

PART 02: THE ECONOMY OF NUNA & SILA

A YELLOWHEAD INSTITUTE SPECIAL REPORT

PINASUNNIQ

Reflections on a Northern
Indigenous Economy

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ABSTRACT

*Pinasunniq: Reflections on a Northern Indigenous Economy** offers a vision of Inuit economic self-determination. It challenges the "common sense" Northern economic models that have historically excluded Inuit voices and continue to erase Inuit economic activity. Through economic analysis, narrative, and advocacy, the report asks critical questions about the benefits of government-led policy and approaches of industry. In contrast, it offers examples of Inuit-centered economic frameworks in practice today that prioritize sustainability, reciprocity, and care. Part 01 reviews the current landscape, reflecting on systemic barriers to Inuit-led development. Part 02 addresses traditional economic activities, particularly hunting, harvesting, and food sovereignty, emphasizing the role of Indigenous knowledge. Part 03 explores economic diversity through the arts and care-based economies, with perspectives on healing, meaningful work, and reconciliation. Ultimately, this edited report is not just an analysis but a call to action to envision and act upon a future where Inuit have the authority to shape their economy in ways that foster cultural revitalization and community well-being. *Pinasunniq* demonstrates how Inuit leadership in economic discourse can shift us toward a path for transformative change rooted in self-determination and aligning with Inuit values.

**Pinasunniq* translates loosely to "endeavour" or "venture".

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Download the full report, including Part 01, Part 03 and the Conclusion at
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Hunting Education for an Economy of Food

In contemporary Canada, Indigenous peoples are encouraged to and rewarded for viewing the land as a commodity – something to buy, sell and trade, to use and exploit and then, maybe, to remediate when we're done with it. Some Indigenous peoples and organizations support this position because those participating in the wage economy are rewarded for doing so. It is challenging to uphold and maintain pre-colonial values around social cohesion when individual gain and status are prioritized as part of the messages that we (Indigenous peoples) are inundated with on a daily basis. The resulting socioeconomic conditions can be devastating, and extraction and research industries, in particular, have had a history of exploiting this reality.



Photo Credit: Janine Lightfoot

The partnerships with industry, jobs, and benefits agreements can all help Indigenous peoples and communities address the consequences of colonization.

We are often told that poverty and other socioeconomic challenges can be solved with joint ventures. Unfortunately, this emergent view may take us away from the view of the land we have embraced and practiced for thousands of years. From Anishinaabe in the South to Inuit in the North, the land is alive with agency and spirit. It holds knowledge, language, and laws. To that end, we are finding ways to live in balance by degrees. That does not mean we did not or do not exploit or use the land. In fact, that is the foundation of our relationship with the land and how we learned to live with it. There is no better example of this than our hunting cultures.

The focus of this report is trying to conceptualize a Northern Indigenous economy. In this chapter, we have chosen to explore hunting as an economic activity that reinforces who and what we are as Indigenous peoples and the less discussed solution to many of the challenges wrought by colonization. While this may be less discussed because it is increasingly difficult to use the land for these purposes in the South (where most of the Indigenous-Canada relationship discussions are shaped), the proximity of Inuit to the land in the North is still very close. It is common for Inuit — and Northerners generally — to have a hunting cabin outside a town or village and for children as young as eight and nine to harvest and celebrate their first caribou or seal. Meals reflect the seasonal migrations of animals in our shared territory. These are collective experiences: Inuit hunt together, share supplies, share environmental observations and knowledge, and ensure the harvest is dispersed in communities.

The “goods and services” of the Northern economy – if conceptualized along the lines of Western economic frameworks – are ammunition, wildlife, and knowledge.

At the same time, our hunting culture is threatened. Colonialism was (and is) expressed in the North by forcing First Nations and Inuit to settle in villages and abandon the travel required for sustainable hunting. Inuit were forced to relocate, the sled dogs were slaughtered, outpost camps banned, and racist attitudes told Inuit they were savages for living off the land. Despite the Indigenous resistance to these strategies, they have taken a significant toll. Now, we face messages that suggest that hunting is not a worthwhile economic activity in the face of mining and resource development, and, generally, there is limited support, resources or tools to revitalize the practice. Indeed, those who traditionally would have hunted are often lured to mining or trade opportunities, restricting their time on the land to a hobby.

At this point in our history, these forces and attitudes have led to a crisis in food security for Inuit in particular. The extremely high cost of imported foods in Inuit Nunangat has meant families and communities cannot meet their nutritional needs. Inuit are at a disadvantage when it comes to feeding our families, which was exacerbated during and following the COVID-19 pandemic that further strained Northern supply chains. Even federally subsidized programs are unable to address the issue, and the poor implementation of those programs, like Nutrition North, has resulted in public demonstrations to advocate for the affordability, quality and availability of store-bought foods in our communities.

This is the context for Inuit seeking, once again, to return to the land for our food. Inuit from all across Inuit Nunangat still rely heavily on what we call “country food” or “wild food” — foods from our lands, waters, and sila — as part of our diets. Each Inuit region in the country has developed or is supporting hunting programs to encourage the country food market to grow and, in so doing, address food insecurity. This growing movement represents an opportunity to support Inuit self-determination in food systems through land-based and hunting initiatives.



Building and sustaining land-based and hunting programs supports Inuit self-determination and our local economies and addresses serious gaps in caring for our communities. Despite years and myriad tactics of colonialism, the knowledge of our environment, animals, weather, seas and harvesting is still accessible. We can reclaim our cultural ways.

For example, in 2012, the Nunatsiavut Government launched the Going Off, Growing Strong Program to engage Inuit youth and support mental health by connecting young people to the land. Soon after, the Arviat Wellness Society in Nunavut began the Young Hunters program for youth as young as eight to train with Elders and hunters to learn land-based skills. These programs were also responses to mental health crises that were affecting young people, in particular Inuit men from the ages of 15 to 29. Prior to colonialism, Inuit men played a significant role in providing for families in our hunting society. With the introduction of a wage-based economy, their displacement affected our communities and our families. These programs, while not full-time, support and celebrate the roles that Inuit hunters have in our communities and demonstrate how much of an impact hunting programs can have.

Perhaps most notable in the movement toward supporting hunters in full-time roles has been the Angunasuktiit program, launched in 2020 by the Ittaq Heritage and Research Centre (Ittaq) in Clyde River. Angunasuktiit is a full-time, all-year harvesting instruction program. Ittaq hunter-instructors work one-on-one with participants on all aspects of hunting and harvesting. They are on the land most days of the year, learning about and practicing harvesting country foods to support food security in the community. At the heart of the program is viewing and supporting hunters as an essential service critical to the community's health and wellness.



Photo Credit: Janine Lightfoot

Inspired by these initiatives, Inuit in Makkovik, one of five Inuit communities in Labrador, began to offer on-the-land workshops in 2023 for residents to address food insecurity, cultural continuity, Inuit-centered education and skills transfer. In partnership with the Angunasuktiit program, the Makkovik Inuit Community Government (MICG) secured resources to be able to pay hunters, rent equipment, and recruit participants to run a series of workshops that involved hunting, harvesting and Inuit-specific skills development such as seal hunting and skinning.

The first seal workshop resulted in six seals harvested over two days by three different boats. There were 11 participants, five under the age of 12. But the program required more than just the hunt. Planning included meetings between hunter-instructors and program support workers to ensure logistics, supplies, and safety. There was a division of labour between hunters, who determined what was needed for the hunting trips, and program support, who handled the administrative needs to secure the fuel, ammo, boat rental, compensation, and coordination for participants. Equipment also needed to be secured: boats, communication devices (VHF radios), and firearms. All of the hunting programs mentioned above require the same types of administrative, funding, and logistics support.

The seal hunting workshop in Makkovik cost less than \$10,000. It supported training for 11 people, and with the hunters and program support staff, 15 were able to provide for their families with their wages earned and food harvested. In fact, food went to even more homes and tables. Meat from the seals was distributed at the regional Elders Gathering, and what was left went to the local community freezer to be accessed when needed. Families also received seal skins for making clothing and skills to pass on to our children and generations to follow. The return on a relatively small investment was and will continue to be significant.

This single workshop demonstrated the economic power of revitalizing hunting practices. Imagine the return on investment of full-time hunting programs.

As Matthias Oschinsky points out above, hunting's "return on investment" from a food security perspective is astounding, providing the required protein for community needs in a majority of Inuit communities.

And there are other benefits.

Hunting involves more than searching for and harvesting an animal. For Inuit, it provides healthier and more culturally relevant food, regular monitoring of the environment by knowledgeable land-users for safety, critical education, language, culture, and skills transfer in our families and communities.

It is an essential service in Inuit Nunangat. Elder Mariano Aupilardjuk reflects on this point in a discussion about the links between the economy and Inuit law. He notes that Inuit laws were diminished with the introduction of schools, churches, and other institutions. Aupilardjuk explains, "These types of laws were relinquished when we ceased to manage and control our own destiny. As soon as we started to be helped by the government, we were made to live in these communities and became reliant on welfare assistance, also called *niqai'ttuq*... When I think back as to how organized Inuit culture was, I really started to wish we did not lose our cultural ways..."

In other words, without the legal frameworks and self-determination to operationalize them, pursuing an economy that supports the community and culture is much more difficult. These elements of Inuit life are interconnected.

Building and sustaining land-based and hunting programs supports Inuit self-determination and our local economies and addresses serious gaps in caring for our communities. Despite years and myriad tactics of colonialism, the knowledge of our environment, animals, weather, seas and harvesting is still accessible. We can reclaim our cultural ways.



HUNTING BENEFITS THE HUNTER, THE FAMILY, AND THE COMMUNITY IN MULTIPLE WAYS BECAUSE WE ARE DOING MORE THAN JUST HUNTING. WE ARE ALSO TEACHING, DISTRIBUTING FOOD, VOLUNTEERING FOR SEARCH AND RESCUE, COLLECTING DATA OR RESEARCH FOR MONITORING PROJECTS, MENTORING YOUTH, AND HELPING WITH DIFFERENT COMMITTEES.

HUNTING IS ABOUT MORE THAN BRINGING IN FOOD; IT'S A LIFESTYLE THAT POSITIVELY INFLUENCES EVERYONE INVOLVED – ESPECIALLY YOUNG PEOPLE. WE NEED TO CONTINUE SHARING THE SKILLS AND TRADITIONS OF OUR ANCESTORS FOR OUR CULTURE AND OUR PEOPLE TO THRIVE.

Return of the Full-Time Hunter

I'm a hunter. I'm also an artist. My income through an average year is usually a combination of hunting, carving, outfitting, guiding and odd contract jobs. Hunting is mostly for food for my family and others, but the skins, tusks, and bones come into play for carving and add to income on a small scale for things like gas, ammo and other needed hunting equipment. Outfitting is seasonal work when available, like taking out tourists or students in land programs. Guiding is seasonal, too – for sport hunters or fishing, and sometimes sealing. It can be good pay, depending on who you work for in a season. Contract jobs are specific. For example, I maintain the community weather stations and sometimes do other work for scientists and prospectors – everything from fieldwork, such as gathering samples and data, to bear monitoring and safety. My skills as a hunter overlap into all of these areas.

I've been hunting my whole life.

I was raised at an outpost camp and started hunting around age ten. I learned to hunt with my grandfather and then hunted with my uncles in my teens. Later, I started hunting on my own and discovered how much I love it and how much it makes me who I am. To this day, I still really enjoy hunting on my own.

I never considered hunting to be a paid profession before working on the Full-Time Hunter Pilot Project through Ittaq.

I was skeptical of the idea but was willing to give it a try. A lot of what happened during that time was unexpected. The hunting was great, but the paperwork took some getting used to. Since this was somewhat of an experiment, documenting everything was part of it. On the hunting side, one of the biggest impacts I noticed was on my ability to be properly prepared all the time. I have never had so much ammo, skidoo parts, new clothing, new knives — new everything. And I had time. Time to work on all of my equipment, clean, and maintain it. And I could buy quality supplies, not just the cheapest option just to get by until it breaks. It is now at the point where, if I have it, others can borrow it — like fishnets, ice chisels, ice jiggers, and harpoons. For 17 years, I had one scope that I would rotate from gun to gun. Now, each rifle has its own.

Being supported as a full-time hunter meant I didn't have to ask my partner for money to pay for new equipment or make a carving to trade. I had more time. I could be more consistent. As a result, the quality of everything goes up: the quality of equipment, of preparation, of the time on the land, of maintaining knowledge and skills.

Sometimes, younger people are in a hurry, but there is great value in taking things more slowly; you can't rush if you're going to learn properly. You can't take shortcuts where the environment doesn't care if you live or die. If you're going to hunt, you have to adjust for the weather and for your equipment — and you must have endurance. These three things have to be learned and practiced your whole life. I have seen examples of people rushing and being careless about what their equipment or the environment can do. One little thing can go wrong, and then everything can go wrong. I used to do these things, but I slowed down. While I still make mistakes, they are fewer than when I used to act with haste.

Being a full-time hunter doesn't mean I hunt more than I need. This is important. That teaching is still there and still practiced.

Another crucial aspect of the full-time hunter role today, now that it has evolved in the community as a program, is that it is a hunter-instructor role. Our full-time hunters are also instructors. They are constantly and consistently taking out students and passing on those skills. That's part of the profession.

There have been several different hunter support programs over the years, all with upsides and problems. For example, "hunter support" once meant giving equipment to anyone to encourage hunting. But this didn't end up benefiting hunters or hunting. Sometimes, the equipment ended up in the hands of people who didn't use it for hunting and sold it to make money. In the end, any type of support or activity around hunting will always involve some tension. That is just how it is. What is important is how we work through it.

Being a respected hunter in a hunting community comes with some expectations. Even if you don't know who is expecting what, those expectations are still there. When you come from a background of skilled people, you want to live up to that reputation, and it feels good when you do. One day, unexpectedly, someone might say, "You did good. You still have your grandfather's blood in you."



These are the unwritten rules about hunting: as part of a community's history, you inherit, respect, and ultimately pass on the skills you carry.

I am sometimes asked what makes me want to keep hunting. It's a combination of things. There is the social expectation, the need for food, and the satisfaction of providing food to other people, especially when they crave their traditional foods. There are very special moments when I harvest a particular kind of food and share it with others. Take shooting a seal, for example. Imagine pulling it out of the breathing hole, cutting it up while it's still warm and harvesting pieces of liver with little bits of fat just as it is starting to freeze. For our people, this is a delicacy. And being

able to provide this delicacy to others is good! You can hunt all you want, but if you don't get to try these special things or bring them to others, you're not getting the same feeling a hunter does. After you have felt that sort of satisfaction, you yearn to feel it again. The same applies when you give someone a favourite food and see their reaction. You want to do it again. There is also a health aspect to hunting. Growing up on fresh food makes your body as it should be. As Inuit, we need that kind of food.

Hunting full-time is the only way to know intimately the needs and preferences of people in your community. When you have been hunting for long enough, you can tell the difference between the tastes of animals from different locations. You will learn what type people prefer, and then you will learn how they want it prepared. You get to know how different women like their animal skins. You learn who wants what kind of skin, how to cut it for them, and how to transport it properly to them. You also learn how food should be distributed well in the community and understand who needs food, even if they

are not asking. Providing for your community is both an Inuit tradition and part of being a hunter. Only a certain number of people have this kind of knowledge, so it is essential to maintain it and pass it on. However, it takes time and consistency.

In fact, a full-time hunting program relies on consistency. A consistent income means I can be prepared and organized to hunt all year, get and maintain quality equipment, constantly practice my hunting skills, and regularly bring food to my house and other places. Additionally, consistent teaching is critical to successfully passing on our knowledge and skills. Consistency is also essential in observing our environment. Being on the ice all year round gives

us better knowledge of what's happening and where. This is important for monitoring our environment and comes into play with safety and even search and rescue operations. Consistency on the land all year creates a new level of hunting, knowledge, preparing specialty foods, and reinforcing language around hunting and place names.

As a child, I used to think of my grandfather's lessons as chores. But one day, he told me, "You will have to be *anguti* one day." As time passed, I realized my grandfather was educating me in the ways of a hunter, and today, I realize how lucky I was to receive that Inuit education.

As Elders teach less and pass on, our traditional skills slowly dissipate and are lost. Passing the torch as my grandfather did — the knowledge, skills, language, and values around hunting — is essential in maintaining the Inuit way of life.



HUNTING FULL-TIME IS THE ONLY WAY TO KNOW INTIMATELY THE NEEDS AND PREFERENCES OF PEOPLE IN YOUR COMMUNITY....

PROVIDING FOR YOUR COMMUNITY IS BOTH AN INUIT TRADITION AND PART OF BEING A HUNTER.



Photo Credit: Janine Lightfoot

From 2017 to 2018, Esa Qillaq and Shari Fox, with support from Tides Canada, worked together on a pilot study called “Reclaiming the role of full-time hunter in an Inuit community.” Over the course of the project, Fox interviewed Qillaq as he reflected on the work. Drawing on those interviews, Qillaq and Fox compiled and edited this essay. The pilot project set the foundation for the full-time hunting instruction program, Angunasuktiit, which has operated in Clyde River since 2020.

Learn more about Angunasuktiit at itqa.ca and by watching [this video](#).

Developing a Conservation Economy in the Canadian Arctic

Over the past half-century, Inuit in the Qikiqtani region¹ and Indigenous peoples around the globe have been faced with environmental degradation resulting from industrial activities and climate change.

Industrial markets, based on extractive activities, are a challenge because they significantly impact our cultural continuity, our ability to travel, access to our harvests, and our ability to pass on intergenerational knowledge between families, communities, and throughout our regions.

As the environment around us changes – the result of international and domestic tourism, mining, and the persistent creation of organic pollutants worldwide, to name a few – our way of life continues to be threatened. Human activity continues to fundamentally transform our world, causing serious and often unexpected negative impacts on species, affecting population numbers, genetic composition, behaviour, and survival. The globally significant ecological services that the Arctic provides, including storing carbon, cooling the planet, and influencing oceanic and atmospheric currents, are also under pressure.

To combat these ominous changes and transition from extractive economies to sustainable ones, we must harness Inuit knowledge, practices, and skills to find solutions.

Qikiqtani Inuit have identified a clear path forward through investment and engagement in conservation economies and by continuing to do what we have done for millennia - living, breathing, harvesting, and passing on our traditional knowledge of the lands and waters around us. This path also creates space for governments to meet international obligations to conserve the marine and terrestrial environments we all rely upon to survive.

HARVESTING FOR CONSERVATION: THE NAUTTIQSUQTIIT PROGRAM

For Inuit, the benefits of a conservation economy are many and overlapping. Inuit-led Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs) enable species central to Inuit culture and harvesting, such as seals, polar bears, and

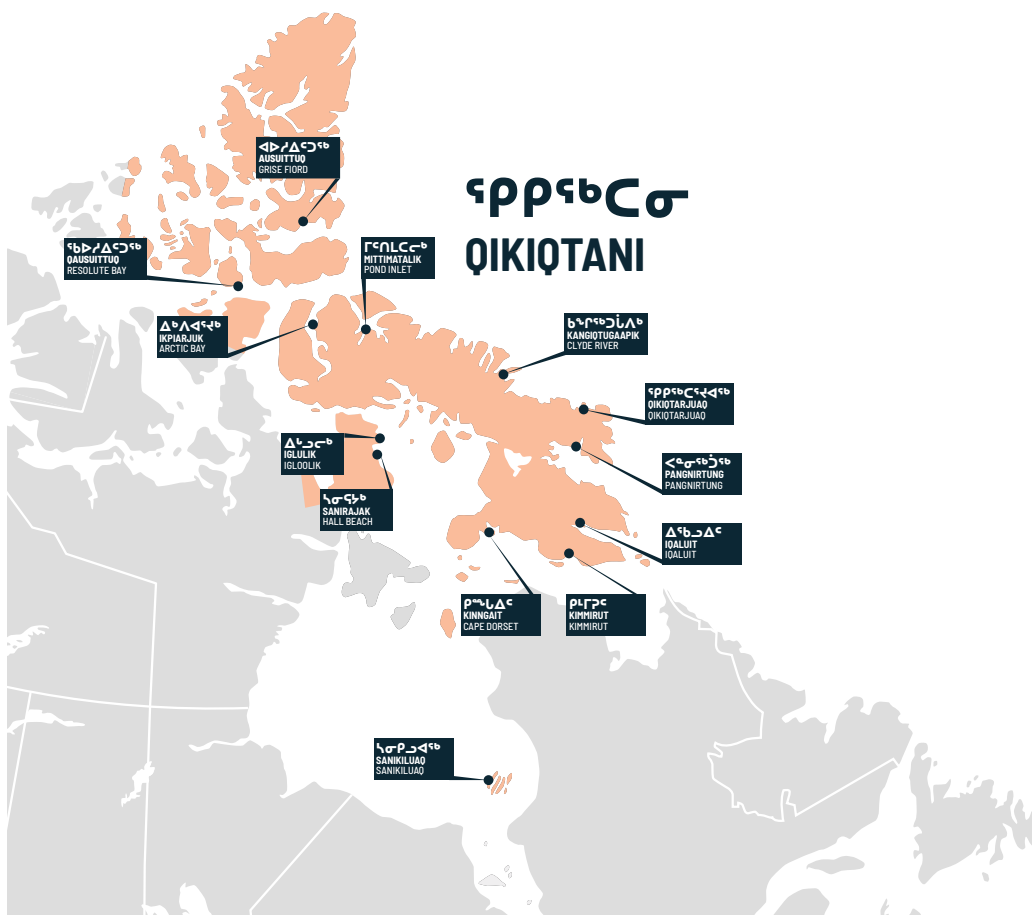
narwhals, to have a healthy environment. IPCAs foster traditional livelihoods, including hunting and sewing, which preserve cultural and governance practices such as country food distribution and, more importantly, food sovereignty. Through Inuit Impact and Benefits Agreements, to the extent that they allow Inuit to operate sustainably in the conservation economy or protect marine areas, IPCAs improve financial autonomy in a way that is consistent with the objectives of the Nunavut Agreement.

For decades, Inuit sought to protect the ecological engine of the Eastern Arctic, what is now known as the Tallurutiup Imanga National Marine Conservation Area (TINMCA), established in 2018. A fundamental part of supporting this was the creation of the Nauttiqsuqtiit Inuit Stewardship Program. The Nauttiqsuqtiit program began in 2018 as a pilot program in Arctic Bay, with six stewards, or Nauttiqsuqtiit, the watchers and observers of our environment. The full program now spans five communities, and 35 Nauttiqsuqtiit have formalized

Inuit roles in environmental stewardship and harvesting in Tallurutiup Imanga. The program also provides a foundation for training, jobs, and other economic opportunities for Inuit in all 13 communities of the Qikiqtani Region.

An important part of the Nauttiqsuqtiit work is harvesting marine animals such as arctic char, shrimp, and seal. The harvesting is part of their wildlife monitoring work. The animals harvested not only provide valuable monitoring data but also help to feed the communities in which they live.

The strong connection Inuit have with the water and land has fostered



values of environmental stewardship. Since time immemorial, Inuit have acted as stewards of the Arctic's pristine environment. Nauttisqutiit are essential in the promotion of Inuit culture, well-being, the transmission of knowledge to youth, and the delivery of Inuit cultural, social, health and conservation benefits.

While this is a holistic approach to the economy, it is nonetheless a discussion of skills development and training for an Inuit workforce tasked with the revitalization of Inuit economic activity.

CONSERVATION GOVERNANCE

As the Qikiqtani Inuit Association's conservation economy expands, the need to create an Inuit-led Council is increasingly apparent. This council will consolidate and unify our approach to managing conservation economy efforts and, in so doing, demonstrate the ongoing importance of local governance and management. Governance founded on Inuit laws, customs, and knowledge that has adequate structures and resources in place to sustain traditional practices and inform new approaches within the conservation economy will ensure Inuit reclaim economic decision-making roles in areas that we have historically governed.

Fundamental to an Inuit-led economic activity that protects our environment is one that also elevates and strengthens Inuit-led governance using a regional approach.

An example is a Qikiqtani Inuit Stewardship Council aimed at directing governance of conserved areas in the Qikiqtani region, which will expand to work with Qikiqtani communities and partners to make governance decisions and build capacity independent of government and other interests.

The Stewardship Council will play a crucial role in making Inuit-led decisions in the management of conservation areas. This will lead to the creation of a regional network of existing and proposed conservation areas, all managed through a holistic Inuit approach, thereby interconnecting the entire Qikiqtani region across both terrestrial and marine landscapes.

The Stewardship Council will also act as a repository for Inuit knowledge and laws pertaining to environmental protection and conservation from the Qikiqtani Region, which will then be accessible for learning, application, and transmission. Inuit-led research decisions also ensure our knowledge is at the core of program approaches and outcomes. In our conservation economy, applying the elements of Inuit science is central to research and monitoring and creates a process that considers community priorities and concerns. This is not to dismiss other knowledge systems, such as Western science. Prioritizing Inuit science creates a lens through which research and monitoring are conducted ethically for Inuit, but also considers and includes other knowledge systems.

CONCLUSION

Broader policy thinking is still evolving around an economy that protects our environment. Qikiqtani Inuit represent less than 0.05 percent of the Canadian population, yet the Arctic, our homelands, represents more than 10 percent of combined marine and terrestrial conservation targets. Inuit stewardship of lands and waters and a sustainable economy are vital to meeting conservation goals and maintaining ecosystem integrity throughout the Qikiqtani Region. As we take steps towards a conservation economy, we can see a healthy and resilient Qikiqtani Region supporting a mosaic of interconnected conservation areas. A successful conservation economy in our region can serve as a blueprint for conservation economies across the rest of the world.



Photo Credit: Jae Light

Navigating the Turbulent Waters of Fisheries' Rights in Nunavut

Canada, often celebrated for its pristine natural landscapes and abundant resources, boasts a rich and diverse fishing industry spanning three coastlines from the Atlantic to the Pacific to the Arctic. However, when it comes to accessing these lucrative fisheries, not all regions are treated equally.

Within the vast territory of Nunavut, located in Canada's far north and home to many Inuit communities, a complex and often contentious relationship exists between inhabitants and the fisheries sector.

This relationship emerged at contact as European explorers sought fish and other marine species in Inuit waters. In this article, I explore some of the contemporary issues surrounding access to the commercial fisheries of turbot and shrimp within and adjacent to the Nunavut Settlement Area, highlighting the disparities in access and the ongoing struggles faced by Inuit in Nunavut.

A BOUNTIFUL SEA, DISPUTED ACCESS

Established as a territory in 1999, Nunavut is home to approximately 39,000 people, most of whom are Inuit. This land is surrounded by an ocean teeming with marine life, highly valued both within local communities as country food and in broader domestic and international markets. Despite its adjacency to these abundant fisheries — and specifically turbot and shrimp fisheries — Nunavut does not have comparable access as other Canadian jurisdictions do. In Atlantic Canada, for instance, they have access to their adjacent fisheries from 80 to 90 percent (GN, 2016). Nunavut does not benefit from the same level of access. In 2019, for instance, Nunavut had access to 76 percent of turbot and only 38 percent of shrimp (Nunatsiaq News, 2020).

Over the past two decades, Inuit organizations have been actively involved in legal battles challenging federal ministerial decisions to achieve fairer quota allocations for Nunavut. In a recent court case, two Inuit organizations brought a lawsuit against the federal government after they allocated a significant portion of a fishing license to a company based in the south (CBC News, 2024). The organizations argued that the Minister had neglected to consider Article 15 of the Nunavut Agreement, which mandates special consideration for Nunavut's adjacency to these fishing grounds when allocating commercial fishery licenses. In 2021, the court struck down the ministerial decision. This matter is still unresolved (CBC News, 2024).

Historical factors have contributed to this stark contrast in access. In the past, Nunavut Inuit were left out of opportunities to join the offshore fishing industry, as government quota allocations prioritized the growth and stability of the fishing sector in Atlantic Canada (Bernauer, 2022). Through years of political effort, there has been gradual progress in increasing Nunavut's involvement in the offshore fisheries, but more is required.

THE POTENTIAL OF THE COMMERCIAL FISHERY

Fishing represents a significant economic opportunity for Inuit communities in Nunavut, with the potential to benefit regional and local economies in ways that extend beyond immediate financial gains. In 2019, the

value of the turbot and shrimp fisheries in Nunavut was approximated at \$112 million (Nunatsiaq News, 2020). Achieving parity in terms of access could mean a greater opportunity for Nunavut's economy, including the creation of jobs and increased economic stability within Inuit communities.

Another potential benefit of increased access to the shrimp and turbot fisheries for Nunavut is the availability of a healthy food source. While these species are not historically traditional staples in Inuit diets, the growing seafood sector has the potential to make these nutritious resources more accessible. Shrimp and turbot offer a source of protein and essential nutrients that can contribute to Inuit communities' overall health and well-being, promoting food security.

Finally, greater access on par with other Canadian jurisdictions opens the possibility of more locally based fisheries. Winter fisheries in Nunavut provide economic, social, and cultural benefits back to the community (GN, 2016). This type of local fishing enterprise not only creates economic opportunities but also strengthens the ties between Inuit communities and land-based economic practices.

CONCLUSION

The disparities in access to fisheries resources in Nunavut represent a complex issue rooted in history, legal agreements, and political decisions. For Inuit in Nunavut, fishing represents an important economic opportunity with the potential to benefit regional and local economies, promote food security, and foster cultural connections. As we move forward, it is crucial to recognize the importance of collaboration, transparency, and respect for the rights and knowledge of Inuit. Only by working together and considering innovative approaches can we ensure that the rich resources of the sea benefit all who call Nunavut home. This has the potential to foster economic growth and stability in the territory, particularly through job creation, and strengthens the bonds between Inuit communities and their cultural ties to the sea.



Photo Credit: Yumi Numata

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