

MANIT**o**BA
RES**E**ARCH
ALLI**A**N**C**E

CED

IN THE NEW ECONOMY

CED and the New Economy: Northern Manitoba

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CED AND THE NEW ECONOMY: NORTHERN MANITOBA*

The Manitoba Research Alliance on Community Economic Development in the New Economy (referred to throughout this document as the Research Alliance or the MRA) is a three-year research project to examine how communities might overcome obstacles and share in the benefits created by the New Economy. We identified Community Economic Development (CED), a development strategy that emphasizes local self-sufficiency, local decision making and local ownership, as a strategic response to assist communities in taking up the opportunities and meeting the challenges created by the transition to a New Economy.

The Research Alliance brings together academic researchers from the universities of Manitoba, Winnipeg and Brandon; senior government policy makers; and practitioners active in Manitoba's dynamic CED community (and elsewhere). The lead organization is the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives–Manitoba, a community-based research institute uniquely positioned to make such community-university connections. The team's Principal Investigator is Dr. John Loxley, Professor of Economics at the University of Manitoba. The Research Alliance was launched in late 2002, and it funded and oversaw more than 40 individual research projects chosen to help meet the larger project's overall goals. This research was conducted by academics, students and community researchers, in many cases working in teams. These

projects have been successful, not only in their particular research findings, but also in providing opportunities for students and community researchers to receive practical research training. And they have bridged the gaps between academic disciplines, and between the university and the larger community. While focussing primarily on Manitoba, the composition of the Alliance has enabled it to draw on experiences from across Canada and beyond.

This publication is one of ten summary publications prepared by the Research Alliance. These publications, which we have come to call “kits,” describe the results of our research, and the kits are organized by audience or by theme. It should be emphasized that we are not — nor could we be — comprehensive in addressing these themes. Rather, we have identified a wide range of research results based on the specific research projects that we undertook. The themes and audiences for the kits arose out of the research, as we think these themes are the most effective way to organize the results.

* We are pleased to acknowledge the generous financial support of the Initiative on the New Economy of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council; via the Manitoba Research Alliance on Community Economic Development in the New Economy. For further information please see: <http://www.manitobaresearchallianceced.ca>.

The complete list of kits is as follows:

1. The impacts of the New Economy
2. The potential of Community Economic Development
3. Government policy regarding Community Economic Development and the New Economy
4. The role of gender in Community Economic Development and the New Economy
5. Aboriginal issues in Community Economic Development and the New Economy
6. Business issues in Community Economic Development and the New Economy
7. Education issues in Community Economic Development and the New Economy (aimed at educators)
8. Urban issues in Community Economic Development and the New Economy
9. Rural issues in Community Economic Development and the New Economy
10. Northern issues in Community Economic Development and the New Economy

These kits, along with the rest of the publications prepared by or for the Research Alliance, can be downloaded for free from www.manitobaresearchallianceced.ca. Much of the research has also been published by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives — Manitoba (www.policyalternatives.ca/mb).

A note on sources

This particular publication is informed by all the research carried out, but in particular the information here has been drawn from the following individual projects:

“Government Policy Towards Community Economic Development in Manitoba,” by Lynne P. Fernandez

Impact of Information Technology on Community Economic Development Processes in Northern Manitoba Communities, by Malcolm Cook, Tim Johnston, and Maxine Larway of the Northern e-BIZ Centre

Informal Learning and the Digital Divide, by Lawrie Deane

Internet Connectivity in a Northern Setting: A Churchill Case Study, by Susannah Cameron, Robert Annis, and John Everitt

IT and CED networks, by Cameron

“A Scan of Community Economic Development Organizations, Rural Communities and First Nations in Manitoba and their Participation in the New Economy,” by Carly Duboff

Training Options that Would Increase Employment Opportunities for Local People in Resource Extraction Projects in Northern Communities, by Nancy LeBlond and Sasha Brown

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CED AND THE NEW ECONOMY: NORTHERN MANITOBA

Profile of Northern Manitoba

Northern Manitoba is geographically vast and sparsely populated. Many communities in the North are accessible only by air or rail, others only by ice roads in the winter months, and many more, while accessible by all-weather roads, are separated from the nearest town by hundreds of kilometres.

According to the 2001 census, northern Manitoba accounted for only 7% of the province's total population. Northern Manitoba also has a very high proportion of Aboriginal people — 68%, according to census data. And the northern population is young — the greatest number of northern Manitobans fall within the 5–14 and 25–44 age categories. This means that there are a large number of youth who will join an already-young labour force within the next five to ten years.

Education levels in the North are lower than in the province as a whole. The 2001 Census revealed that 46% of northern Manitobans over 20 years of age have not completed high school, compared with 28% province-wide. Where 19% of Manitobans have received a diploma or certificate from a university, only 10% of northern Manitobans have done so. Lower education levels make it more difficult for Northerners, on aver-

age, to find a job, and overall economic growth is hindered by these lower average education levels. Employment levels have fallen slightly between 1991 and 2001; employment levels fell during the same period in the specific category of agriculture and resource-based industries, which includes fishing and trapping, logging and forestry, and mining. The fall in this category has been offset slightly by a rise in employment in manufacturing and construction. Attempts to diversify the northern economy in recent years have included the areas of communications, tourism, winter weather testing and non-timber forest products.¹

Northern Aboriginal Communities and Hydro Development

The modern period of natural resource development of northern Manitoba began in the late 1950s when the International Nickel Company (INCO) found a large ore body near what is now Thompson. In order to meet the electrical needs of the mine and rapidly growing townsite, the 223-megawatt (MW) Kelsey Hydroelectric Generating Station was constructed between 1957 and 1961 on the upper Nelson River. After Kelsey, four additional northern generating stations were constructed on the Nelson and Saskatchewan rivers. Grand Rapids (1968) (479 MW), Kettle (1974) (1220 MW), Long Spruce (1979) (1010 MW), Jenpeg (1979) (132 MW), and Limestone (1990) (1340 MW). Since these

projects were completed, Manitobans have enjoyed some of the lowest electricity rates in North America, while many northern Aboriginal communities have endured staggering hardships. Williams and Compton reported that for Aboriginal peoples living in the vicinity of these developments, the extensive impacts — ancient burial sites being washed away, shoreline impact due to soil erosion, abnormal water fluctuations, and reversing of river flows, to name but just a few of the problems — continue to be felt to this day. Aboriginal people were not consulted in advance about the scope and magnitude of the

Grand Rapids was the last major piece of a first phase of hydroelectric development in Manitoba in the 1960s. The authors describe the social and economic destruction that the dam project has caused the Grand Rapids communities, and the province's mentality toward northern First Nations. This mentality pervades the new round of Hydro development proposals. The mentality treats local peoples, mostly First Nations and Metis, as an obstacle whose support should be purchased with the minimum possible expenditures. It treats the hunting and fishing economy as a residue from the past with no significant social or economic value in a contemporary context. The mentality is not concerned with the ultimate social or economic impacts on First Nations and other communities directly affected.

Residents of rural, northern, and First Nations communities cherish their lifestyles and rich cultural heritages. They do want to be able to take advantage of New Economy tools, but not at the expense of the lifestyles they have chosen.

“Manitoba Hydro remains a massive presence in northern Manitoba”

projects, a process referred to by Grant as ex-poste decision making.

Manitoba Hydro remains a massive presence in northern Manitoba. The Crown corporation currently has a generating capacity of over 5000 MW, and it estimates that a further 5000 MW remain available in northern Manitoba for development.² There are numerous potential development projects in the works, including the Wuskwatim generating station on the Burntwood River (200 MW); the Keeyask generating facility (650 MW), with associated transmission lines linking northern Manitoba to the south (possibly on the east side of Lake Winnipeg); and the Conawapa generating facility (1400 MW) with transmission lines linking the generating facility with Ontario's power grid. All these will directly affect, to varying degrees, northern Aboriginal communities.

A report prepared for the MRA by Kulchyski and Neckoway examines the impact of hydro electric development on Grand Rapids, which is a community divided into two parts, the Town of Grand Rapids and the Cree community known as Grand Rapids First Nation. The dam built at

What Is Community Economic Development?³

Community Economic Development (CED) has been subject to an eclectic range of definitions. To some, CED covers any economic development initiative, be it private, public or community driven, taking place within some definition of ‘community’, usually a geographic one. According to this view, there is no necessary inconsistency between orthodox economics and CED. In view of the more demanding definitions of CED now coming to dominate the literature, more radical departures from the orthodoxy seem necessary.⁴ These define CED as a social process in terms of decision making; they replace the individual ‘consumer’ with the collective community; they see the meeting of collective ‘needs’ taking precedence over the satisfaction of individual consumer ‘demands’; they take a long view of economic activities as opposed to that of short-term profit maximization; and they see economic decisions as being inextricably linked to social, environmental, political and cultural considerations.

Within this more demanding view of CED, there are two schools of thought. The first, associated with a more radical, communal, tradition, sees CED as an alternative form of social organization to capitalism. The second has a more limited vision, seeing CED as a desirable and workable approach to dealing with particular problems facing communities. These problems are a direct outcome of the way in which capitalism differentially and unevenly affects certain communities and CED is seen as a way to help fix them. Adherents to the first school are often found working alongside those of the latter.

The most complete set of CED principles are those underlying the Neechi model of CED. Neechi Foods Co-op Ltd. is an Aboriginal worker-owned cooperative retail store in inner-city

Winnipeg. The idea of this approach is to build a strong, inward-looking, self-reliant economy, which is based on goods and services consumed by people who live or work in the community. In theoretical terms, it is a “convergence” strategy of economic development.⁵ It favours cooperative ownership, small-scale production and popular control over economic decision making. It is a holistic approach, in which the safety, health and self-respect of residents are of paramount importance.⁶ The principles on which it operates are as follows: production of goods and services for local use; use of local goods and

“The Neechi Principles have been widely adopted as a benchmark in Manitoba’s CED community”

services; local reinvestment of locally generated profits; long-term employment of local residents; local skill development; local decision making; improved public health; improved physical environment; neighbourhood stability; human dignity and solidarity among communities and businesses following these principles.

Notwithstanding the ongoing debates about how to define CED, the Neechi Principles have been widely adopted as a benchmark in Manitoba’s CED community (and especially in Winnipeg, where the CED community is large and active), and as a theoretical starting point by the MRA and most of the individual researchers working on projects under the MRA. Several researchers attempted to refine or restate a definition of CED, but all these redefinitions remained broadly consistent with the Neechi principles. For example, Friesen and Hudson define CED as “placing the community at the centre of economic development — such that the community is both the beneficiary and the prime mover. By matching local resources with local needs, community members are able to realize their higher-order non-economic needs, as well as their basic mate-

rial needs.”⁷ Fernandez adopts a definition prepared by the BC Working Group on CED, which takes CED to be “a community-based and community-directed process that explicitly combines social and economic development and is directed towards fostering the economic, social, ecological and cultural well-being of communities.”⁸

What Is the New Economy?⁹

In recent years, a New Economy has emerged, one in which information and knowledge play a central role. The emergence of the New Economy has been credited with generating robust economic growth, new and challenging employment opportunities, new wealth-creation possibilities, and the promise of greatly enhancing the productivity, and, hence, incomes, of people in the rest of the economy. Information technology also offers new opportunities for leisure, education, lifestyle and access to government services.

Some researchers have been quick to caution that the extent and “newness” of the New Economy should not be overstated. Historically, all capitalist economies have experienced cycles of upturn and recession, with the upturns often the result of technological innovations. Information technology is, no doubt, a major innovation, but the fundamental elements of the economy remain in place. Evidence suggests that the only sectors that have experienced extraordinary economic growth in the New Economy are the computer information technology-based sectors.¹⁰ And since many businesses have already bought and incorporated the new technology, growth in these sectors will level off.¹¹

There is also evidence that the benefits of New Economy growth have not been distributed evenly, and the New Economy may even have hurt the most vulnerable people, creating permanent job insecurity. A “dual-segmented” labour force intensifies the split between high-paying, flexible jobs and deskilled low-wage, non-unionized, service-sector jobs.¹²

Not surprisingly, given that there is not even general agreement about whether and to what degree a “New Economy” actually exists, there is no foolproof, touchstone definition for the term. However, a number of authors see it as being underpinned by three major structural changes: a

rise in general education levels; the development and availability of new information technology; and the increase in “invisible” trade in services, mergers and acquisitions, and the flow of information. This definition was adopted by the MRA as a starting point, and was used by many of the researchers on our team.

Additionally, a second, broader, understanding of the New Economy is reflected in the work of a number of MRA researchers. This model focuses on neo-liberalism, economic instability, growing income inequality, the entrenchment of poverty and problems associated with energy and the environment. Such a definition provides context for the research on hydroelectric development, mine reclamation and other issues of regional inequality and underdevelopment that are described throughout this publication.

The New Economy is intimately linked with the information and computer technology (ICT) sector (in fact, it is often *defined* as the ICT sector, although, in reality, it is broader than just that). The New Economy in Canada is largely concentrated — or “clustered” — in a few large cities, primarily in Quebec and Ontario, and secondarily in British Columbia and Alberta. Research on clusters of innovation stresses the importance of proximity in the process of innovation. Since the early 1990s, clusters have emerged as a widely influential public policy idea, and many governments have made formal attempts to foster clusters of innovation and New Economy development. A “cluster” is essentially a group of interconnected companies, suppliers, and institutions (such as universities) that both compete and cooperate in a field. They are all located in the same geographic area, which could be a city or a region (Silicon Valley, for example). The geographic concentration gives the area critical mass. Proponents of the cluster approach argue that clustering enhances competition, productivity and innovation. Firms and supporting institutions in clusters are linked formally and informally. Firms within the cluster are privy to new research findings and technological developments. Innovation is partly driven by

competitive pressures — especially early in the life of a cluster — but, over time, collaboration between members increases as levels of trust are increased.

Manitoba seems to have had the misfortune of missing out on the late 1990s New Economy boom, but the good luck of avoiding the bust. (This is not at all unusual for Manitoba, a province with an open mixed economy not prone to the extremes of a boom and bust cycle).¹⁴ Relative to the rest of the country, the ICT sector in Manitoba is relatively small and growing relatively slowly. It is also located primarily in one urban centre: Winnipeg.

“Just as New Economy growth is clustered at the national level, in Manitoba it is clustered in Winnipeg. This presents challenges for small northern communities.”

In other words, the clustering effect seen at the national level is replicated at the provincial level. This presents challenges for small northern communities attempting to avail themselves of the possibilities offered by New Economy developments.

Effects of the New Economy on Northern Manitoba Communities¹⁵

The new economy appears to hold real potential to counter the effects of social and economic exclusion. For individuals living in disadvantaged communities, such as those in northern locations, the benefits might be realized directly through New Economy jobs and increased productivity, or through related phenomena, such as better educational opportunities, greater access to government and better state services.¹⁶ That is the promise.

The challenge is that disadvantaged communities typically lack many of the characteristics that would attract New Economy industries. Northern

and First Nations communities in Manitoba also have low general education levels, tend to lack workers trained in the use of new technologies and have limited access to broadband and IT equipment.

Studies of the Manitoba economy indicate that IT knowledge and skills will be increasingly important in nearly all occupations in coming decades. The Manitoba government's list of occupations in high demand in the province has included those in the IT field at least since 1997.¹⁷ These occupations include computer support technician, software developer and computer systems analyst.

“Lack of broadband access hinders economic development in a northern community such as Churchill”

Not only are specific IT occupations in high demand, but IT skills within occupations are also required. These include “general computer skills” and “internet use skills.” For the Aboriginal community in particular, “Information, Communication Technology (ICT) skills” are listed as in high demand.¹⁸

Churchill is a fairly typical northern Manitoba community. The town can be reached only by air or rail — it is 1700 rail miles from Winnipeg. About half its population is of Aboriginal ancestry. A case study of Churchill (Martin, Falvo, and Chotka) demonstrates some of the challenges and opportunities facing northern communities in the New Economy. Churchill has an unemployment rate of approximately 20%, or four times that of the province as a whole. This is due, in large part, to the seasonal nature of employment. Tourism accounts for fully 40% of Churchill's regional economy, and the tourism sector is growing steadily by approximately 5% annually. No doubt, New Economy tools offer support for tourism, in particular in the way of marketing, but the New Economy benefits actually experienced by the

town of Churchill are hampered by ongoing lack of affordable, reliable broadband access.

Churchill was chosen as the subject for another case study (Annis, Everitt, and Cameron), because the Churchill Community Network (CCNet) was established in that community at a time when internet connectivity was just gaining momentum in rural, remote and northern areas. CCNet was a community-driven, volunteer-run initiative established prior to nationwide initiatives to address bandwidth needs. As such, CCNet was a truly remarkable achievement with many benefits. In addition to purely economic benefits, it has created community control and empowered individuals. But it was not economically viable, and was in competition with the vastly larger Manitoba Telecom Services (MTS). Moreover, members of CCNet, for the most part, did not come to see themselves as members, but, rather, as customers. As a result, they showed little loyalty to CCNet, and were ready to leave the community business if they were unhappy with service problems. CCNet also had trouble finding volunteers to assist it, and board members were discouraged and burnt out. CCNet board members also reported that their extremely limited resources left them unable to promote the advantages of the internet to local businesses. In June 2005, after the report was completed, CCNet ceased operations. As a result, the community as a whole does not have access to broadband. A number of businesses in town, in addition to the local government, have had to go to the great expense of having MTS install private cable lines to deliver high-speed service.

In a report prepared for the MRA, Duboff conducted a scan of rural and northern Manitoba communities to determine the extent to which they are involved in the New Economy. She found that northern First Nations have the poorest participation in the New Economy of all respondents. The cost of computers and internet access, the unreliability of internet connections, and lack of skills in the community have resulted in a cycle of non-participation in the New Economy by northern Manitoba First Nations.

While all urban and rural CED organizations and rural communities she surveyed are connected to the internet, 11% of northern Manitoba First Nations do not have any internet access. High-speed internet access, through a satellite modem, is only available in Garden Hill First Nation, Wasagamack First Nation and Manto Sipi Cree Nation. The rest of the First Nations use dial-up connections, many through a community 1-800 number.

Even when northern First Nations do have access to computers and the internet, they experience many ongoing problems that limit their participation in the New Economy. Because of their dependence on dial-up connections, First Nations cannot receive a reliable connection to the internet, which is very limited, based on the type of telephone service they receive. The 1-800 number that serves the whole community is often more a challenge than a benefit to users. Whether it is too many users slowing down the connection or a downed phone line (which is not uncommon in the North) cutting off the connection entirely, connecting to the internet through a 1-800 number is often very problematic. Unreliable internet access is a prevalent issue for northern First Nations.

Only one quarter of First Nations governments have resources available on-line. These sites offer government information, including band council minutes and community meetings. Local organizations tend not to post information on the internet for community or external use. A small percentage of communities, in which computer usage is higher and internet connections are better, have some local organizations on-line, including banks, school districts, nursing stations, libraries and tourism bureaus. Duboff found that natural resources management, including use of Geographic Information Systems, by northern First Nations organizations was very limited.

The number of household computers in First Nations is comparable to the rest of rural Manitoba, but much lower than in urban areas. Duboff found that only 17% of households have computers, and only 47% of those households are connected to

the internet. Although there are computers in all the First Nations schools, only 88% have an internet connection, 44% of which are only connected in a computer lab, not in classrooms. As well, nearly half the schools do not integrate technology into the curriculum, choosing to focus on more traditional teaching methods and topics. There is a small amount of computer training in First Nations schools, including software application (56% of schools), keyboarding, internet research and computer literacy (11% each). Students who have access to computers use them for word processing, internet research, e-mailing and edu-

“For northern First Nations, internet access is unavailable or unreliable”

cational games. Most northern Manitoba First Nations do not have the capacity to offer many public-access computers to their members.

Computers and the internet offer a multitude of educational opportunities for northern Manitoba First Nations, yet these are underutilized. In general, northern First Nations students are not taking distance education courses, and only a small number are conducting internet research.

Simply put, the internet is not an inherent part of the lives of most northern First Nations people. These residents are not reliant on e-mail or internet research and they do not conduct their work on a computer. The dependence on computers found in southern urban communities does not exist in northern First Nations. There is some connectivity, especially among the children at school, but not reliance. A large part of this lack of reliance is due to the poor service, as well as to a shortage of skills. There is a desire, though, to become connected. This was expressed over and over during the MKO and MTS public consultations, especially in the areas of education, health and economic opportunities. The excitement over the Nations Sphere proposal reinforces this desire for connection. There is potential, in the form of

a proposal by Nations Sphere, to work with First Nations communities to provide them not only with high-speed internet, but also with training, employment and economic development opportunities. The proposal uses Manitoba Hydro's broadband capability, which emphasizes once again the importance of Hydro in northern Manitoba, and raises the question of why Hydro is apparently unable to do more to help connect northern communities to the internet.

According to Industry Canada (2005), 64% of Canadians, the percentage of the population that lives in or near major metropolitan areas, is able

it the most. The service provided by MTS is another problem. Because of high costs, MTS is very slow to connect northern First Nations. One community resident stated that, rather than spending so much money on advertising in the south, MTS should funnel that money into providing better service to their customers in the north.

“Despite federal efforts, 6 million Canadians cannot get access to broadband”

to access broadband through commercial network operators. Additionally, some rural and remote residents are able to have access to broadband internet via the Broadband Initiative. However, there are about 4200 Canadian communities (average population 1500) that do not have access to broadband.¹⁹ Therefore, despite the federal government's efforts so far, a gap still exists for Canadians in towns and rural areas that have not been served by the Broadband Program and are not served by the commercial broadband market.

Many of the problems in northern First Nations could have been resolved had the Broadband Initiative been a success. These First Nations are the communities that could benefit the most from this access, as it can improve education and training in the community, offer new services, provide links with other communities and create new economic opportunities. Unfortunately, most of these communities did not have the ability to access the program and therefore could not receive the government grants to obtain broadband connection. It is this flaw in the Broadband Initiative that has contributed to the deprivation of reliable, affordable internet access for the people who need

CED in Northern Manitoba

Federal Government Policy

The federal government has increased internet access by two national initiatives: the Community Access Program and the Broadband Program. The Community Access Program (CAP), a program of Industry Canada, places public-access computers in locations throughout urban and rural Canada. For rural and remote locations that do not have the infrastructure to support broad-band internet, there is the federal government's Broadband for Rural and Northern Development Pilot Program. The Broadband Initiative, as it has come to be known, was launched in 2000. It committed the federal government to providing all of Canada with access to broadband internet services by the year 2004. This commitment reflected the government's recognition of the importance of effective internet access to rural and First Nations communities. Broadband has the ability to offer new opportunities in areas of health, education and commerce, all of which contribute to an innovative and successful community. These opportunities are especially important for rural and First Nations communities, where distance and smaller populations make access a challenge.

Community Economic Development Program (CEDP)

In spite of the name of this program, its focus is largely on traditional business development. The CEDP is meant to provide long-term development opportunities in employment and business. It is meant to allow First Nations communities access to the menu of programs offered by the federal government, such as the Resource Partnerships Program, the Major Business Project Program and the Procurement Strategy for Aboriginal Business. Various tools are available to participating communities and include: business plans, the National

Aboriginal Capital Corporation Association, internet tools and information sheets. The program is somewhat more streamlined than previous programs offered by this department. However, there is no indication that it can be considered an application of CED as defined by the MRA.

Western Economic Diversification Canada

Western Economic Diversification (WD) administers programs and services intended to advance innovation, entrepreneurship and sustainable communities. In the fulfillment of its mandate,

"WD's main role is to facilitate partnerships"

WD has been involved in CED programs, although it is not dedicated specifically to CED. Because WD offers its services to a variety of different types of initiatives, it can support a CED-based program, and it will accept the CED definition adopted by the community.

WD sees itself as a facilitator of partnerships. It is able to partner with the province, other federal departments and with municipalities. As well as bringing partners to the table, WD can provide much-needed funding to community projects. The closest that WD comes to a CED policy is through the administration of its Community Futures Development Corporations (CFDCs). Manitoba has 16 CFDCs, each one led by a local board of volunteer directors. Notwithstanding the lack of a real CED focus, the CFDCs are providing a valuable service to Manitoba communities and, in some cases, may be building CED strategies without being aware of it. Johnston points to WD's support of grassroots development in the province's North. The Northern Diversification Centre Initiative in The Pas looks for alternatives to forestry and other resource-based, capital-intense development. Projects may include the gathering and processing of wild

mushrooms or rice and the making of Christmas wreaths. CFDCs work together with the communities to market the products at the local level so that they can be shipped south for sale. Running parallel to WD's support for community-driven projects is the growing tendency of both the federal and provincial governments to support community initiatives.

Provincial Government Policy²⁰

In the 1970s, the government of Manitoba developed a complex piece of policy aimed at fostering

forward linkages to furniture and home construction. The home construction industry would, in turn, precipitate the need for factories producing windows, doors, etc. — thereby creating yet more linkages to forestry and other industries.

It was estimated that 2300 jobs would be created directly, with the 20% minimum employment of Aboriginal workers for existing industries adding an additional 3000 jobs for Native people by 1981.

The plan was not implemented for various reasons. The planners overestimated the political will of the governing party to invoke such changes, and underestimated the difficulty they faced in changing the northern bureaucratic machinery.²¹ As well, the fiscal crisis faced by the federal government in 1976–77 meant that the province only received half the funds it had requested, and political support for the project dried up. Still, the plan remains a touchstone for CED planning in Canada, and it influences the current wave of CED initiatives in Manitoba, whether the participants are aware of it or not.

“The Great Northern Plan offered a coherent, sophisticated CED strategy”

CED in northern Manitoba. This policy, known as the Northern Manitoba Development Strategy, or more commonly as the Great Northern Plan, represented a landmark in the evolution of CED theory. It was a tightly organized and coherent economic development strategy that provides one of the first examples of a CED approach that would look familiar to today's CED practitioners. The Great Northern Plan was based on convergence theory — very simply put, under this plan, northern Manitoba would, to the greatest extent possible, produce what it consumed and consume what it produced. The goal was to create greater linkages and fewer leakages in the northern economy. To take just one set of examples, the plan envisaged creating 15 sawmills to provide lumber for local construction and mining. Thirty-two community lumber-harvesting operations would supply the sawmills and would replace workers from outside the area — once they quit or retired — with previously unemployed members of the local community. Forestry resources within 25 miles of the communities would be held for community use. A particle-board plant would purchase most of the wood wasted by the sawmills, thereby establishing

Northern CED Organizations in the New Economy²²

As a result of the New Economy, there has been an increase in services for and by CED organizations. For CED organizations, the New Economy holds the potential for new forms of training and education, as well as for research and the sharing of information with other organizations. This holds special potential for rural, remote, and northern organizations. E-learning (conducted over the internet) and tele-learning (in which a group of people participate in a conference call in which learning occurs) allow CED organizations to provide a level of staff training that would otherwise be impossible, due to a lack of resources or because they are located in distant communities. A report prepared for the MRA by Duboff found that the vast majority of CED organizations are using computers for such basic tasks as word processing and

data management, and all the CED organizations surveyed are connected to the internet.

Most CED organizations also recognize the importance of computer literacy and access, not just for staff, but for the wider community. With the rise in New Economy participation, public-access computers have become prevalent in CED organizations. On average, there are 5.5 public access computers available to the public in CED organizations, and many other CED organizations would provide public-access computers if they had the resources to do so.²³

The biggest barriers to participation in the New Economy by CED organizations are the cost of new technology and a lack of staff time available to learn new programs. There are also differences between urban and non-urban CED organizations when it comes to use of New Economy technologies. More urban organizations continue to employ other tools for research and communication; for remote organizations, using the internet is almost always cheaper than using the phone, due to long-distance charges.

CED Networks

Over the past decade, communication and collaboration between otherwise isolated and independent CED organizations have increased through the formation of networks. These networks allow participating organizations to share information, improve practices and coordinate policy and funding initiatives. The emergence and growth of these networks have paralleled those of New Economy technologies. CED networks in Manitoba typically use IT tools such as Web sites, e-mail, distance training courses video conferencing and on-line surveys. A study conducted by Cameron for the MRA on the use of such IT tools to facilitate the work of CED networks found that they had provided significant benefits to the networks that use them. The main limitation was that most, if not all, members of the network must have access to a new technology if it is going to be effective in supporting network-wide communications and planning.

Thus, new technologies will not be employed by a network until a critical mass of member organizations has access to that technology.

CED Opportunities: Identification and Recommendations

In a report prepared for the MRA, Duboff expressed optimism about the economic opportunities that new technologies offer remote communities. The internet potentially allows businesses in such communities to reach a global market.²⁴ It should be noted, however, that such an approach

“The internet can connect northern businesses with a global market”

is only partially consistent with CED — for example, it does not meet the first criterion of the Neechi Principles: production of goods and services to meet local needs. Nonetheless, there is nothing to say that northern enterprises could not use new technology to meet a number of other CED goals. Key opportunities identified by MRA research are listed below.

- **The need for new technology** itself. Communities can create companies that will offer IT services to neighbouring First Nations and other northern communities.
- Because of distance from MTS and their repair people, there are also potential **training opportunities in northern communities**. If MTS were willing to provide the training, service and repair jobs could be given to local residents, thus providing new employment opportunities and improving service. This scenario has been proposed by Nations Sphere. Nations Sphere will provide First Nations with the infrastructure for telecommunications and then train local people to run the operation and service the equipment, thus improving

telecommunications while creating jobs and wealth in the community.²⁵

- **Call centres** have proven to be a useful industry for communities with limited other options. Manitoba already has a strong call-centre industry — concentrated in Winnipeg — thanks in part to its central North American location, the “neutral” accents of Manitobans and government targeting of the industry as a priority for subsidization.
- **Manufacturing** can now operate in some relatively remote areas, receiving orders electronically and shipping the goods to customers directly.
- **Tourism** deserves special mention, because tourism is already particularly important to the North, in particular to the community of Churchill and surrounding areas — tourists come from around the world to experience the Northern Lights, whales, polar bears, historic sights and parks and (the fastest-growing sector of the tourism industry) bird watching. And since, almost by definition, tourists come from outside the community, the internet offers a powerful way to reach new markets from remote northern communities.
- As has been shown in Saskatchewan and Alberta, industry has taken a lead role in developing **training initiatives with northern and Aboriginal communities within the mining, oil and gas and forestry sectors**. This has resulted in the development of many successful businesses. While these businesses were initially started to serve a specific industry or company, many have grown to service the broader community. Therefore, government and industry should look for opportunities for northern and Aboriginal businesses to gain greater contract work to support the mining, forestry and hydro industries. A recent wood-technology initiative by Forintek is an exciting example of future business development in the forestry industry.

- An Aboriginal Chamber of Commerce has recently been established in northern Manitoba. Government should build on this and assist in the establishment of a **northern-based Aboriginal business incubator**.
- The field of **mine-site remediation and reclamation** is evolving as governments (provincial and federal) come to grips with cleaning up orphaned and abandoned mine sites through new legislation. The current regulatory environment also requires new and existing mines to develop closure plans concurrently with operational planning. This will involve progressive site reclamation and environmental monitoring, in addition to post-closure reclamation work. This provides an opportunity for northerners to be employed on several levels: reclamation engineers; technician/technologists; consultants doing environmental assessment; and contractors involved in heavy equipment operation and decommissioning work. The government could investigate using the Mining Community Reserve Fund for training and employment programs involved in mine reclamation and remediation targeted at northern residents. Currently, there is a Prospector Training Program — the government could also investigate whether developing a similar program for Site Reclamation/Remediation is feasible. This would be in keeping with the Manitoba Minerals Guideline.
- The **environmental sector** is said to be one of Canada's growth industries, and thus can provide an opportunity for northern residents with employment. There is also the opportunity for northern Manitobans for value-added programming that blends seasonal part-time employment with traditional activities such as fishing, hunting and trapping. First steps would be to expand value-added programs such as the non-timber forest products and ecotourism initiatives of Kewatin Community College (KCC), and encourage and assist in the creation of businesses that could tie into environmental assessment and monitoring activities.

Training and Job Readiness²⁶

A large proportion of the northern population has inadequate education levels and skills to enter the workforce. The local economy will benefit in numerous ways from a better trained and more educated populace, and this can be achieved through distance learning and community-access computers, among other ways.

“Training should draw on partnerships among government, industry and educational organizations”

Educational Institutions in Northern Manitoba

Currently, **Keewatin Community College (KCC)** is the key post-secondary institution located in the North. However, two other training and/or educational centres are to be established within the next several years.

The **University College of the North (UCN)** is a post-secondary institution that will offer a comprehensive range of post-secondary education options including developmental, trade, career, technical and undergraduate degree programs. UCN will provide Northerners with a regional institution that will grant university degrees. Initial indications are that the UCN will develop one-year programs that lead to Bachelor of Arts and/or Science degrees, with other programs to follow in the future. Programming focus will be community driven.

The **Atoskiwin Training and Employment Centre of Excellence** (a partnership between Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation, based in Nelson House, and Indian Affairs and Northern Development) has resulted in plans to build a training facility and business incubator on-

reserve. The programs to be offered by the centre include: literacy; security skilled trades; heavy equipment operating; and women in Trades and Technology. The centre will also offer business support services.

Many northern communities want to have access to basic skills training within their own community. It is recommended that government continue to develop partnerships with community colleges and community-based organizations for additional community-delivered programs aimed at young adults and adults, in communities not currently serviced. These programs should include basic literacy and numeracy skills, academic upgrading, employment/job readiness skills, testing and assessment programs, technical training directly linking high-demand occupations and local employment opportunities.

Similarly, it is recommended that government work with industry to design training programs and encourage industry partnership in these programs. And government should also make it a priority to develop strong partnerships with First Nations and Métis organizations to assist in achieving higher educational attainment, developing workforce training programs and long-term employment. There is a critical need for flexibility in programming, and more sensitivity to (and inclusion of) Aboriginal culture and knowledge in programming.

Current levels of unemployment, coupled with the large numbers of northern youth entering the labour force, suggests the need for having an accurate and up-to-date demand-and-supply analysis of skills (hard and soft) that are required by various key resource industries. Specifically:

- Government and education/training institutions must work with communities to identify their emerging training needs and skill gaps; work with industry (Manitoba Hydro, forest and mining companies) to design needs assessments and training programs; and encourage industry to be a full partner in providing on-the-job training and cooperative training within communities.

- Government and education/training institutions must offer a broad spectrum of training opportunities — including community-oriented value-added jobs (non-timber forestry products; ecotourism); basic industrial training through to journeyman apprenticeship training (heavy equipment operator/mechanic; carpentry; electrician, etc.); as well as scientific and professional college/university opportunities whose delivery is more regional in nature (The Pas, Thompson, Brandon and Winnipeg).
- Policy makers must link high-demand occupations in the north, such as construction electrician, carpenter and heavy duty equipment mechanics and operators, with high-demand occupations within Aboriginal communities (carpenters, heavy duty equipment operators), and the institutions such as UCN that will deliver the training.
- There is also the need for government and educational institutions to respond to future growth in the environmental industry, particularly as it relates to environmental assessment and management; environmental technician/technologist; and engineering technician/technologist.

Conclusion

- The population in the North is young and sparsely distributed.
- The population in the North is relatively undereducated.
- Manitoba Hydro is a huge and expanding presence in the North.
- The Neechi model offers a complete set of CED principles.
- The Neechi Principles have been widely adopted as a benchmark in Manitoba's CED community.
- The benefits of New Economy growth have not been distributed evenly.
- The New Economy in Manitoba is small and growing slowly, and centred in Winnipeg.
- Just as New Economy growth is clustered at the national level, in Manitoba it is clustered in Winnipeg. This presents challenges for small northern communities.
- Northern communities typically lack the characteristics that would attract New Economy industries.
- The demand for IT knowledge and skills continues to rise.
- Lack of broadband access hinders economic development in a northern community such as Churchill.
- A volunteer effort to establish broadband access in Churchill was remarkable but ultimately unsustainable.
- Northern First Nations have very limited participation in the New Economy.
- For northern First Nations, internet access is unavailable or unreliable.
- Northern First Nations governments make limited use of the internet or IT
- There are few computers in northern First Nations households.
- If the federal Broadband Initiative had been successful, many of the problems facing northern First Nations would have been resolved.
- Despite federal efforts, 6 million Canadians cannot get access to broadband.
- WD's main role is to facilitate partnerships.
- The Great Northern Plan offered a coherent, sophisticated CED strategy.
- CED organizations have come to rely on new technology for basic tasks.
- New technology has been a boon to CED networks.
- The internet can connect northern businesses with a global market.
- Training should draw on partnerships among government, industry, and educational organizations.

Notes

- 1 Cook, Johnston, and Larway, p. 10.
- 2 Manitoba Hydro, 1999, cited in Hultin, p. 5.
- 3 This section draws most on Loxley and Lamb, Friesen and Hudson, and Fernandez.
- 4 See, for instance, Canadian CED Network, 2004; Loxley, 1986.
- 5 Thomas, 1974, cited in Loxley and Lamb, p. 2.
- 6 Loxley, 2002, cited in Loxley and Lamb, p. 2.
- 7 P. 4.
- 8 P. 1.
- 9 This section draws most heavily on Graydon and Duboff.
- 10 Bobe, 2002; Tabb, 2001, cited in Graydon, p. 16.
- 11 DeLong, 2002; Tabb, 2001, cited in Graydon, p. 17.
- 12 Hudson, 2001; Yates, 2001, cited in Graydon, p. 16.
- 13 This section is based primarily on Friesen and Hudson.
- 14 Calculated from Statistics Canada, *Trends in Provincial and Territorial Economic Statistics: 1981–2002*, Table 1, p. 21.
- 15 This sections draws most heavily on Duboff, Cook et al., and Deane.
- 16 See MacKenzie and Duboff for fuller discussions of these points.
- 17 Manitoba, 1997, 2005, cited in Deane, p. 3.
- 18 Manitoba, 2005, cited in Deane, p. 3.
- 19 <http://broadband.gc.ca/pub/faqs/index.html>
- 20 Fernandez, pp. 83–87.
- 21 Loxley, 1981, p. 172, cited in Fernandez, p. 87.
- 22 This section draws on Duboff.
- 23 Duboff, section 4.0.
- 24 Duboff, 3.2.1.1.
- 25 For more information, see Duboff, 3.2.1.
- 26 This section based primarily on LeBlond and Brown, p. ii.

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