



qia.ca



ᐅᓂᓂ ᐱᐅᓚᓕᓂᓴᓂᓴᓂᓴᓂᓴᓂ
ᐱᓚᓚ ᐅᓂᓂᓴᓂᓴᓂᓴᓂᓴᓂᓴᓂ

FOOD SOVEREIGNTY AND HARVESTING

QIKIQTANI

INUIT ASSOCIATION

The Qikiqtani Inuit Association (QIA) is a not-for-profit society which represents approximately 14,000 Inuit in the Qikiqtani (Baffin) Region of Nunavut, including 13 communities from Grise Fjord in the High Arctic to Sanikiluaq (Belcher Islands) in the southeast of Hudson Bay.



CONTENTS

- 4. **INTRODUCTION**
- 5. **SNAPSHOT OF FOOD INSECURITY IN NUNAVUT**
- 6. SHORTCOMINGS OF THE NUTRITION NORTH PROGRAM
- 7. **FROM FOOD INSECURITY TO FOOD SOVEREIGNTY**
- 8. FOOD SOVEREIGNTY AND INUIT CULTURAL VALUES
- 10. FOOD SOVEREIGNTY AND THE HARVESTING INDUSTRY
- 11. **HOW TO ACHIEVE FOOD SOVEREIGNTY**
- 14. RENEWED POLICY FRAMEWORKS AND FUNDING MODELS
- 15. HARVESTER ENABLING INFRASTRUCTURE
- 17. INUIT HARVESTER AND STEWARD PROGRAMS
- 18. HOW TO SUPPORT HARVESTERS
- 19. **APPENDIX**

INTRODUCTION

Country food and harvesting are central to Inuit culture, community and well-being. Colonization has disconnected us from harvesting, the very cultural practice that reinvigorates our sense of identity, feeds our communities and stimulates our local economy.

Inuit Leadership in food sovereignty responds to the Nunavut Agreement objective: to provide rights for Inuit to participate in decision making concerning the use, management and conservation of land, water and resources, including the offshore
(preamble Nunavut Agreement).

As a result, Nunavut suffers from chronic food insecurity. Over 70 per cent of Nunavummiut are food insecure. Current approaches to remedy this crisis, such as providing subsidy on imported foods, are not working. Nunavut needs a shift from thinking about food security to food sovereignty. This means empowering Inuit to feed our communities.

The Nunavut Agreement gives Inuit the right to control our natural resources and food supply. Inuit environmental stewardship of our land and waters, and management of our parks and conservation areas, is intrinsically linked to control of the wildlife that sustains us. Making food sovereignty possible in the Qikiqtani Region would revitalize Inuit culture and be a significant step towards reconciliation between Inuit and the Government of Canada.

NUNAVUT NEEDS A SHIFT FROM THINKING ABOUT FOOD SECURITY TO FOOD SOVEREIGNTY. THIS MEANS EMPOWERING INUIT TO FEED OUR OWN COMMUNITIES.

To achieve food sovereignty in Nunavut requires renewed policy frameworks and funding models that recognize Inuit leadership in decision-making and enable long-term strategic planning. Major investment in infrastructure, particularly small craft harbours are needed, as well as resources to train and employ Inuit for jobs in the harvesting industry.

SHORTCOMINGS OF THE NUTRITION NORTH PROGRAM

Nutrition North Canada is a Government of Canada subsidy program intended to provide Northerners in isolated communities with improved access to perishable nutritious food. QIA echoes the position articulated by Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami and Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. about the shortcomings of Nutrition North Canada. Like previous food subsidy programs, Nutrition North has fallen short of meeting its objectives.

Shortcomings of Nutrition North include:

- Nutrition North does not subsidize hunting, fishing and harvesting equipment which creates systemic barriers for Inuit to cultivate our local food systems
- Less than one per cent of the total Nutrition North budget has contributed to increasing access to country food
- Nutrition North preferentially supports imported, factory-farmed animal protein rather than locally harvested country food
- Nutrition North is based on a market-driven model that treats food as a commodity rather than a basic human right

“We found that [The Ministry] has not verified whether the northern retailers pass on the full subsidy to consumers.”

Auditor General, 2014

- Nutrition North protects the interest of the retailers by not making public the terms of the agreement between the Government of Canada and northern businesses that benefit from the subsidy
- Nutrition North allows retailers to exercise arbitrary power over food pricing without checks and balances to ensure the full subsidy is passed on to consumers
- Nutrition North does not require that landed freight costs of food and the profit margin collected by retailers be made publicly available making it impossible to determine if the subsidy is passed on to consumers
- The Nutrition North program structure is fragmented as it is administrated by different federal departments located in the south

Food prices in Nunavut versus other parts of Canada



Nunavut (per kg)		Other parts of Canada (per kg)	
Banana (per kg)	\$4.86	Banana (per kg)	\$1.58
Apples (per kg)	\$6.44	Apples (per kg)	\$3.85
Butter (454 g)	\$9.01	Butter (454 g)	\$4.90
Carrots (per kg)	\$5.93	Carrots (per kg)	\$2.03
Bread	\$4.47	Bread	\$2.81
Potatoes (per kg)	\$6.97	Potatoes (per kg)	\$3.29
Total	\$37.68	Total	\$18.46

Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. Recommendations for an improved nutrition north Canada subsidy program. 2016

FROM FOOD INSECURITY TO FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

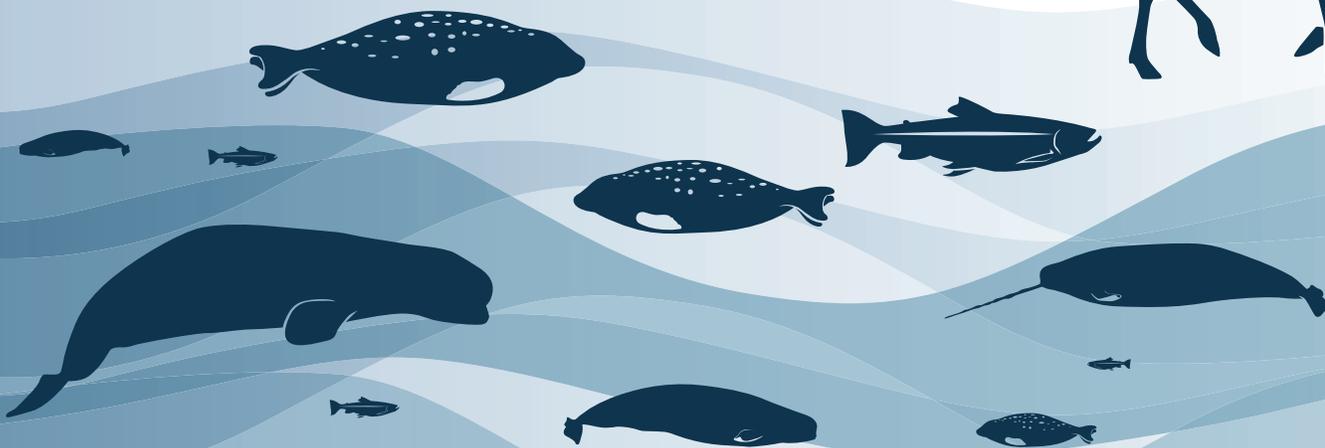
Food sovereignty for Inuit means the right to nutritious locally-sourced food. In Nunavut this translates to country food. Harvesters play an integral role in Inuit food sovereignty. They provide country food that feeds communities, reinvigorates Inuit cultural practices and stimulates local economies.

Inuit food sovereignty means:

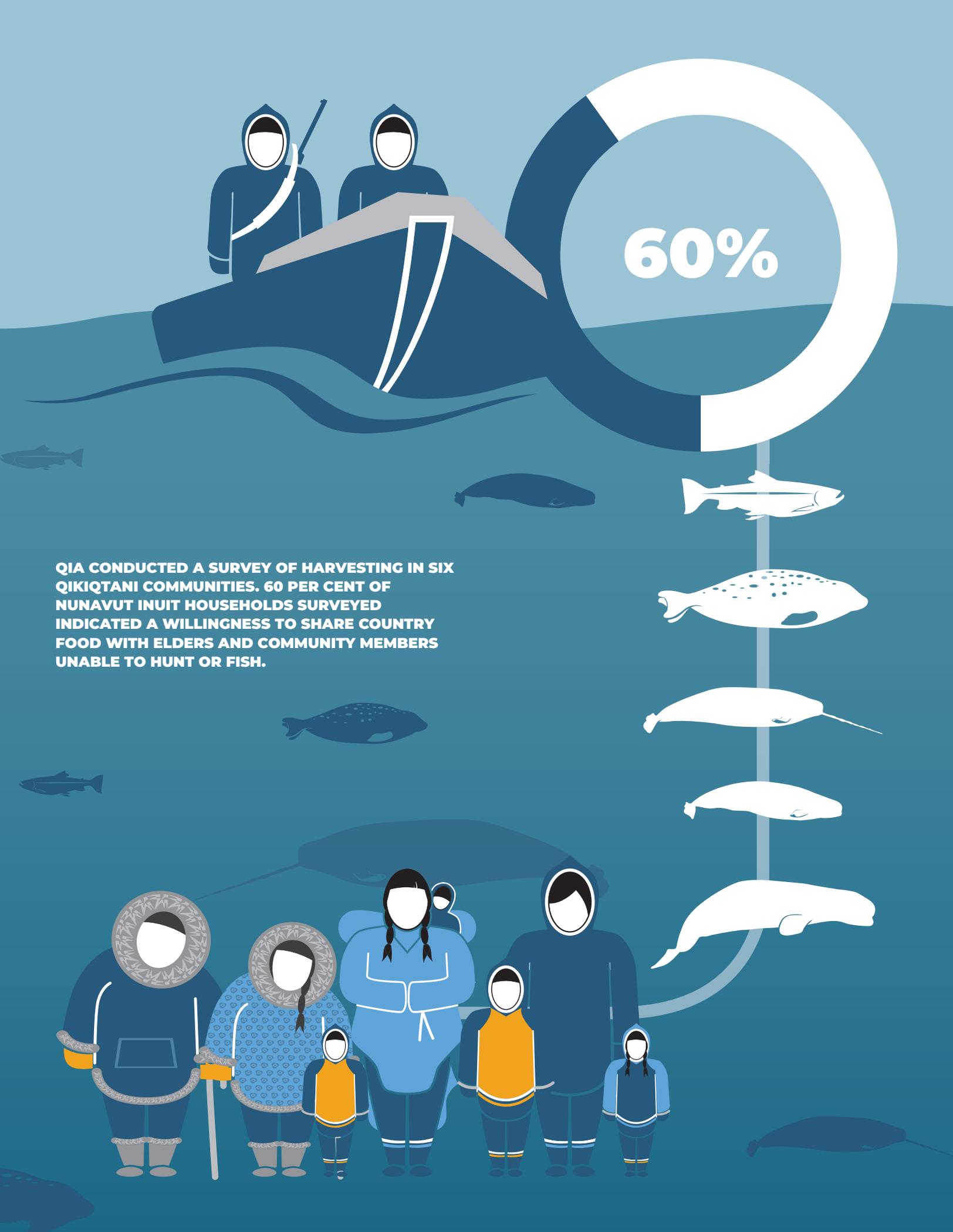
- the right to healthy and nutritious food
- the right to culturally appropriate food
- the right to food harvested through ecologically sound and sustainable methods as guided by the Nunavut Agreement and wildlife management regiment
- the right to access wildlife in ways that empower communities and stimulate local economies

QIA prefers using the term food sovereignty rather than food security because food sovereignty allows for a culturally and community-minded approach to food management. Food sovereignty incorporates Inuit knowledge, language, culture continuity and community self-sufficiency. Supporting food sovereignty shows a commitment towards reconciliation.

WHAT IS COUNTRY FOOD FOR INUIT?



berries, narwhal, ringed seals, walrus, beluga whale, caribou, arctic char, polar bear and a variety of birds



60%

QIA CONDUCTED A SURVEY OF HARVESTING IN SIX QIKIQTANI COMMUNITIES. 60 PER CENT OF NUNAVUT INUIT HOUSEHOLDS SURVEYED INDICATED A WILLINGNESS TO SHARE COUNTRY FOOD WITH ELDERS AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS UNABLE TO HUNT OR FISH.

FOOD SOVEREIGNTY AND THE HARVESTING INDUSTRY

The Nunavut Agreement gives Inuit control to manage our land, waters and natural resources including wildlife. The Agreement also entails stringent wildlife management systems that protect and preserve Arctic species.

Environmental stewardship is an intrinsic part of Inuit cultural values. Environmental protection and conservation have always meant the active use of land and water and a thriving harvesting industry.

The Inuit approach to harvesting is conservation-minded. Inuit harvesters act as environmental stewards, monitoring and safeguarding the Arctic ecosystem. Wildlife is highly respected. Inuit use the whole animal from furs to intestines.

The harvesting industry is not only an important part of Inuit culture and value systems, but also significant to Nunavut's economic future. Harvesting is an essential and integral component in developing a conservation economy in the Arctic.

A conservation economy for Inuit means economic wealth derived from local natural resources in a way that respects and preserves Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit, meets local needs and restores rather than depletes natural resources and social capital. Supporting a conservation economy translates to support for conservation areas and sustainable industries such as harvesting.

An investment in the conservation economy would provide the infrastructure needed for food sovereignty in Nunavut by giving harvesters the tools necessary to feed Inuit communities, reinvigorating cultural practices and stimulating local economies.

Harvesters' catch will fill the community freezer and feed Nunavut. Their catch will also provide animal products that stimulate the local economy. Hides, furs, skins, bones, antlers, and tusks become essential material for making clothing, art and craft items.

HOW TO ACHIEVE FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

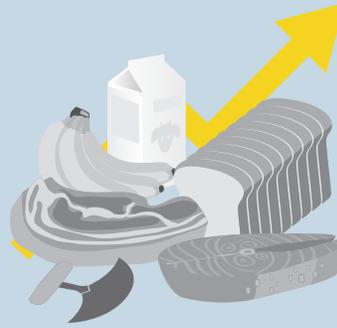
- **Renew policy frameworks and funding models to acknowledge the centrality of country food to Inuit culture, economy and well-being**
- **Invest in harvesting enabling infrastructure that facilitate access to land and waters**
 - Marine infrastructure
 - Multi-use facilitates
 - Food processing plants
 - Training facilities
- **Fund harvesters and steward programs**
 - Wages
 - Equipment, tools and supplies
 - Elders and youth programs



SUPPORTING HARVEST



THIS MEANS



THIS MEANS



IF WE DO NOT INVEST IN TRAINING AND WAGES FOR HARVESTING JOBS AND DON'T FUND HARVESTERS FOR EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES

MORE FOOD IS NEEDED



MORE TIME TRYING TO EARN A WAGE AND LESS TIME HARVESTING



LOSS OF TRADITIONAL SKILLS AND LESS SUCCESSFUL HARVESTS



MORE STORE-BOUGHT FOOD

LESS COUNTRY FOOD TO SHARE

THIS MEANS



NUNAVUT HAS THE HIGHEST COST OF FOOD IN CANADA

Banana (per kg) \$14.99	Banana (per kg) \$14.99
Apples (per kg) \$14.99	Apples (per kg) \$14.99
Butter (454 g) LC*	Butter (454 g) LC*
Carrots (per kg) \$14.99	Carrots (per kg) \$14.99
Bread \$14.99	Bread \$14.99
Potatoes (per kg) \$14.99	Potatoes (per kg) \$14.99
Total \$144	Total \$77

RENEWED POLICY FRAMEWORKS AND FUNDING MODELS

Renewed policy frameworks and funding models are required to support food sovereignty in Nunavut. QIA is seeking a new collaborative approach to government policy and funding that respect the Nunavut Agreement and gives Inuit the tools needed to manage our food systems. These new frameworks must not only acknowledge the inequalities between Inuit communities and other jurisdictions in Canada but also facilitate long-term strategic programs.

Principles for developing renewed policy frameworks and funding models:

- Inuit involvement in all decisions relating to our homeland
- A whole-of-government approach that allows for long-term strategic investments
- Long-term stable funding that supports strategic planning
- A commitment to address inequalities and a strategic investment in the North as part of Canada's nation-building efforts

QIA'S VISION IS GUIDED BY THE OBJECTIVES OF THE NUNAVUT AGREEMENT

- **to provide for certainty and clarity of rights to ownership and use of lands and resources, and of rights for Inuit to participate in decision-making concerning the use, management and conservation of land, water and resources, including the offshore;**
- **to provide Inuit with wildlife harvesting rights and rights to participate in decision-making concerning wildlife harvesting;**
- **to provide Inuit with financial compensation and means of participating in economic opportunities;**
- **to encourage self-reliance and the cultural and social well-being of Inuit;**

“the legal rights of Inuit to harvest wildlife flow from their traditional and current use”
(Article 5.1.2)

“there is a need for an effective system of wildlife management that complements Inuit harvesting rights and priorities, and recognizes Inuit systems of wildlife management that contribute to the conservation of wildlife and protection of wildlife habitat” (Article 5.1.1)

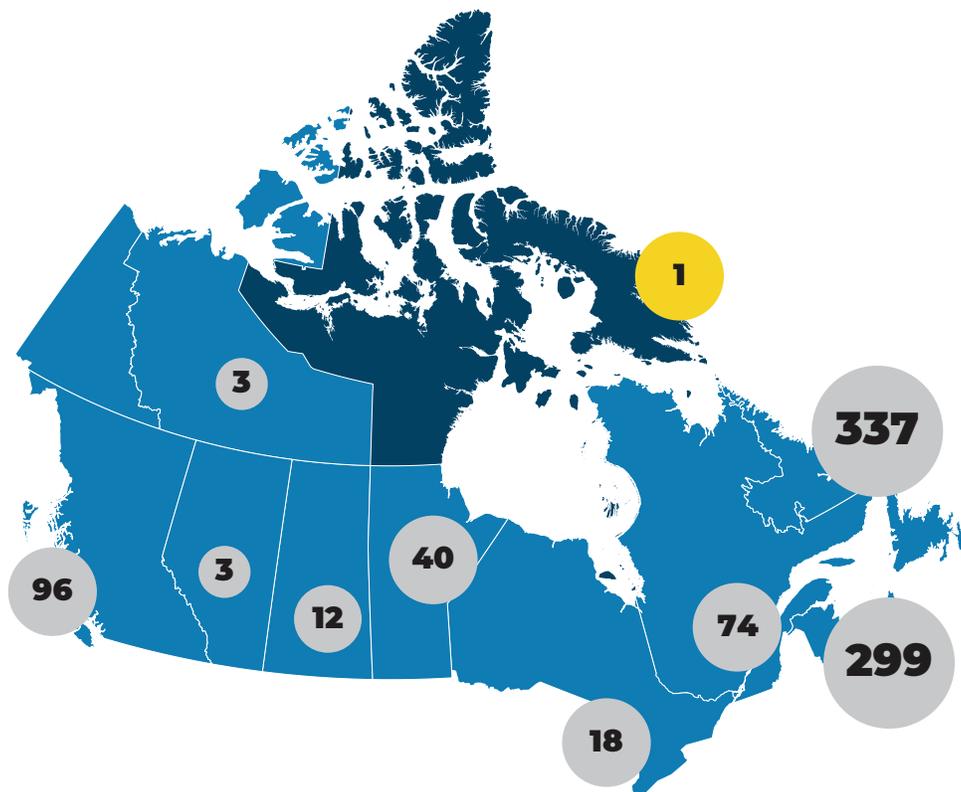
“an Inuit economy based in part on marine resources is both viable and desirable”
(Article 15.1.1)

HARVESTER ENABLING INFRASTRUCTURE

Marine infrastructure is essential for harvesters to safely access the water. Food processing plants are needed to ensure that country food harvested can be properly prepared, stored and shared. Training centers and programs are needed to develop and transfer skills. Without these supports, harvesters will not be able to feed communities.

Marine infrastructure

To build the foundation for food sovereignty in the Arctic, Canada needs to invest in small craft harbours and deep-sea ports that facilitate safe and reliable access to the land and sea in the context of rapid environmental changes. This infrastructure is needed to support local harvesters and allow Inuit to meaningfully participate in the management and stewardship of conservation areas.



There are over 1,000 harbours overseen by Department of Fisheries and Oceans. Only one is in Nunavut.

Multi-use infrastructure

Equipment warehouses, office spaces and other multi-use facilities are essential for the delivery of harvester and steward programs.

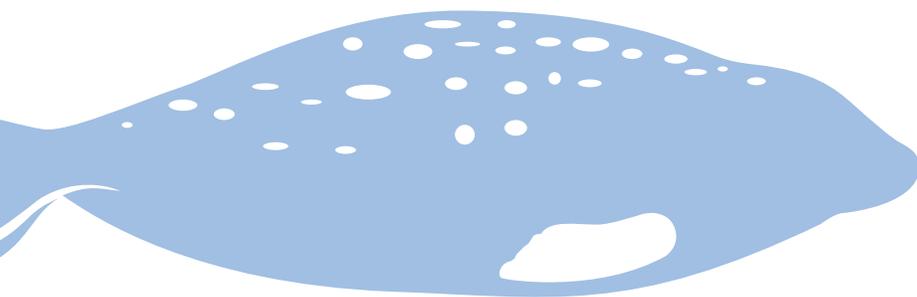
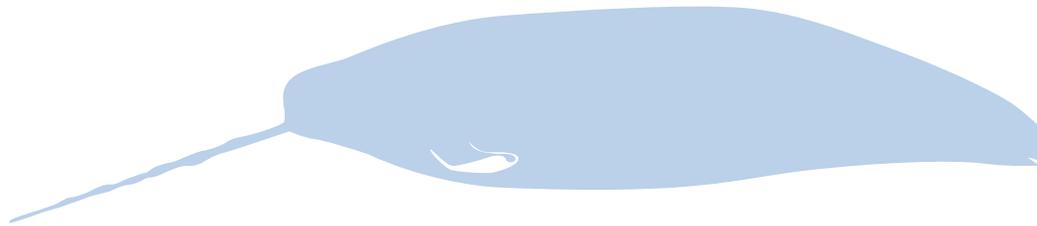
Food processing plants

Food processing plants will support country food preparation such as seal, waterfowl, fish, caribou and berries. The plants will increase access to country foods by extending shelf-life and can support the use of various food processing options such as vacuum packing, canning, drying, smoking, and sausage making.

The plants will also support value-added business opportunities by increasing access to hides, furs, seal skins, bones, antlers, walrus and narwhal tusks. These products are essential materials for making clothing, art and craft items.

A training centre

The center will be a dedicated space for Qikiqtani Inuit to train and develop the necessary skills for employment related to Inuit stewardship, harvesting, conservation and parks management.



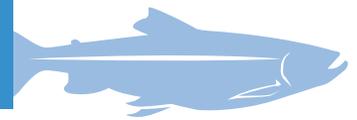
INUIT HARVESTER AND STEWARD PROGRAMS

Inuit harvester and steward programs deliver tangible, direct socio-economic benefits to Qikiqtani communities. These programs advance food sovereignty, bolster research capacity, and empower Inuit. These programs are dependent on infrastructure that does not yet exist.

Inuit harvester programs

Inuit harvesters will harvest and process country food and prepare byproducts such as furs, bones and skins. Harvesters need quality tools and equipment that can withstand the harsh Arctic environment as well as resources to store, maintain and repair them.

Harvester's catch will fill the community freezer and provide country food to feed Nunavut. Their catch will also provide animal products that stimulate the local economy. Hides, furs, seal skins, bones, antlers, walrus and narwhal tusks become essential material for making clothing, art and craft items.

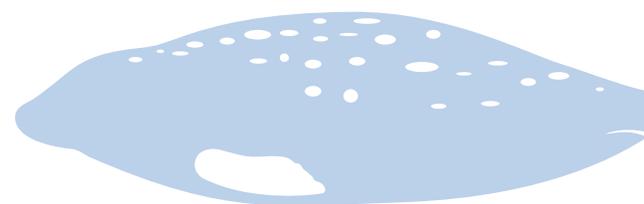
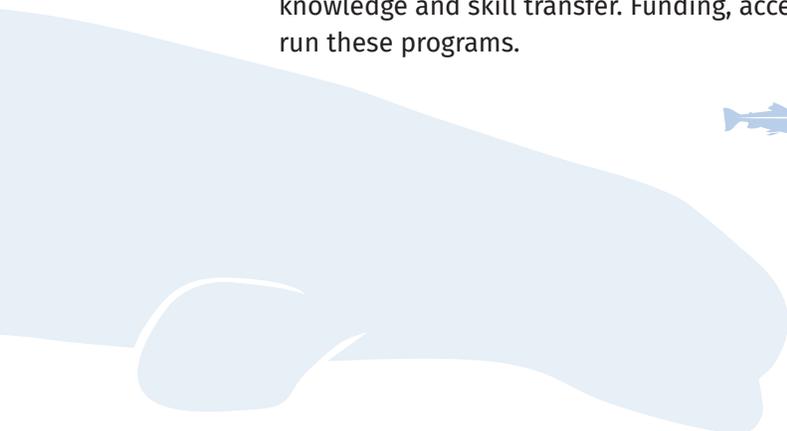


Inuit Stewardship programs

Inuit Stewards will monitor, manage, and oversee conservation efforts within the Qikiqtani Region. They will also assist with research, collection, and preservation of Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit. These stewards will require quality equipment and facilities.

Elder and youth on the land programs

These intergenerational initiatives will be led by harvesters and stewards to support knowledge and skill transfer. Funding, access to facilities, and equipment are needed to run these programs.



HOW TO SUPPORT HARVESTERS

MAKE HARVESTING A PAID JOB

- ALLOW INUIT TIME TO FOCUS ON HARVESTING
- PAY INUIT FOR HARVESTING TIME, FOOD PROCESSING AND FOOD SHARING
- RECOGNIZE HARVESTING SKILLS AS PROFESSIONAL SKILLS



RESOURCE HARVESTERS FOR EXPENSES

- FUEL
- EQUIPMENT PURCHASE
- EQUIPMENT MAINTENANCE
- EQUIPMENT REPAIRS



PROVIDE THE NECESSARY INFRASTRUCTURE

- SMALL CRAFT HARBOURS AND PORTS
- MULTI-USE FACILITIES FOR OPERATIONS, EQUIPMENT STORAGE AND REPAIRS
- FOOD PROCESSING PLANTS
- TRAINING FACILITIES



PROVIDE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND MENTORSHIP PROGRAMS

- FORMAL TRAINING FOR HARVESTER-RELATED FIELDS SUCH AS PREPARING AND PROCESSING FOOD, PELTS AND OTHER ANIMAL BY-PRODUCTS
- MENTORSHIP PROGRAMS TO TRANSFER SKILLS ACROSS GENERATIONS WITH A FOCUS ON YOUTH



APPENDIX

RECLAIMING THE INUIT HUNTER: THE ROLE IN NORTHERN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND THE HUNTING ECONOMY

Pitseolak Pfeifer

I write this as an Inuk born and raised in Iqaluit, Nunavut, aiming at giving the reader an appreciation of the value of the hunting economy for my people in pre- and around-contact context. I want to highlight the key role of Inuit hunters as anchors of our communities and peoplehood, which includes, but is not limited to, economic development. That is, although focusing on hunters as agents of economic development here, their story in Inuit societies would make the reader understand that they are actually much more: they are guardians of Inuit Nunangat (Inuit homelands) and a way of life that has sustained our people in the North for millennia. To put it simply, it is an example of a sustainable economic practice with returns beyond the economic domain (i.e. social, cultural, political). More importantly, it is sustainable because it has traditionally included social and cultural considerations, in addition to environmental responsibility. If filtered through the Western economic lens, the story of hunters makes them community entrepreneurs, leading to assets and skills development by continued investments, in ways that adapt to the changing climate.

To begin, we encourage the reader to move away from the use of the words traditional or subsistence economy when discussing the Inuit hunting economy. The word traditional often evokes ancient practices that lack any connection to Western modernity or that are the exclusive domain of culture. The word subsistence is also problematic, in that it places what has historically been a complex socio-economic and cultural governance system at a survival individual level. With hunting came the development of social sharing networks and rules, gender and intergenerational roles, community economy, environmental knowledge, tools, cultural practices, trade, and education. Hunting was part of a holistic way of being revolving around “sila.” The Inuit notion of sila implies conservation attributes (i.e. living in harmony with nature), but is different from the Western understandings of ‘land’, ‘nature’, or ‘the environment’ – it is a state of being in intellectual, biological, psychological, environmental, locational, and geographical senses.¹

Our hunters worked together with women, communities more generally, and with our natural laws, in structured, yet adaptable ways, which was necessary to keep our society healthy through harsh environmental conditions. Hard work ethic was key in

¹Qitsualik, R. A. “Inummarik: self-sovereignty in classic Inuit thought. In Inuit qaujimatuga- nqut in Nilliajut: Inuit Perspectives on Security, Patriotism and Sovereignty. Ottawa: Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (2013): 29.

this enterprise to work with, and respect, nature. Laziness, greed and jealousy were not tolerated, and zero waste and sharing were principles driving our economy. Respect for our parents and Elders was paramount, and so was looking after the ones who could not provide for themselves. The hunter was a central figure in maintaining this state of affairs, pre- and around-contact: expertise was gained with a lifetime of training on the land and in the community, and the knowledge, not only the food, was to be shared. In Inuktun (the Inuit language), Inuit knowledge is Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit (IQ). The literal translation of IQ would be, “Inuit way of doing things: the past, present, and future knowledge, experience and values of Inuit Society.”² The applied and the communal aspects are perhaps the pillars of IQ: non-hierarchical, a culture of sharing knowledge by sharing actions, where welcoming and helping represent central societal values.

In this context, in hunters we find the same abilities and skills that commonly characterize the profile of an entrepreneur and community leader: passion and motivation, risk-taking, knowledge of the domain of activity and its connection to the larger environmental, market, and societal factors, experience-based confidence, work ethic, disciplined dedication, adaptability and flexibility, effective planning skills. Hunting required continued technological invention and innovation, training, research and development, labour and capital investments, with return not only to the individual, but to the whole community.

As food providers, hunters had intimate knowledge of the uumajuit (Inuktun for animals). Uumajuit means those beings which are alive. This is important, as it shows that for Inuit animals are not only a source of food. We relate to them as beings in our common world, and hunters guard them as such. Hunting implies a sense of responsibility not only to our families as providers, but also to our uumajuit. Hunters knew which animals were healthy or sick, and which to harvest and which to leave to grow. In Western thought, this would make them the veterinarians or animal biologists. The process of becoming a hunter meant becoming inummarik – a whole capable human being, who possesses the character traits and values of respect, selflessness, empathy, teaching, and self-respect, with a fierce devotion to family, children, to our survival as a people and to our land, waters and those beings which are alive (i.e. the uumajuit). With the animals we caught, we gained home- heating fuel and fuel for our transportation (Inuit sled dogs), clothing, tools, nutrition, and our homes. From there, we manufactured our hunting tools and equipment. It was a complex economic system, which did not function on the principle of profit, but on the principles of balanced supply and demand and zero waste (i.e. silatunig: the respectful state of being in the world).

Inuit hunters have always been a source of great pride for our people. Inuit are raised to see hunters as central to our community well-being, with a role beyond alleviating food

²Awa, S., Tapardjuk, L. The First Annual Report of the Inuit Qaujimagatuqanginnut (Iq) Task Force. The Government of Nunavut (2002): 4. Observation on the land, which would nowadays be research in physics, biology, and geography.

insecurity. Historically, they had expertise in the multi-dimensional aspects of our lands, waters, and our skies. They had the knowledge to keep us safe from the great dangers of our lands and waters, by expertly navigating through the natural world. They knew our world in a very intimate way through sight, sense, and smell; through philosophy, reason, and discernment; and through physics, science, and logic. They were mentors, professors, and teachers, providing camp leadership for our communities by listening to our collective voices.

As community leaders, hunters worked out a governance model through consensus building and by helping to keep the peace and giving counsel. They led by working collaboratively with one another and by recognizing that each community member had strengths and assets, with specializations and particular expertise, which contributed to the well-being of our communities. As a hunter, one was responsible for the lives of the community members. Responsibility and dedication came with the pride and joy of being the guardian of natural laws, through direct connection they operated with *silatunig*.

We need to re-establish the role of the hunter and the centrality of the hunting economy in the North. Our people, those of us who would be hunters, are under intense and undue pressure to conform to the global market economy in ways that disconnect us from our lands and animals. This means disconnection from our social fabric as Inuit. By reclaiming the role of the Inuit hunter as a profession in its own rights, we apply IQ to the current political-economic context of paid labour to bring positive change to communities, rather than keeping hunters and their knowledge exclusively in the ecological and cultural domain. Hunting is central to Inuit holistic conservation and identity as a people. It is environmental protection (preservation stewardship value – responsibility to our land, animals and waters). It is knowledge economy (scientific value – intergenerational knowledge transfer, the research enterprise, climate change mitigation and adaptation, technology). It is sustainable economic development (economic value – food security, trade). And it is cultural and social economy (cultural and social value – kinship, community ties, social networks, creative industries).

The return per investment is considerable. It is an act of reconciliation that contributes holistically to healing and to the success of Inuit that yields profits beyond the economic value: as a capable human being (*Inummarik*). These profits include combating the social ills our youth face today, in light of mental health and suicide prevention. Inuit hunters can once again become the main actors in social cohesion that bring together Inuit societal values with current opportunities moving to future social enterprise, climate monitoring, sovereignty, environmental protection, and cultural tourism.

