ATIIK ASKII:
LAND OF THE CARIBOU

Building Community Partnerships for the Northwestern Manitoba Regional Tourism Strategy

Manitoba

Canada

A BEST PRACTICE CASE STUDY IN COMMUNITY TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

Prepared for

Indian and Northern Affairs Canada

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Canadian Heritage

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Manitoba Culture, Heritage and Tourism

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Manitoba Aboriginal and Northern Affairs

by

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PREFACE

What does Aboriginal tourism mean to you?

To Sherilynn Thomas, a nine year-old girl from Brochet in Northwestern Manitoba, Aboriginal tourism means caribou hunting, camping and fishing.

Sherilynn Thomas

To others it means arts and crafts, pow wows, story-telling, and foods such as venison, bannock and wild rice. It also means outdoor activities such as canoeing, dog-sledding or staying in a tee pee or lodge.

Aboriginal tourism may also mean something different for Aboriginal communities across Canada. This publication highlights some of the best practices 13 communities used in planning for their future in the tourism industry. These communities have identified local opportunities which may lead to greater economic benefits for their community and to an improvement in their quality of life.

It is the intention that the sharing of the experiences of the communities profiled in this document will inform, inspire and assist other Aboriginal and rural communities as they work to develop and realize their tourism potential.

ATIIK ASKII: LAND OF THE CARIBOU

a • tiik /_teek/ n. caribou

a • skii /_skee/ n. land or place

— *from the Cree Language*

Some eight thousand years in the past, a mere moment back in geologic time, the Land of the Caribou — Atiik Askii — began to emerge from under the late Pleistocene glacier that covered most of northern Canada. It was a stark and barren landscape at first. Outwash streams flowed from under the glacier, spreading sand and gravel at the edge of the ice front. As the glacier retreated, it left behind mucky ground moraine covering vast areas. Streams, rivers, and lakes formed in profusion. Eskers — long north-south ridges of glacial debris — formed too. Because eskers were well-drained, high-ground terrain, they became the region's travel corridors. In time, they would come to lend visual interest to an otherwise low-relief landscape.

After the ice receded, there was little vegetation and few animals. This changed as the climate warmed and the land drained and dried out. First came the tundra plant communities that supported herds of caribou and their predators, the wolves. Slowly, forests grew and other animals, notably moose and bear, moved into the region. Whitefish, northern pike, pickerel and lake trout migrated into the lakes and streams and became abundant.

Humans came too. At first few in number, they settled in small encampments along lakes and streams. They moved frequently, following ever-migrating and seasonal food sources. The archaeological record suggests at least two distinct prehistoric Aboriginal cultural communities lived in the Land of the Caribou in the last millennium. The most geographically concentrated of these settled along the Churchill River and the shores of South Indian Lake. The record suggests these people used and re-used particular sites many times over in the five hundred to six hundred years they lived in the region before European traders arrived in the eighteenth century. Manufacture and use of pottery was a distinguishing characteristic of their culture.

The archaeological evidence of the other group, mostly stone tools, is more widely and thinly dispersed across the landscape, reflecting a pattern of far-flung travel and short-term residence at any given place. Many descendants of these early peoples, the Cree and Dene First Nations and Métis, continue to live in the region in modern times and, although culturally much transformed, many have found ways to integrate traditional artefact production, technologies, and lifestyles with the reality of Euro-Canadian dominion. In recent years, an upsurge of Aboriginal sovereignty has led to new and stronger social relations among all the communities in the region.

Today the land is largely pristine boreal and taiga forest wilderness. It is sparsely settled and lightly travelled. The slightly rolling land surface is covered by spruce and pine forests. There are countless lakes and streams that flow into the major rivers; beautiful rapids and falls; abundant and diverse wildlife; subtle communities of flowers, lichens, and mosses; insects; ancient rock; eskers. In winter, temperatures plunge. Forests are carpeted with snow; the air is bitter cold and dry. An eerie silence pervades the land. Frost forms and sparkles like Christmas lights on the tree branches when backlit by the sun, always low on the southern horizon. The lakes are frozen thick with ice. The night sky crackles with the energy of northern lights; iridescent pink and green lights tower and surge and shimmer overhead.

This Land of the Caribou — Atiik Askii — is northwestern Manitoba. It is a region that many different people, both Aboriginal and Euro-Canadian, call home. It is a remote place that people love and are reluctant to leave, even in hard times: it invigorates their lives; it sets them apart. It is a land, seemingly inhospitable, that those who live there value profoundly because it is a place where people can still intimately experience the richness and authenticity of nature and indigenous cultures.

Now, as the result of two years of hard work by many different local and outside community and institutional investors, there is a new inter-community regional partnership that will make sharing this special place with the rest of the world possible: Atiik Askii Adventure Tours, Inc.

CONTENTS

CASE STUDY SUMMARY

This case study of the Northwest Manitoba Regional Tourism Strategy, *Atiik Askii:* Land of the Caribou, identifies and describes eight best practices derived from a community tourism development strategic planning process carried out over two years by 13 communities — 12 located in northwestern Manitoba and one in eastern Saskatchewan. Community and economic development practitioners attempting community tourism development may find that considering and/or adopting these practices in their planning processes can help stakeholders ensure and enrich a successful outcome. The study is based on field interviews with those key participants in the strategic planning process.

The case is presented against the existing socioeconomic backdrop of the 13 ethnically diverse communities. Eleven of the communities are Aboriginal: two Dene First Nations, six Cree First Nations, and three Métis. The other two are Euro-Canadian, representing a mix of cultural traditions and languages. Since 1986, extreme economic circumstances have arisen in the region. As a result of mine closures, there have been relocations and depopulation; reductions in public and private sector services provided locally; loss of jobs, incomes, and traditional ways of life; increased dependence on social assistance programs; increased cross-cultural conflicts; and loss of residential property values.

The Northwest Manitoba Regional Tourism Strategy, the outcome of a two-year planning process, is seen as an opportunity to revitalize the economy of the region and to equitably distribute benefits from activities among participating communities. The most remarked-upon aspect of the process was, however, the overall new sense of partnership and heightened level of co-operation that sprang up among the communities.

The best practices identified and described in this case study are:

- rapport and trust;

- adoption of regional planning and focus-down perspectives;

- leadership;

- community visioning and strategic planning process;

- consensus decision making;

- partnership equity and opportunity;

- sustainability; and

- funders' parallel process.

Northwest Manitoba
Regional Tourism Strategy

Existing Attractions & Tourism Facilities
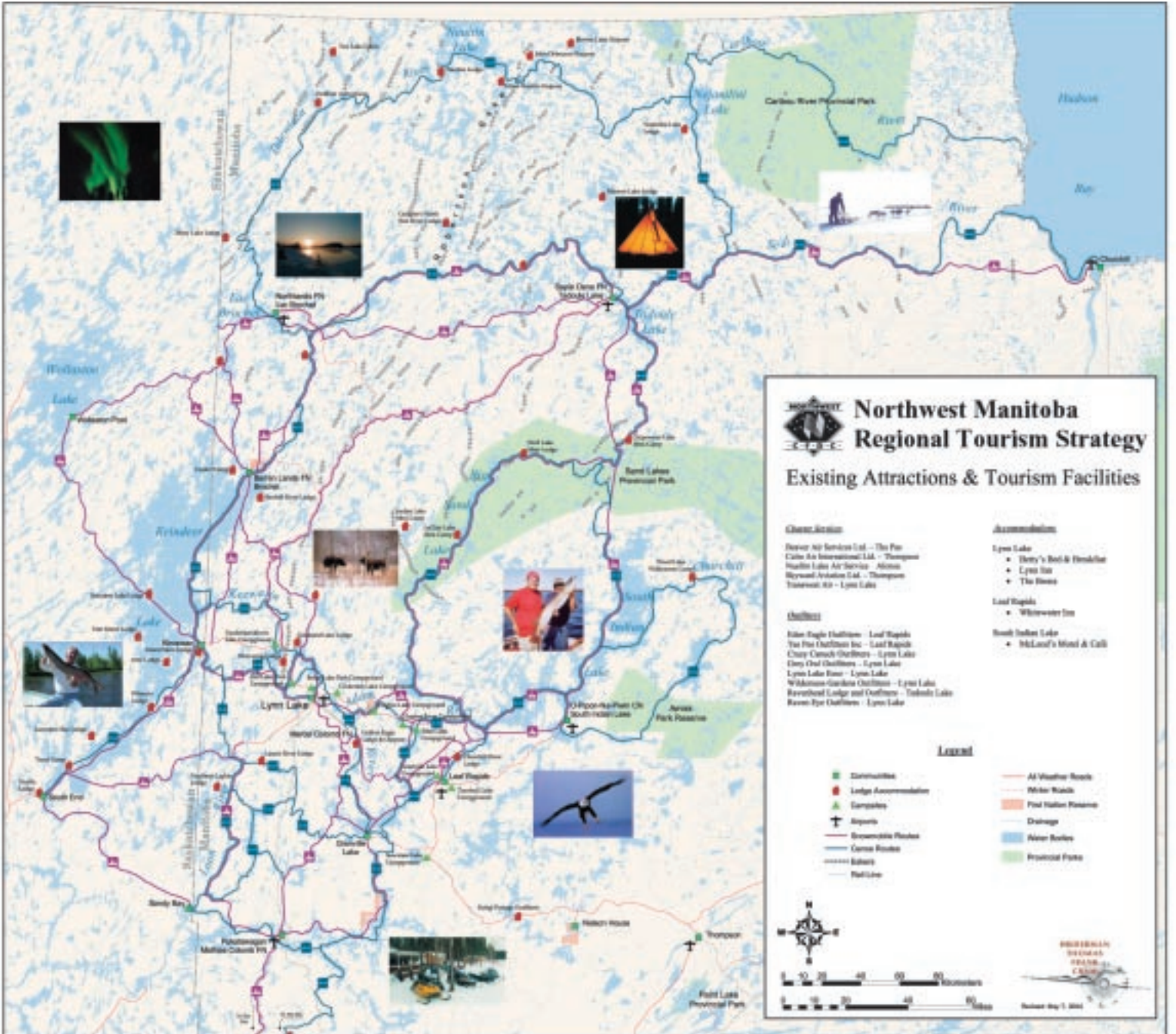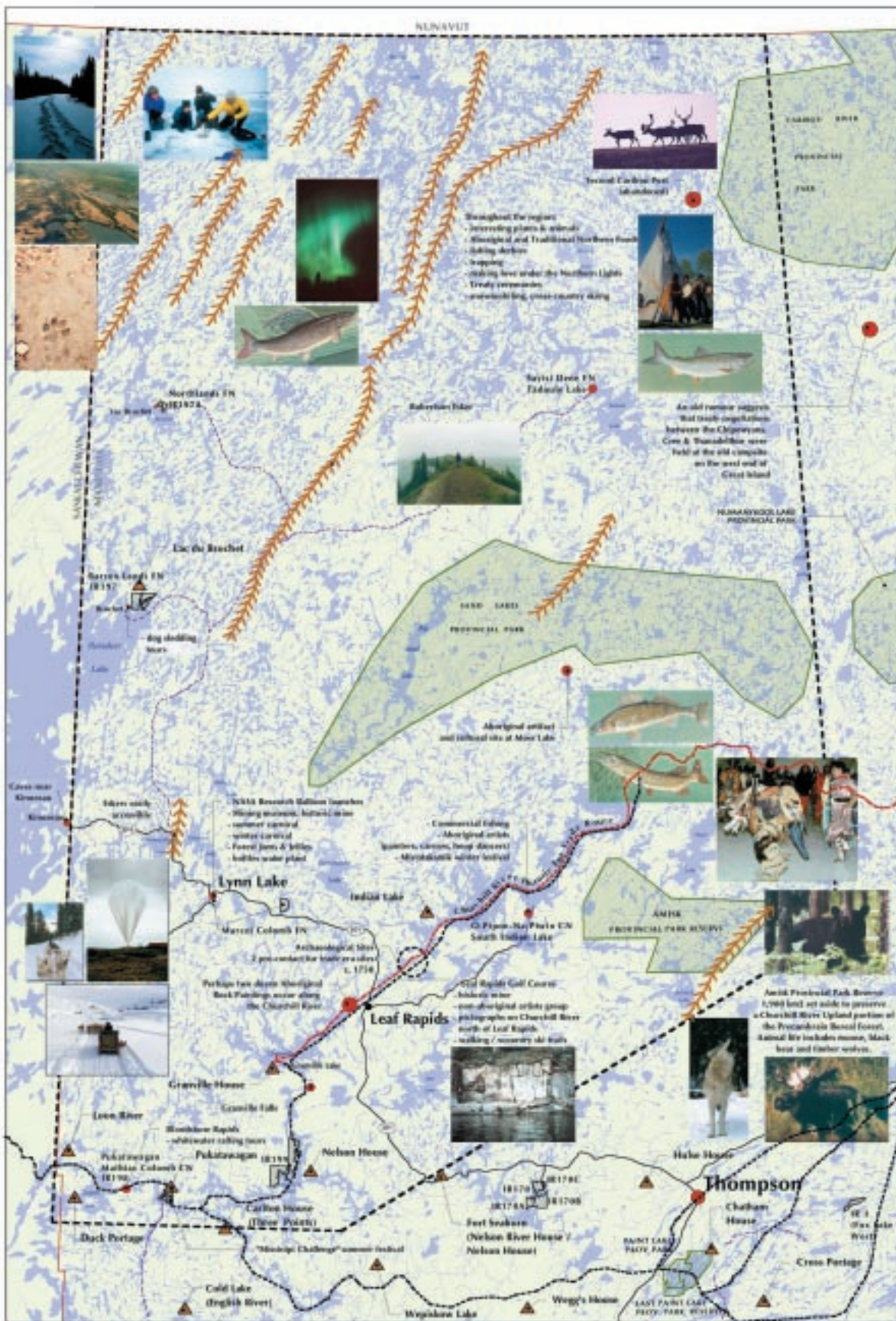
Northwest Manitoba
Regional Tourism Strategy

MAP 5:

Tourism Opportunities and Attractions

Legend

Hudson's Bay Company Forts
Historic Sites
Churchill River Historic Fur Trade Route
Explorer David Thompson's Route while employed by the Hudson's Bay Company
Rivers

Lynn Lake

Leaf Rapids

Thompson

Granville House

Pukatawagan

Nelson House

HILDERMAN
THOMAS
FRAME

Thermopylae Consultants

INTRODUCTION

This case study of the Northwestern Manitoba Regional Tourism Strategy (hereafter called the Strategy)[1] is the story of a focussed and determined community planning process carried out over two years by 12 communities[2] located in northwestern Manitoba and one located in eastern Saskatchewan. These communities worked together to design and implement a plan to begin restructuring their regional economy in the wake of the departed— "bust" —mining industry. The case study emphasizes the best practices of local leadership and community-based strategic planning.

The Strategy is a story with complex historical roots and a unique multicultural dimension. It is a story that not only involves two resource-dependent Euro-Canadian communities — Lynn Lake and Leaf Rapids — that have been devastated in recent years as a result of mine closures, but also 11 Aboriginal communities that are working through issues of sovereignty and independent governance. In the 50 years since "Lynn and Leaf," as they are sometimes called, came into existence, the Aboriginal communities of the region have established many service links with them. The recent regional economic downturn has forged a new set of circumstances all around, and now all the communities in the region have found they must learn how to relate and work together as equals to endure. In short, there has been social learning about the potential value of partnership among culturally diverse communities, a partnership that is manifested in the Strategy.

Another dimension of the Strategy story is the parallel partnership process that arose among the project's funders — various agencies of both the federal and provincial governments. This partnership arose, in part, in response to the long-term goal of governments to support Aboriginal people in their quest to transform their place in civil society from one of dependence on welfare to one of independent self-determination. New attitudes are emerging in government to support this transformation. Community-based Aboriginal economic development is seen as part of the solution. Recently, Dr. Gordon Shanks conducted survey research on policy related to First Nations economic development and presented his assessment in a study released by the Public Policy Forum.[3] In the context of Shanks' study, the Strategy can be viewed as a successful economic development model in community tourism for many Aboriginal communities, or rural areas in Canada.

An Appreciative Inquiry approach was applied to develop the case study.[4] This approach asks: "What are the positives, what has really worked in this process? What are the good things that have come about? What should we continue to do?" rather than focussing on the negatives by asking: "What's wrong with this picture?" This approach was implemented through a survey questionnaire. The questionnaire guided field interviews of 15 Northwest Manitoba Community Futures Development Corporation (Northwest CFDC) staff, community residents, federal and provincial employees, and project consultants. The field interviews were conducted in October and November 2004. This case study is derived from these interviews and other background reports, documents, and information.

The story revolves around the initiative and organizational leadership by Northwest CFDC, a member-based regional community economic development corporation located in Lynn Lake, Manitoba. The Northwest CFDC acted as a catalyst for resources provided by the supporting government agencies over a two-year period, bringing residents of the 13 communities together, for the first time face-to-face, to consider the question: "OK, the mines are closed. This is still our home. What shall we do now?" The lessons learned from what they did to answer that question will be of practical interest to many rural and remote communities in Canada that face similar economic constraints. It will also be of interest to community economic developers seeking solutions that have proven successful. While the focus of this case study is tourism, the lessons learned can be broadly applied to the full range of community economic development strategies.

NORTHWESTERN MANITOBA

Northwestern Manitoba makes up 20 percent (110,000 sq km) of Manitoba's land area of 552,000 sq km, yet less than one percent (5,265) of the 1.12 million people who live in the province live in the region.[5] From Winnipeg, the nearest major population centre, it takes half a day by air — over a full day by road — to reach the region. Only four of the 13 communities are accessible by road year-round, although some of the remaining communities are accessible seasonally by winter road. The predominant mode of travel to the communities is by air. Both scheduled and charter flights are available from regional operators. However, these flights are expensive.

Since 1986, the residents of northwestern Manitoba have faced extreme economic circumstances. There have been relocations and depopulation; reductions in public and private sector services provided locally; loss of jobs, incomes, and traditional ways of life; increased dependence on social assistance programs; increased cross-cultural conflict; and loss of property value. As indicated above, northwestern Manitoba is remote and isolated and seems likely to remain so for the foreseeable future, despite ongoing discussions of constructing an all-weather road through the region into Nunavut. Heavy reliance on a single-resource industry — mining — has made the region highly vulnerable to fluctuations in commodity prices and the inevitable depletion of mineral reserves. Nevertheless, those who remain are willing and eager to try new economic strategies that will regenerate investment and economic activity and thereby allow them to remain in the region and to enjoy a reasonable quality of life.

THE NORTHWEST MANITOBA REGIONAL TOURISM STRATEGY

In 2003, Manitoba received a total of 1.82 million tourist visits.[6] Of these, 1.05 million (57.7 percent) were from Canadian provinces other than Manitoba, 694,000 (38.1 percent) from the United States, and 66,000 (3.6 percent) from overseas. These visitors spent an estimated $531.3 million in the province during their stays. For many visitors, though, northwestern Manitoba is not their destination. Most people coming to the province arrive in Winnipeg and do not venture beyond. There are, however, several notable exceptions to this general pattern.

One important exception is sport fishermen and hunters who come to northern Manitoba, including the northwest region, from the United States each year. Nineteen lodge operations located in northwestern Manitoba cater to this market. Six of these are accessible by road; the others are fly-ins, with flights usually originating in Winnipeg. In addition, a small, but established, international market of canoeists paddle the large rivers of the region — the Churchill[7] and the Seal — during the summer. There is also an emerging market of snowmobilers interested in making long-distance cross-country winter trips. This market originates in northern Manitoba (Thompson), southern Manitoba, Saskatchewan and the northern United States, primarily Minnesota and North Dakota.

Prior to the creation of the Strategy, there was no systematic or comprehensive planning that considered both the supply and demand sides of tourism in a context of sustainable community economic development for northwestern Manitoba...

Most of the fishing and hunting lodge operations are run by independent small business entrepreneurs. The canoeists and snowmobilers arrive as self-sufficient groups drawn to the region by word-of-mouth and its reputation in the adventure tourism market. However, the economic benefits of both types of tourism to the region tend to be minimal.

Prior to the creation of the Strategy, there was no systematic or comprehensive planning that considered both the supply and demand sides of tourism in a context of sustainable community economic development for northwestern Manitoba, even though tourism has long been recognized as an important development possibility for the region. Instead "planning" tended to focus on marketing and promoting the region.
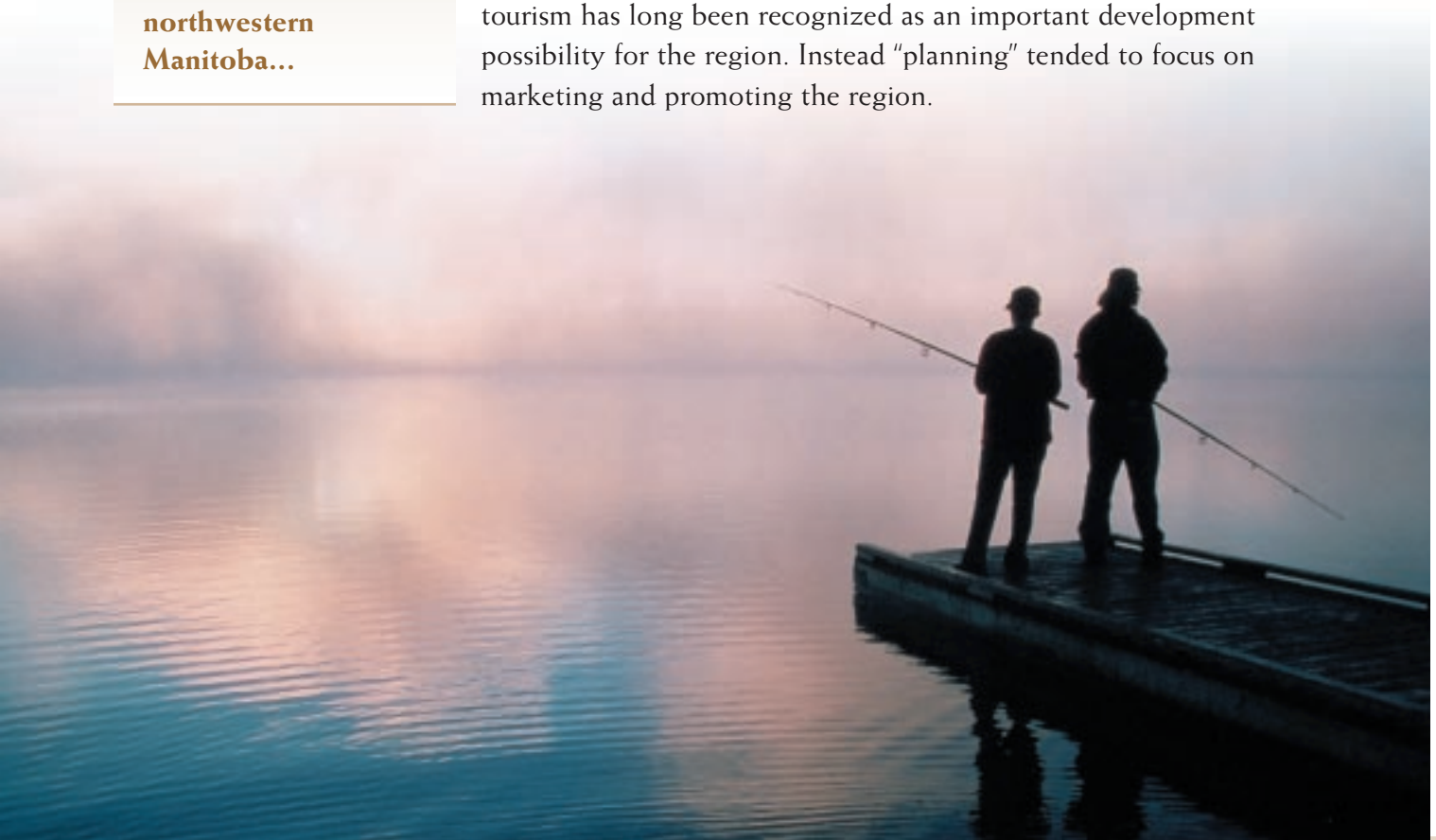
Northwest Manitoba Communities Futures Development Corporation

The Northwest Manitoba Communities Futures Development Corporation (Northwest CFDC) is a "grassroots" community economic development resource that serves the residents and communities of the entire northwest Manitoba region. The Northwest CFDC was incorporated in 1987, several years after Sherritt Gordon Mines Ltd. ended mining operations in Lynn Lake. It was one of the first Community Futures economic development corporations created in what has become a highly successful Canadian government regional economic development assistance program. The Community Futures program was launched by the former Canadian Department of Regional Economic Expansion (DREE) and is now managed in western Canada by Western Economic Diversification Canada (WD). The mission of the program is to support community economic development in rural and northern Canada by:

- facilitating strategic community planning;

- offering business services and counselling; and

- providing access to financial capital.

While, technically, the Northwest CFDC is a "lender of last resort" and is obliged to charge a higher interest rate for loans than are banks, according to one informant many start-up entrepreneurs in the region prefer the CFDC as a "first resort" in financing their businesses. While this reflects well on the staff of the Northwest CFDC and on its relations with communities, it is also a matter of limited options: there are no longer any banks operating in the region.

Like most Community Futures programs, the Northwest CFDC tends to emphasize its business services and financing mandates in its day-to-day operations. Specialized training/retraining programs are also frequently offered. However, this focus has the effect of emphasizing services to individuals and limiting services to communities or regions as a whole. It is not difficult to understand why this emphasis occurs. The CFDC's door is open to anyone. Individuals needing help, guidance, and assistance are free to walk though it at any time to request business support and loan services. They do walk through the door often. Communities and regions, being aggregates of people, do not do this. The Northwest CFDC is simply meeting persistent, immediate demand. However, as vital and as consistent with policy as the provision of business and financing services is, this day-to-day *de facto* emphasis creates programming imbalance. The imbalance stems from an almost systematic neglect of the first of the three Community Futures mandates — that is, to facilitate strategic community economic development planning.

There is considerable incentive for many branches of both the federal and provincial governments to be interested in Community Futures programs. Because CFDCs tend to be locally formed and controlled institutions, they can act as instruments of public policy that distribute government programs and assistance in a regionally targeted way, one that allows for and accommodates a diversity of needs and circumstances among different regions of the country. Delivering programs on a regional scale is difficult for governments to achieve because there are few legally established recipients on that scale. In contrast, the number of individual recipients abound.

The Strategy stands as a model project that exemplifies a means for Community Futures programs to overcome some common program difficulties and to advance the policies of both the federal and provincial governments, as well as the interests of communities and regions.

Project History

In mid-October 2002, the Northwest CFDC sponsored a one-day workshop, held in Leaf Rapids, for regional tourism industry stakeholders. The workshop produced a grant proposal to develop a regional tourism strategy, with a request for $87,285 from the Rural Development Initiative (RDI), a one-year Agriculture and Agri-food Canada Rural Secretariat/Partnership program. The amount requested of the RDI was one-third of the total anticipated strategic planning project cost of $264,500. Other sources targeted for financing the project included Western Economic Diversification Canada (WD); Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC); Aboriginal Business Canada (ABC); the Province of Manitoba — Travel Manitoba and Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives (MAFRI); and the Northwest CFDC. The proposal went forward almost immediately after the workshop because the Rural Secretariat/ Partnership had announced that it would cease accepting RDI applications on October 31, 2002; thus, there was some urgency to submit the proposal.

The proposal and supporting 16-month work plan were reviewed by INAC headquarters staff in Ottawa in December 2002. INAC staff recommended rewriting the work plan to incorporate a phased approach. (Part of the rationale for the phased approach was to spread project funding over several fiscal years.) In the revised work plan, four phases were defined:
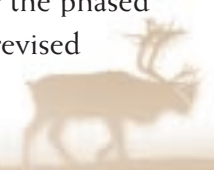
- Phase 1 — Inventory and Situational Analysis;

- Phase 2 — Community Workshops;

- Phase 3 — Regional Workshops; and

- Phase 4 — Implementation.

Ultimately, the project was funded and went ahead under the revised work plan. Phase 1 was completed in May 2003.[8] Phases 2 and 3 were carried out during the winter of 2003–04, with the final report on that work released in May 2004.[9] Phase 4 was just getting under way when the field research for this case study was in progress (October/November 2004).

The final report submitted for Phase 1 — a resource inventory and situational analysis — identified existing and potential tourism facilities and attractions; assessed current tourism activity; and provided a preliminary market analysis based on secondary market research. It identified three regional destination areas where there was some massing of existing and potential tourism opportunities, and suggested several development strategies as policy options. While a resident of Leaf Rapids participated on the study team and developed the resource inventory for the study, the research process did not involve public participation.

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>
> **Phase 1 — Inventory and Situational Analysis;**
>
> **Phase 2 — Community Workshops;**
>
> **Phase 3 — Regional Workshops; and**
>
> **Phase 4 — Implementation.**

Real local interest and excitement for developing the Strategy emerged when the project implementation team delivered the project's 16 Phase 2 and 3 workshops in the communities during the winter of 2003–04. These workshops facilitated an extensive public participation process (between 70 and 100 people were estimated to have participated in the workshops) and stimulated general commitment to planning outcomes. The process resulted in the formulation of three strategies, all regional in scope. These strategies were:

- to create a regional snowmobile trail corridor (4,020 km) and a regional canoe route (3,950 km) that would link all 13 regional communities in summer and winter packages;

- to market and distribute throughout the world locally produced arts and crafts; and

- to manage risk which was "understood as [being the] governance, executive and administration systems that are put in place to reduce the threat of project/program failure" (NMRTS Phase 2 and 3 Final Report 2004:29) and would be achieved by legally incorporating an inbound tourism operator business.

In addition, each community identified one or more projects it would pursue individually. These included:

- local land- and water-based excursion packages (two communities);

- building tourist services (motel/cabins/restaurant) (two communities);

- cultural camp (one community);

- town beautification (one community); and

- historic site reconstruction (one community).

The most remarked-upon aspect of the process was, however, the overall new sense of partnership and heightened level of co-operation…

Research for this case study revealed that several different factors have played key roles in creating the Strategy. These factors are described and discussed below. Each should be regarded as a "best practice" for planning community tourism development projects. The most remarked-upon aspect of the process was, however, the overall new sense of partnership and heightened level of co-operation that has sprung up among the 13 communities as a result of participating in the planning process. This is particularly striking given the complex multicultural mix and history of competition among these communities.

BEST PRACTICES IN COMMUNITY TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

Best Practice simply means the best way of doing things. Best Practices are concepts or processes that are known to produce desired results. Best Practices are 'tried and true.'

— Deal Consulting, 2002

Rapport and Trust

Several circumstances contributed to creating community rapport and trust for Northwest CFDC's programs and initiatives. The former general manager had been on the Northwest CFDC staff since its beginning 16 years ago. He was personally well known in all 13 communities that the Northwest CFDC serves. There is also a predisposition for community co-operation for any Northwest CFDC initiative because of the structural link that exists between the organization and the communities. There are 13 voting members on the Northwest CFDC Board of Directors, one from each of the 13 communities.

Building on the established rapport and trust between the Northwest CFDC and the communities, the organization was in an ideal position to initiate and facilitate the planning process that led to developing the Strategy.

Adoption of Regional Planning and Focus-down Perspectives

A thorough understanding of both supply and demand is a vital element of any tourism development process.

— K. Godfrey and J. Clarke,
Oxford Brookes University, 2000

Tourism is inherently a regional enterprise. It requires the balanced delivery of attractions, accommodations, food and beverage establishments, transportation, and ancillary retail and other services, synchronized with market demand in a context of sustainable community infrastructure and acceptance. Typically, tourism development becomes bogged down with details for individual attractions, accommodations, and other businesses early in the planning — long before an overall tourism concept has been created, or the necessary land use/landscape plans have been designed to ensure the desired tourism experiences are possible.

> **The phased approach the Northwest CFDC adopted for the Strategy focussed on regional development planning issues first, then on more detailed planning.**

The phased approach the Northwest CFDC adopted for the Strategy focussed on regional development planning issues first, then on more detailed planning. This focussing down approach has been pivotal to the project's success by incorporating community development considerations into the Strategy. Specifically, Phase 1 (the regional inventory and situational analysis) provided everyone with the larger context in which to design the tourism adventure experiences envisioned in Phases 2 and 3. Appropriately, in the implementation phase (Phase 4), planning activities have now refocussed down to developing the detailed business and marketing plans needed to create the market-ready, quality travel products and businesses that tourism requires.

Leadership

> *Leadership in tourism development "is not necessarily about individual character or personality, but rather the collective ability of the organization to offer some form of focus and direction to the development strategy process."*
>
> — K. Godfrey and J. Clarke,
> Oxford Brookes University, 2000

Several informants cited leadership as an important factor in creating the Strategy and the enhanced sense of community partnership that emerged from the process. Leadership focussed around the Northwest CFDC and included actions by both the Board of Directors and staff. Informants recognized the Board for delivering, early in 2002, an organizational directive to create a regional tourism strategy. For many years, there had been a widely held perception that tourism could become an important sector of the regional economy, but no action was taken. As a direct result of the Board's directive, staff organized the RDI grant proposal development workshop that was held in October 2002. The proposal resulted in an $18,000 RDI grant contract with the Rural Partnership program and, ultimately, in additional funding from other sources.

The persistence of the Northwest CFDC's general manager in writing grant applications and working with funders to secure the full complement of dollars needed for successful completion of the first three phases of the project was also cited as an important leadership action.

The Northwest CFDC committed substantial in-kind contributions to the project as well. Several informants saw the communities themselves and the people who came to the workshops as key contributors to leadership.

Community Visioning and Strategic Planning Process

ToP [Technologies of Participation] Strategic Planning is recognized worldwide by thousands of organizations. It systematically and quickly addresses key issues and results in a focused action plan. You get innovative strategies, and people leave the planning sessions knowing what must be done next week, next month and next year.

— Institute for Cultural
Affairs Canada, 2004

The heart of the Strategy partnership came into existence during the 16 strategic planning workshops (in Phases 2 and 3), which were held over the winter and early spring of 2003–04. These workshops facilitated a planning process modelled on methods advocated by the Institute for Cultural Affairs (ICA) to initiate social and community change.[10] There are four steps in the ICA process:

I.   creating a practical vision;

II.   identifying underlying obstacles blocking that vision;

III. developing strategic directions to achieve the vision, given the obstacles; and

IV.   devising action plans.

The Phase 2 (community) workshops were a series of 13 two-day events. One workshop, open to all community residents, was held in each community. The Phase 3 (regional) workshops were a series of three one-day events attended by one or two representatives from each community.

As it worked out, the Phase 2 and 3 workshops overlapped. The Phase 2 workshops took participants through the first three steps of the ICA model. The Phase 3 regional workshops picked up the ICA model at the second step and brought the whole strategic planning process to a conclusion by devising and adopting three substantive action plans (Step 4).

The first three steps of the ICA model employ a technique of facilitated "brainstorming," which, in this case, generated ideas for individual tourism products. Step 1 brainstormed around the question, "What kinds of tourism do you want to see in our communities and region in the next five to 10 years?" Step 2 identified obstacles to those ideas by asking, "What are the roadblocks and deterrents standing in our way of realizing our vision?" Step 3 pointed out possible strategic directions for future community and regional tourism development in answer to the question, "What are the new directions in which we must move in order to overcome the obstacles and realize our vision?"

All ideas from each of the three steps were captured on paper to document the process, in a refinement of the brainstorming technique known as "brainwriting."[11] Following each brainstorming/brainwriting session, individual ideas were clustered or consolidated into a reduced set of categories according to projects, obstacles, and directions. These were reframed into actions appropriate at the regional and community scales in the final (action plans) step. This process allowed participants to consider a broad range of ideas and issues. Table 1 provides a sample of what was seen as possible by the different workshop groups.

Several informants indicated that two factors contributed to creating a successful project. First, the whole workshop process was planned and facilitated by a facilitator trained in the ICA process. Second, the entire project implementation team, including the facilitator, were residents of the region.
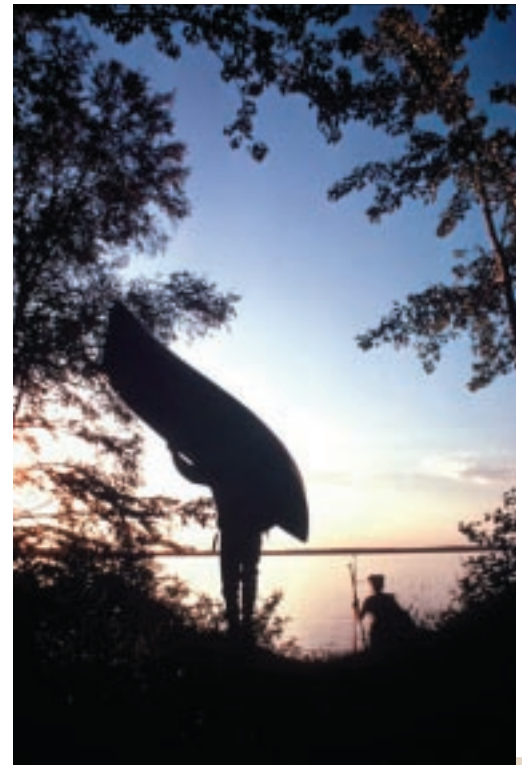
Consensus Decision Making

An important aspect of the ICA model, and one cited by several informants as an important contributor to the overall success of the planning process, is that decision making throughout the entire process relied on consensus rather than on majority or unanimity rules. Consensus requires only partial agreement with (or at least no objection to) the decision being made. Consensus allowed the group to move forward on issues without the overwhelming amount of work that is sometimes necessary to convince everyone in a group of the appropriateness of a particular decision.

> **...decision making throughout the entire process relied on consensus rather than on majority or unanimity rules.**

Partnership Equity and Opportunity

Another component of the successful partnership formation was the overall equity that became inherent in the partnership. This equity arrangement was explicitly agreed to by all the participants at the regional workshops. It specified that the regional snowmobile and canoe routes would link all 13 communities together in two, seasonally separate, travel corridors. Thus, all 13 communities will have an equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from development and implementation of winter and summer adventure tourism.

Sustainability

> *It is not possible to speak of sustainable tourism development without simultaneously talking of sustainable community development.*
>
> — Dr. Edward W. Manning,
> Tourisk Inc., 1995

As one informant reported, sustainability was not explicitly discussed in the workshops. Recognition that the concept was an integral part of the Strategy emerged only during preparation of the Phase 2 and 3 final report. While writing the report, it became apparent to the author that sustainability had been an underlying assumption throughout the process and he explicitly included sustainable practices and principles into the Strategy by using the acronym SERV:

- **S**ocial responsibility — no initiative will compromise the social well-being of the community; training and skills enhancement programs related to initiatives will be offered to those most directly affected;

- **E**cological sensitivity — any initiative will reduce, avoid, or mitigate all negative impacts to the environment;

- cultural **R**espect — any initiative must honour the way of life, values, and ethnic diversity of the community affected; and

- economic **V**iability — any initiative must not only be acceptable for the social, environmental, and cultural bottom lines, but it must also have a business plan for economic profitability.

The commitment to sustainable development in the Strategy also included incorporating the economic principle of developing exportable tourism products. In the three-tier (primary-secondary-service) economic model used to analyse economic development in the report, exportable products can only come from production by primary and secondary industries. According to this model, tourism produces non-export, service industry products that do not bring new money into local economic systems; only primary and secondary industries do this. Thus, one objective of the Strategy was to ensure that tourism "enjoys the status of a Secondary or Primary Industry." It is not clear in the report how this will be achieved.[12]

A second guiding economic principle of the Strategy is to reduce local economic leakage and thus increase the multiplier effect of any new money coming into the regional economy. In practice, evidence from many empirical studies suggests this is exceptionally difficult to accomplish in remote areas like northwestern Manitoba.

Funders' Parallel Process

One informant talked about the parallel partnering process that arose among the project funders. Both the provincial and federal bureaucracies commonly establish interdepartmental working groups to deal with issues that fall into multiple spheres of policy
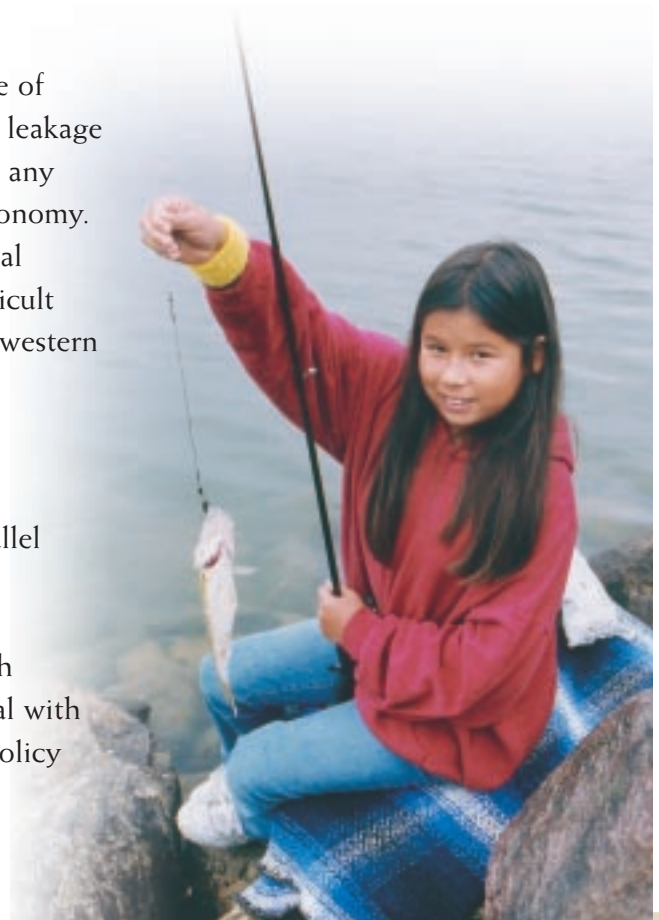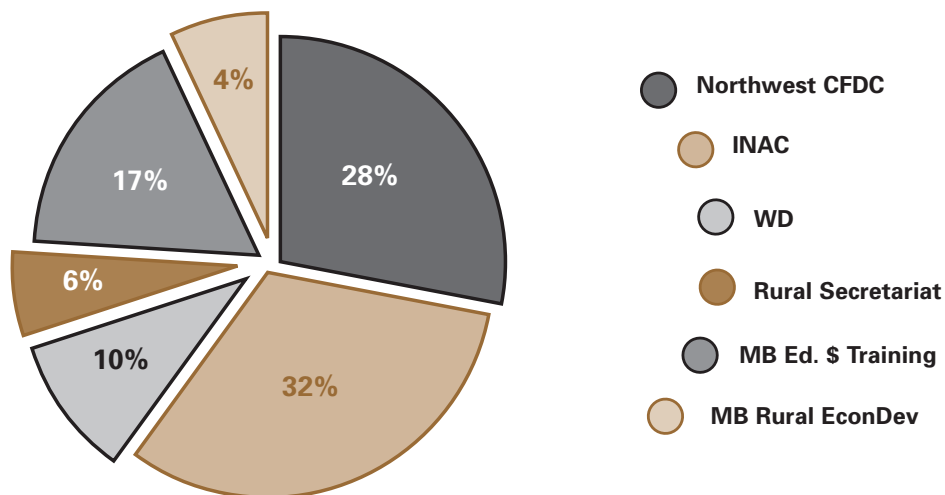
interest. Although it is rare for several levels of
government to form a working group, it did happen
in this instance and became known as the Aboriginal
Tourism Working Group. Ken Hildebrand of Travel
Manitoba describes it as a "multi-level, multi-department
group that reviewed the initial submission and requested
changes such as phasing the process, etc."

As the Aboriginal Tourism Working Group, the
various provincial and federal government agencies that
were being asked for grant funding by the Northwest
CFDC met together to review and identify the different
components of the proposed project that each agency could fund under its program
mandates. Each of these agencies had a definite interest in the success of the project,
and thus they worked collectively to support it. Each agency's participation in the
project, measured by the percentage of their overall funding contribution, is
illustrated in Figure 1 below.

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Figure 1: Agency Participation

28% — Northwest CFDC
32% — INAC
10% — WD
6% — Rural Secretariat
17% — MB Ed. $ Training
4% — MB Rural EconDev

IMPLEMENTATION

Community development is community action that is led by and for the people. A community development model that relies on traditional values and systems is a powerful tool.

— Simon Brascoupé and
Howard Mann, INAC, 2001

Many informants said they were concerned that the break in the flow of funds between the end of Phases 2 and 3 and the beginning of Phase 4 would cut off the enthusiasm for the Strategy generated by the Phases 2 and 3 workshops. Nevertheless, the Northwest CFDC pressed ahead with the project in the summer of 2004 and partially achieved the Risk Management strategy initiative that was specified in the final report. The Northwest CFDC has legally incorporated a tour operator business, *Atiik Askii* Adventure Tours, Inc., and hired two staff to begin mapping and planning for the winter snowmobile and summer canoe adventure tours. Market research and testing is occurring. The Northwest CFDC has provided office space, equipment, and access to telecommunications and Internet infrastructure.

The community partnership has been maintained by having the 13 Northwest CFDC Board members become the Board members of the in-bound tour operator

Atiik Askii
Adventure Tours

business. In the fall of 2004 the Northwest CFDC held a Board retreat at a fly-in lodge on Reindeer Lake. An evening presentation and a half-day work session were given over to the business of the Strategy. The work session focussed on starting to develop a business plan for *Atiik Askii* Adventure Tours, Inc.

At the end of the half-day work session, all the participants realized there was much work yet to be accomplished before market-ready tourism products based on the Strategy could become available. Details of the two product concepts — canoe and snowmobile adventures — have to be developed in much greater detail before the associated business and marketing plans can begin to be drafted. Route maps have to be finalized. Itineraries and logistics need to be organized. Arrangements for guides, equipment, and trail accommodations need to be negotiated and contracted. Responses to emergency situations need to be formulated.

Many market-ready preparedness questions need to be thought of and asked. For example: "How will we cope with unexpected high demand if it occurs in our first season?" "Will we have the trained staff to meet the demand or will we have to turn prospective clients away?" "How will we ensure that all communities benefit from growth of tourism in the region?" "How will we know if we are offering a quality tourism experience product to our clients?" "Can we be contacted 24/7?" "Can we respond to anyone anywhere in the world within 24 hours?"

The staff has also initiated a program for "just-in-time" stocking and marketing of regionally produced arts and crafts through the Exhibition Centre in Leaf Rapids. In October 2004 the staff was investigating setting up an arts and craft display and sales area in the basement of the Northwest CFDC building in Lynn Lake.

INVESTMENT GUIDELINES FOR PLANNING TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

From the analysis of best practices in the strategic planning process that resulted in the Strategy come some worthwhile lessons learned and guidelines for potential, particularly government, investors in tourism planning and development programs. Factors that are likely to lead to successful outcomes include:

- regional, multi-community leadership by an organization and people that have established rapport and trust in the communities through track records of past client satisfaction;

- adopt initially a regional strategic planning perspective, then focus down to specific actions with associated detailed planning;

- use facilitators trained in group planning processes to conduct workshops that lead to group problem-solving and consensus decisions;

- seek and encourage selection of principled strategies as solutions; and

- involve all proponents and funders in an open and inclusive process for program development and contract negotiation.

FINAL REFLECTIONS

According to some research,[13] three hallmarks of a successful planning process are:

- documentation;

- action; and

- feelings.

Measured against these criteria, the Strategy should be considered a successful planning process. It resulted in two final reports, one for the Phase 1 inventory and situational analysis and a second for the combined Phase 2 and 3 process of developing strategic concepts. These reports effectively and comprehensively document the background research, the procedures and the substantive results of the public workshops. The process also led to the articulation and adoption of three community economic development actions. Last, the process generated genuine feelings of trust, co-operation, and partnership, and perhaps even a new sense of optimism, among communities and residents of northwestern Manitoba.

Regional Communities

Tadoule Lake — *Sayisi* (Dene) First Nation Community

Tadoule Lake is the home of the *Sayisi* (Dene) First Nation.[14] In 1973, after an unsuccessful federal government forced relocation to Churchill, Manitoba from Duck Lake in 1956, the *Sayisi* (Dene) First Nation selected and settled at Tadoule Lake, a location within its traditional territory.[15] The reserve, Churchill Indian Reserve (IR) No. 1, is 212 hectares in area, and in 2002 the population was 350. The community and reserve are located on the northwestern shoreline of the lake. An elected chief and council govern the community. There is a school, a nursing station and a field office for a child and family services agency in the community. Community infrastructure includes two water treatment plants, limited wastewater treatment facilities and a landfill site. A diesel generating plant provides electricity. Community access is by air and winter road.

The economic base of the community is subsistence fishing, hunting, and trapping. There are several private businesses in Tadoule Lake, including a Northern Store. These businesses offer few employment opportunities. Visitor services are poor.

Lac Brochet — Northlands (Dene) First Nation Community

The community of Lac Brochet, located on the north shore of Lac Brochet, is the home of the Northlands (Dene) First Nation. The reserve (Lac Brochet IR No. 197A) is 464 hectares in area, and in 2002 the population was 956. The community is governed by a chief and council. The community has a primary/secondary school operated by the First Nation, a nursing station, and a few recreational facilities, including a community hall, an outdoor skating rink and a baseball diamond. Infrastructure includes water and wastewater treatment plants, water supply and wastewater collection systems connected to all the houses and public buildings in the community, a landfill, and a satellite telecommunications ground station. A diesel generation plant provides electricity. The Lac Brochet community is isolated, accessible only by air and winter road.

The economic base of the community is subsistence fishing, hunting, and trapping. There are several private businesses in Lac Brochet, including a Northern Store. These businesses offer few employment opportunities. Visitor amenities and services are poor.

Brochet — Barren Lands (Cree) First Nation and Non-Status Indian and Métis Communities

Brochet, located on the northeastern shoreline of Reindeer Lake, is the home of the Barren Lands (Cree) First Nation (Brochet IR No. 197) and a provincially recognized community of Non-Status Indian and Métis people who live adjacent to the reserve. The reserve is 4,339 hectares in area, and in 2002 the First Nation population was 446, with an additional 270 people provincially recognized as Non-Status Indians and Métis. Parallel local governance structures — chief and council, and mayor and council — oversee the affairs of the two jurisdictions.

Community infrastructure on the reserve is less well developed than in the community. The water supply is pumped from Reindeer Lake and distributed by supply lines to community residents and service providers, but is trucked to cisterns and barrels on the reserve. Outhouses, holding tanks, and septic fields are used for wastewater on the reserve, while a lagoon and collection system has been constructed in the community area. The First Nation operates the local landfill site. Telephone and other telecommunication services are available. Diesel generation is the source of electrical power for the communities. Travel to Brochet is by air (land-based and float plane), water (Reindeer Lake) and the annually constructed winter road that seasonally links Tadoule Lake, Lac Brochet, and Brochet with Lynn Lake.

In addition to the traditional pursuits of subsistence fishing, hunting, and trapping, commercial fishing and sport outfitting/guiding contribute to the economic base of the community. Several businesses, including a Northern Store and a motel, are located in the community.

Black Sturgeon Reserve — Marcel Colomb (Cree) First Nation Community

The Black Sturgeon reserve (IR No. 198A) encompasses 2,327 hectares of land on Hughs Lake, 20 kilometres (km) east of Lynn Lake. The reserve is under the jurisdiction of the recently (1999) created Marcel Colomb First Nation, which numbers 290 people. The reserve was created from an award of land made to the Marcel Colomb First Nation in 1986. The origin of this community is the Mathias Colomb (Cree) Nation, a large First Nation community located at Pukatawagan. An elected chief and council govern the community. The community operates a program office in Lynn Lake where most Marcel Colomb community members reside at present awaiting completion by the federal government of their on-reserve infrastructure and housing construction projects.

Pukatawagan — Mathias Colomb (Cree) First Nation Community

The Pukatawagan reserve (IR No. 1980) encompasses 1,537 hectares located on the Churchill River. It is one of two reserves under the jurisdiction of the Mathias Colomb (Cree) First Nation and is where most of the community resides. The other reserve is the Highrock reserve (IR No. 199) located on Highrock Lake, 30 km downstream from Pukatawagan. In 2002 the population of the Mathias Colomb (Cree) First Nation was 2,700 people. A chief and council govern the community. The community operates the *Sakastew* primary/secondary school, which has an annual enrolment of 550 students. Some 600 other students attend off-reservation schools. There is a nursing station and a child and family services agency field office in Pukatawagan. Most of the 300 houses in the community are connected by service lines to water supply and wastewater treatment plants. The community maintains a landfill site for disposal of collected solid waste. The community is accessible by air, rail, and winter road.

The community has a Northern Store and several other small businesses. The economic base is subsistence hunting and fishing. These activities are augmented by some trapping and commercial fishing. Tourist and visitor services are poor.

Granville Lake — Pickerel Narrows (Cree) First Nation and Non-Status Indian and Métis Communities

These communities are located on the eastern shore of Granville Lake. The combined population in 2002 was 75 people. The area is accessible by winter road. At the time field work was conducted for this case study, the community had been abandoned because of contamination of the water supply resulting from a failure in the wastewater system. Many residents were living in Leaf Rapids. The community has a nursing station and other public services. Business and tourist services are poor.

South Indian Lake — *O-Pipon-Na-Piwin* (Cree) First Nation and Non-Status Indian and Métis Communities

South Indian Lake, located along a narrows separating South Bay from the main body of South Indian Lake, is the home of the recently created *O-Pipon-Na-Piwin* (Cree) First Nation and a provincially incorporated community of Non-Status Indian and Métis people. Total population in 2002 was 1,000 people.

South Indian Lake has undergone substantial socioeconomic changes as a result of Manitoba Hydro's Churchill River Diversion Project, completed in the late 1970s. The project flooded the lake and realigned its outlet from the north end at Missi Falls to the south end through a channel constructed between South Bay and the Rat/Burntwood/Nelson Rivers system. As a result, part of the area was abandoned and relocated, some residents having resettled and established the First Nation and Métis communities at Granville Lake. Mercury levels in the lake increased, the commercial fishery was curtailed, and the traditional pursuits of hunting, fishing, and trapping were reduced.

The community has a nursing station, primary/secondary school, airstrip, landline hydroelectric power supply, water and wastewater systems, sport and recreational facilities, and there is a road from Leaf Rapids that links to a Manitoba Marine Services ferry at South Bay that provides summer time access to the community. Several years ago, this road was extended to a point of land opposite the community itself, greatly enhancing access. There is a Northern Store and a motel with a restaurant in the community.

As part of Manitoba Hydro's Churchill River Diversion Project community compensation program, South Indian Lake received funds to build a fishing/hunting lodge on Sand Lake, located north of South Indian Lake. This lodge has developed into a world-class tourism operation.

Lynn Lake — Euro-Canadian Community

The Town of Lynn Lake[16] is a former mining community that was officially established in 1951. A grid lot layout plan for the town was drawn up and over 200 buildings were moved onto the town site between 1950 and 1952 from Sherridon, Manitoba, located 230 km south of Lynn Lake. An additional 100 residential units were built on site during the same period. The town population peaked in the late 1970s with over 3,000 residents, one of whom was Lynn Johnston, creator of the internationally known comic strip *For Better or For Worse*. The Lynn Lake mines shut down in 1986 and the rough, but once-prosperous northern community has since wasted away. In 2001 the population had dropped to 699, down 32.7 percent from a population of 1,038 during the 1996 Census. Unemployment rates in 2001 were 21.9 percent for males and 7.7 percent for females.

Sherritt Gordon Mines Ltd., operator of three underground nickle/copper/zinc mines in the Lynn Lake area, was not required to undertake landscape reclamation of their mine sites when they were closed. As a result, there is a significant brownfield site adjacent to the community, replete with abandoned mining facilities and

equipment, tailings heaps, and leach water containment ponds. There is considerable concern in the community about potential contamination of the water supply and about health risks associated with toxic dust blown from the exposed dry tailings piles. There is also one closed gold mine in the area; cyanide is common toxin of gold mining operations.

The town is governed by an elected mayor and council. It employs an Economic Development Officer. The town maintains a primary/secondary school, a hospital that serves the entire region, community recreational facilities, an RCMP constabulary, an airstrip with scheduled service three days a week, and a float plane base. An all-weather road to the community, Provincial Road (PR) 391, comes through Leaf Rapids from Thompson, Manitoba, 315 km to the southeast. The all-weather road continues from Lynn Lake as PR 396 to the Sherritt Gordon Fox Mine site, 45 km to the southwest. An existing, but currently out-of-service, rail line links Lynn Lake with Pukatawagan and The Pas, Manitoba.

The community has a Northern Store, two motels (one with a restaurant), a craft supply shop, a building supply centre, and a few other service businesses. There is also a museum which interprets the mining history of the region. Lynn Lake is a regional service and distribution centre for many communities in northwest Manitoba. An all-season gravel road, PR 394, leads from Lynn Lake to Kinoosao, Saskatchewan. Winter roads constructed each year permit delivery of fuel and other bulk supplies to Lac Brochet, Brochet, and Tadoule Lake. There is scheduled passenger air service to Lynn Lake three times a week and a float plane base located on nearby Eldon Lake. With the availability of landing strips at most isolated northern communities and hunting/fishing lodges, air freight and passenger services now tend to originate in Thompson and even in Winnipeg rather than in Lynn Lake.

Since the mine closures, Lynn Lake has been undergoing severe population reduction and profound economic change. In 2002 the Lynn Lake Community Adjustment Committee issued *A Will to Survive: A Two Year Strategic Plan of Action for the Community of Lynn Lake*. This plan was the result of the efforts of many community residents and support from numerous government agencies, including the provincial Intergovernmental Working Group, and the federal Rural Secretariat program (of Agriculture and Agri-food Canada) and Western Economic Diversification Canada. The committee examined several economic development strategies to induce regional economic revitalization, including development of non-timber forestry products, an integrated northern Manitoba waste management system, an incentive-based minerals exploration program, new road infrastructure, and tourism.

Leaf Rapids — Euro-Canadian Community

The Town of Leaf Rapids[17] is midway between Lynn Lake and Thompson on PR 391, the latter being the regional service centre for all of northern Manitoba. Like Lynn Lake and Thompson, Leaf Rapids started as a mining town. The last operator of Leaf Rapid's Ruttan Mine, Hudson Bay Mining and Smelting Company, Ltd., closed down operations in 2002. Prior to closure, the local population was 1,300 and Leaf Rapids the largest urban area in northwestern Manitoba. The present population is less than half that number and, as in Lynn Lake, many houses now stand vacant.

When Leaf Rapids was built in the early 1970s, it was a planned community designed to fit seamlessly into the surrounding forest environment. Pedestrian movement around the community was emphasized by a D-shaped, concentric, ring-road layout, with walking trails radiating from the Leaf Rapids Town Centre. The town centre won the Vincent Massey Award for Excellence in Urban Environment in 1975.

The town centre houses a variety of municipal and private sector services, including the town offices, the school (K–12), a Co-op grocery store, several restaurants, the regional bus depot, a library, an arena, a curling rink, an ice-skating rink, fitness facilities, and healthcare and dental offices. Also located in the complex is the National Exhibition Centre/Museum which features travelling art shows and live performances several times a year. Finally, there was a hotel in the town centre, but it has recently closed, significantly reducing the tourism amenities offered by the community.

Kinoosao — Peter Ballantyne (Cree) First Nation Community

Located on the east side of Reindeer Lake in Saskatchewan, less than a kilometre from the provincial border and at the end of Manitoba PR 391, is the reserve community of Kinoosao. The Kinoosao–Thomas Clark Reserve (No. 204) is one of 25 reserves in northern Saskatchewan over which the Peter Ballantyne (Cree) First Nation has jurisdiction. The Thomas Clark Reserve is 2.4 hectares in area. The community population in 2002 was 54 people, some of whom reside in Lynn Lake. Kinoosao came into existence in 1952 when a co-operative commercial fish processing plant was constructed at the present community site. The co-op and one sport fishing lodge are the only local businesses. There is an elementary school.

Table 1: Examples of ICA Brainstorming/Brainwriting Results.

Practical Visions		Underlying Obstacles		Strategic Directions	
Categories	Particulars	Categories	Particulars	Categories	Particulars
Aboriginal Tourism	• Museum of ancestors • Aboriginal arts and crafts experiences • Traditional cultural camps and summer gatherings	**Education Blocks Our Vision**	• Lack of training • Lack of planning • Lack of marketing skills	**Comprehensive Planning**	• Planning — in-depth feasibility studies • Long-term community economic development planning • Research
Ecotourism	• Develop Robertson Esker • Northern Lights experience • Caribou viewing	**Location Blocks Our Vision**	• Distance • Vastness of territory • No all-weather road access	**Strategic Marketing**	• Develop a targeted marketing tool • Develop marketing plan with a tourism theme • Invite the money in to look at the resources: give them a tour
Hard Adventure Tourism	• Canoeing adventures/ trips • Guides with all equipment, canoes and accommodations • Winter survival • Dog sledding	**Bureaucracy Blocks Our Vision**	• Government regulations • Animal migration regulations • Animal activists ("Green Peace")	**Involving All People**	• Meet with community and come up with tangible action plan • Decisions should involve all the people • Adopt practices to open doors to other communities

ENDNOTES

1   The case study is based on interviews with 15 key informants conducted in Winnipeg, Leaf Rapids and Lynn Lake, Manitoba between October 26 and November 5, 2004; on reviews of funding proposals; and on interim and final reports, along with secondary sources.

2   The sense of term "community" as used throughout this case study is primarily that of a group of people who all share a common connection with one another as opposed to the sense of community as a geographic settlement. Thus there can be one or more communities of people (status, non status, Métis) located in a single settlement community.

3   Shanks, Gordon, 2005. *Economic Development in First Nations: An Overview of Current Issues.* Public Policy Forum/Forum des politiques publiques, Ottawa (http://www.ppforum.ca).

4   http://www.appreciative-inquiry.org/

5   Statistics Canada, 2001 Census of Canada, Population and Dwelling Counts (http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census01/products/standard/popdwell/Table-PR.cfm). Mine closures since the 2001 Census have caused additional out-migration of people from the region.

6   Travel Manitoba, 2004. *Tourism Visitation And Its Contribution To The Manitoba Economy, 2003: Value of Tourism.*

7   Canoeing on the Churchill River has dropped off in recent years as a result of hydroelectric development of the river by Manitoba Hydro.

8   Hilderman Thomas Frank Cram Landscape Architects & Planners and Thermopylae Consultants, May, 2003. *Northwest Manitoba Regional Tourism Strategy, Phase 1: Inventory and Situation Analysis, Final Report* (available at http://www.northwestcfdc.com).

9   Thermopylae Consultants, 2004 Northwest. Atiik Askii *Adventures Inc., Final Report, Phases 2 and 3: The Northwest Manitoba Regional Tourism Strategy* (available at http://www.northwestcfdc.com).

10   ICA Canada: http://icacan.ca/

11 The ICA process is a variation of the well established Nominal Group (NG) problem-solving model (http://www.extension.iastate.edu/communities/tools/decisions/nominal.html). In the ICA process, NG has been combined with "brainwriting," a refinement of "brainstorming," as the technique to generate ideas (http://www.brainstorming.org/book/c1.shtml). Nominal Group and brainstorming/brainwriting are problem-solving techniques that focus, first, on generating many creative solutions in a group setting, and then, collectively, selecting the most appropriate one. These techniques have evolved over the last 50 years and have been successfully applied in many different contexts.

Steps 2 and 3 of the ICA process are what set it apart from the NG process. These steps are driven by research that shows corporate executives spend 90 percent or more of their time overcoming and creating "work-arounds" for blockages that prevent attainment of visions, goals, and objectives.

12 The economic model used in the Strategy differs from the one used by most planners who design community tourism programs. This alternative model is the Economic Base (EB) model. The EB model distinguishes simply between export and local economic activity and sees all tourism as export activity because tourism brings people — non-resident outsiders and their money — to products and services provided in a community.

In reality, most of tourism products and services are shared between tourists and local residents. Thus, to estimate the export activity derived from tourism in a community, each individual business related to tourism — attraction, accommodation, or restaurant — must proportionally attribute its receipts to either export (tourist) or local (resident) expenditure. The receipts attributed to export expenditure for each business can then be summed over all businesses in the community and the export activity estimated.

13 Peter Boothroyd, 1994. *First Nations Development Planning*. The University of British Columbia, School of Community and Regional Planning and the First Nations House of Learning.

14 Sources of community-specific information taken from Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, *2004–2005 First Nation Community Profiles — MB Region*; First Nation Profiles and the web site http://sdiprod2.inac.gc.ca/fnprofiles.

15 Ila Bussidor and Üstün Bilgen-Reinart, 1997. *Night Spirits: The Story of the Relocation of the Sayisi Dene.* The University of Manitoba Press, Winnipeg.

16 Lynn Lake information: http://www.lynnlake.ca/

17 Leaf Rapids information: http://www.townofleafrapids.ca/index_flash.htm