

A Portrait of the Social Economy in Northern Canada

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Abstract: Northern communities are currently facing many social and economic challenges. The non-profit, voluntary, and co-operative organizations involved in the social economy sector assist communities with these challenges by empowering them through the development of social and human capital. This article is part of an initial evaluation of the potential of the social economy to assist northern communities to deal with these challenges and develop this capacity. It offers an initial description of the state of the social economy in Canada's North through an examination of the results of a census of these organizations and a subsequent survey. The analysis shows that social economy organizations are particularly important to northern communities: they are more numerous and have more of an economic importance than in other regions of Canada. At the same time, these organizations are facing several important challenges that affect their ability to assist these communities such as a lack of funding, finding volunteers, retaining paid staff, and training.

Canada's North has undergone tremendous social, cultural, and economic change over the past sixty years. The two main types of communities in the North—small Indigenous communities and small non-Indigenous resource dependent communities—have gone through processes of development quite different from most other communities in Canada. These processes have resulted in many unique challenges. These challenges now require new approaches that assist these communities to ensure healthier and sustainable futures.

One of these new approaches is that of the social economy. The term social economy refers to those non-governmental enterprises and organizations that use the tools and some of the methods of business, on a not-for-profit basis, to provide social, cultural, economic, health, and other services to communities. It is an approach that seeks to empower communities by developing social capital—the ability to use social relations to mobilize communities—and

human capital—the human resource assets of a community—through non-profit, voluntary, and co-operative organizations that work more effectively in addressing the needs and interests of their communities. This article is part of an initial evaluation of the potential of the social economy in northern communities to enable them to deal with changes they are experiencing. Before a proper evaluation starts we needed to first find out the current state of these organizations. An essential part of this research is understanding the current conditions of the social economy in northern Canada. Are there particularities that make the social economy approach to economic and social development more or less viable in northern communities?

This article is an initial attempt to provide a “portrait” of the social economy in the region. It will start with a brief review of the available research literature in an attempt to isolate key characteristics of the social economy in northern communities. This is followed by an analysis of available census data and a 2003 nation-wide survey of non-profit and voluntary organizations. Finally, the article will outline initial results from an on-going census of social economy organizations currently being administered by the Social Economy Research Network for Northern Canada (SERNNNoCa) researchers. The analysis shows that social economy organizations are particularly important to northern communities—they are more numerous and have more of an economic importance than other regions of Canada. Results show that these organizations are facing several important challenges including finding funding, getting volunteers, obtaining and retaining paid staff and providing their training and development, and problems related to internal capacity.

Introduction to the Social Economy in the Canadian North

In 2006, researchers were awarded funds from the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada to study the social economy in northern Canada. Funding was targeted towards the establishment of a network of researchers and community groups that could work together to study the issue. The network that came into being was named the Social Economy Research Network for Northern Canada (SERNNNoCa). Under the terms of the initial funding agreement, the region that SERNNNoCa is focusing on is comprised of the three territories, Nunavik in northern Quebec, and Labrador. At the same time, we are aware that there are many similarities between communities in these areas and those in other areas of the provincial Norths. We hope to merge this research with that being done by other researchers in these areas.

Until the Second World War most of the Canadian North was isolated from many of the changes occurring in the rest of Canada. Apart from a

relatively brief flurry of activity during the Yukon Gold Rush at the end of the nineteenth century, the Indigenous population of the North was able to maintain their traditional lifestyles supported by the economic interests of the fur trade (Coates and Morrison, 2005; Zaslow, 1989). This started to change in the late 1930s with new mining developments in the Yellowknife area. This was followed by military development during the Second World War (Coates, 1985). These developments introduced the infrastructure necessary for continued development after the war.

Almost from the beginning of this change there was a debate about how the “modernization” of the North should be managed. The fur trading industry and the government first thought it best to keep the Indigenous population as isolated as possible from the forces of change—often in opposition to the people themselves who started to migrate closer to sources of western goods and services (Damas, 2002). Continued dependence on their traditional activities was considered to be the best option for the Indigenous peoples of the region. Sometimes this was taken to the extreme with relocation projects resulting in serious problems for these communities (Tester and Kulchyski, 1994; Marcus, 1995). It was only after a series of incidents involving starvation in several communities during the 1950s that the government started to change its mind and decided that it would no longer attempt to stop people from moving into newly establishing settlements (Damas, 2002: 106). It was felt that as Canadian citizens, the Indigenous peoples of the North had a right to basic services available in the settlements such as education, health, and social services.

Yet it was recognized that the North would not be simply an extension of the modernist urban life of southern Canada. The communal and sharing culture that was presumed to be the basis of traditional Indigenous culture should be maintained by special approaches to development. Co-operatives and community economic development initiatives were highlighted (McPherson, 2000; Pell, 1990; Lotz, 1982). With the negotiation and signing of new treaties, these alternative approaches became institutionalized by the Indigenous peoples themselves in their attempts to maintain traditional activities (Saku, 2002).

While this alternative approach to economic and social development was applied to the Indigenous communities of the region, it was generally not applied to the resource dependent, single industry towns that made up almost all other communities in the Canadian North. These communities were designed to be glorified work camps that would shut down when the mineral that they exploited was exhausted, or when the price for that particular commodity fell to a point that production was no longer profitable

(Southcott, 2006). In terms of social capital, these communities were almost the opposite of the northern Indigenous communities. Networks were meant to be temporary and based around recreational activities rather than around centuries of co-existence and a historic commitment to the land.

Factors Affecting Social Economy Development in Northern Canada

The role and use of social economy organizations is unique in the North given the region's particular conditions. As mentioned above, historically the North has been characterized by two types of communities: resource dependent communities dominated by non-Indigenous peoples, and Indigenous communities characterized by a mixed economy (Southcott, 2003). Recently a third type of community has gained in importance—the service sector community (Bone, 2003). Research on the impact of resource development in northern communities has shown that a fundamental contradiction exists between the organizational principles of large-scale resource exploitation enterprises and “the local social economy” of these communities (House, 1981). The impact of megaprojects on northern Indigenous communities has been an important issue in recent research (Bone, 2003). These projects are typically industrial in nature and affect the communities in varying ways. Research has indicated that the rapid introduction of industrial-based relations and consumption patterns has conflicted with the traditional hunting and gathering economy and traditions. This conflict has led to serious situations of social instability and the myriad of social problems that this instability brings (Chabot, 2004; Niezen, 1993; Stabler, 1990).

While these are all issues that underlie recent social research on communities in Canada's North, there are three characteristics that can be highlighted as having an important impact on the social economy sector in these communities. The first is the existence of a mixed economy in the region's Indigenous communities. These communities rely not only on wages from labour but on the continued existence of traditional subsistence hunting and fishing activities. Another characteristic is the continued importance of the state in Canada's North. A colonial culture combined with an economy dominated by industrial logic and recent implementation of paternalistic welfare state policies has meant a strong role of the state in the northern economy. Given that the social economy is linked to “bottom-up” flows of power, the “top-down” power structure associated with state involvement is likely to have an impact on social economy formation. Finally, the dependence on large-scale resource exploitation found in northern resource dependent communities can also be seen to have an important impact on the formation of a social economy in the region. The lack of a “stakeholder” culture in

these communities is also likely to have an impact on the development of the social economy in the North.

The Mixed Economy

Most Indigenous communities in Canada's North are dependent on a mixed economy (Abele, 1997; Stabler and Howe, 1990). In this mixed economy, income in-kind (from the land through traditional economic activities) and cash income (from wages and social transfers), are shared between community members. The unique aspect of the northern mixed economy is the relative importance of subsistence activities. Abele makes the case that this mixed economy can only be maintained through state policy measures to regulate land use and to provide social transfers. In the current neo-liberal climate the ability of the state to provide these measures is increasingly questioned and as such the mixed economies of these communities are threatened. Stabler and Howe have pointed to the impending crisis arising in the Northwest Territories due to the fiscal austerity of governments and the reduction of social transfers. The mixed economy is also threatened by other things such as accelerating resource-wage opportunities and destruction of wildlife patterns and habitat. Youth are being affected by increased exposure to new cultural ideas. Television, videos, and the school system are challenging the ability of the mixed economy to adapt. Subsistence activities are being challenged by a desire to engage in other types of activities. These changes make it harder to keep production from the land as an important part of northern Indigenous economies.

Despite these challenges, the traditional subsistence hunting and fishing economy continues to exist. It is viewed as an important source of food when economic change turns boom times to bust times. It also continues to exercise a cultural importance and is a significant part of the identity of these communities. Values characterizing subsistence hunting and fishing are still important basic values for the communities as a whole. These values include the importance of group co-operation and sharing. As such, these values do serve as a potential source of encouragement for social-economic sector development. The notions of utilitarian self-interest that characterize the private sector do not totally dominate the economic logic existing in Indigenous communities. Because of this, social economy organizations have the potential to be seen with a greater degree of legitimacy than in non-Indigenous communities. The continued presence of a mixed economy can therefore be viewed as opening up opportunities for social economy development.

Yet the mixed economy is not the social economy. The notions of non-profit activities or democratic decision making central to the social economy are not central concepts to the mixed economy. The co-operative, alternative democratic discourse that characterizes social economy organizations elsewhere in Canada is a largely foreign voice in Indigenous communities of Canada's North. As such, the mixed economy also represents constraints on social economy development.

Many of the activities that dominate the mixed economy can be easily integrated into the social economy paradigm because they both go beyond simple utilitarian economic notions. Sahlins has argued that the traditional economy of Indigenous societies can be considered part of the social economy in that much of its pre-capitalist values still play an important role in the region and act in contradiction to the profit-seeking values of contemporary "affluent" society (Sahlins, 1972). Other aspects of the mixed economy that do not fall under a strict capitalistic or state-based economic paradigm are more easily integrated into a social economy paradigm.

The State

The Canadian North has always been a colony to southern interests. Its historical development is profoundly marked by this fact. In terms of economic development, the distances and conditions in the North meant that the long-term interests of both investors and the government could only be met by long-term planning and a rationalistic exploitation of natural resources. Less than ten years after the initial anarchy of the 1898 Yukon Gold Rush, industrial activity in the Canadian North was dominated by a new logic based on close co-operation and planning between the national government and international finance capital (Coates and Morrison, 2005; Zaslow, 1989).

This logic became even more prevalent following the Second World War when American government actions, with some help from Canada, rapidly established new transportation systems in the Canadian North such as the Alaska Highway and a series of northern landing strips and air bases. These projects legitimized, in the eyes of many, the superior nature of industrial developments planned by both government officials and industrial interests. Following the war, industrial activity in the territorial North became almost entirely controlled by the federal government as the region became "the bureaucrat's north" (Coates, 1985: 191).

In addition to economic planning, by the late 1950s the state had a new role in the North as the provider of those services that the post-war welfare state was supposed to make available to all Canadians. During the 1960s the

Indigenous peoples of Canada's North experienced a shift from dispersed seasonal camps to village life (Damas, 2002). The federal government's attention shifted from "preservationalism" to humanitarianism as it sought to implement the new "Welfare State Policy" (191). The provision of new health care services, educational services, and new housing during this decade led to increased centralization in villages. This was largely accomplished by bureaucratic agencies from outside the community but sometimes co-operatives and community economic development initiatives were used as enlightened government officials saw the dangers of an absence of community involvement (McPherson, 2000).

Despite current trends towards increased self-government, the North is still heavily dependent on the federal government for the provision of services and decision making. This historic role of the state, first as a colonial power, then as the primary provider of the common welfare state and modern services, means that the northern social economy has been affected by different forces than other regions of Canada. The state has been more directly involved in the development of services that are usually developed by social economy or private sector organizations. The most illustrative example of this is the role of the federal government in the development of consumer and producer co-operatives in the region (MacPherson, 2000). Paternalistic state policies can be seen to have had an impact, sometimes positive but often negative, on the development of social economy organizations in the North.

Resource Dependence

Historically speaking, communities in the Canadian North exist primarily for one of two reasons: to provide a homeland for the Indigenous peoples of the region or to facilitate the exploitation of a natural resource by non-Indigenous outside powers. While whaling and fur harvesting were the initial resources exploited by these outside interests, the creation of permanent communities of non-Indigenous peoples was largely a creation of twentieth century industrial needs. While the Yukon Gold Rush at the end of the nineteenth century has tended to create the image that northern communities were created by individual adventurers using their entrepreneurial frontier spirit to exploit the northern wilderness, the historical reality of non-Indigenous community development in the North is one of the planning and construction of resource dependent communities designed by outside corporations in partnership with the federal government.

These communities were based primarily on mining. The dominance of one main industry means that there exists a high degree of "dependency"

in these communities and, because of the cyclical nature of commodity production, they have a high degree of instability. The specific economic characteristics are: one dominant employer who is usually a large industrial corporation based outside the region; the industry is capital intensive and technologically intensive; jobs are primarily unskilled or semi-skilled “blue-collar” occupations; and there are relatively high wages, few employment opportunities for women, and small retail and service sectors.

Demographically these communities are characterized by a highly mobile population, a high degree of youth out-migration, a young population with fewer older people, more males than females, larger families, and greater ethnic diversity. The culture of these towns tends to be dominated by a high degree of dependency, a wage-earner culture (as opposed to a stakeholder culture), a male-dominated blue collar culture, a lower level of formal education, and a negative environment for women.

Sociologists such as Lucas and Himelfarb have shown these towns to be different than agricultural-based and fishing-based communities (Himelfarb, 1982). According to Lucas, fishing towns, agricultural towns, and tourist towns, while they may be resource-dependent, are not single industry communities. Such communities are made up of “small capitalists (and) entrepreneurs” who have a lifestyle that “differentiates them from the population of a community with a single industry base” (Lucas, 1971: 14).

These particular socio-economic conditions lead to a social economy that can be seen to differ from other types of communities. The absence of a stakeholder culture and the lack of economic empowerment can be seen to engender a lack of commitment to the community and a culture of dependence that can be seen to negatively affect the development of social economy organizations. Previous research has shown that other than recreationally-oriented organizations, there are few non-profit or voluntary organizations (Himelfarb, 1982).

The Condition of the Social Economy in the North

The above discussion has shown that the type, form, operation, and development of social economy organizations in the Canadian North may be impacted by Indigenous traditions linked to the mixed economy, the historic role of the state now manifested in the provision of public sector services, and dependence on natural resource exploitation. It is important to understand that each of these factors will impact the social economy in different ways. It is not a simple matter of saying that this factor will have a positive impact or that factor will have a negative impact. We expect the reality will be much more complex.

Indeed, we can discover initial clues to this complexity in the findings of the most important recent attempt to describe the social economy in Canada—the 2003 National Survey of Non-profit and Voluntary Organizations. While this data does not allow in-depth investigations into social economy organizations in the North, a 2005 report from this study did list some interesting statistics related to the situation of non-profit and voluntary organizations in the three northern territories (Statistics Canada, 2005). It should be pointed out that this data does not include all social economy organizations. Co-operatives, an important part of many communities in the North, were not included in the 2003 survey.

The study counted 851 organizations in the territories. It is interesting to note that this was the highest percentage of social economy organizations per population in Canada. At 825 organizations per 100,000 population, the percentage was significantly more than the Canadian average of 508 per 100,000 population (Statistics Canada, 2005: 19). Only a minority of these organizations are registered charities. At 37% this rate is the lowest in the country and significantly less than the national average of 56% of organizations that are registered charities (20). Not surprisingly, compared to the provinces, the territories had the highest percentage of non-profit or voluntary organizations serving Aboriginal communities (20).

The study listed interesting financial characteristics of social economy organizations in the North. Organizations in the territories had average revenues of \$1.4 million. This was higher than the average in all other provinces in the country (Statistics Canada, 2005: 30). Compared to the provinces, social economy organizations in the territories had the highest percentage of income from “earned income”—fees for goods and services. This source comprised 57% of all income for these organizations in the North.

Data showed that social economy organizations in the North varied from other provinces by primary activity. The territories had the highest percentage of organizations involved in law, advocacy, and politics (Statistics Canada, 2005: 19). The region also had higher than average percentages of organizations involved in arts and culture; sports and recreation; education and research; the environment; and business and professional associations and unions. The region had lower percentages of organizations involved in health and social services; development and housing; grant making, fundraising, and voluntarism promotion; and religion.

The study also showed that social economy organizations in the territories were most likely to report problems related to organizational capacity (Statistics Canada, 2005: 53). Interestingly, the one capacity area

where they did not have problems was in obtaining board members. Northern organizations are also far more likely to report problems such as difficulty providing training to board members (52% in the territories versus 34% in Canada); difficulty providing staff training and development (45% versus 27%); and difficulty obtaining the type of paid staff the organization needs (44% versus 28%).

A Census of Social Economy Organizations in Northern Canada: Some Initial Observations

One of the first projects to be undertaken by SERNNNoCa was the development of an initial inventory, or portrait, of the social economy in northern Canada. This first attempt at a mapping of the social economy of the Yukon, Northwest Territories, Nunavut, Nunavik, and Labrador involved two stages. The first was a census of all social economy organizations in the Canadian North. A list of all possible social economy organizations with their main activity and location was constructed. The second was a questionnaire survey in order to uncover some of the basic characteristics of these organizations in comparison with other regions of Canada.

No single list exists for all social economy organizations in the North. As a result, an important first step in the portraiture process was the construction of this list. Before the list could be assembled researchers had to decide on a definition of what constitutes a social economy organization. The mapping exercise used in this project is based upon a broad definition of social economy that refers to activities that focus on serving the community rather than generating profits. The focus is on economic activities that are not primarily state driven and not primarily profit driven, and inclusive of traditional economies of Indigenous populations of the North. While a literature review of definitions was conducted, the project leaned most heavily on the definitions contained in Bouchard et al. (2006). The following is the definition provided in the materials included with an information package and the questionnaire that was distributed:

The social economy is made up of organizations in the not-for-profit sector that seeks to enhance the social, economic, and environmental conditions of communities. They use the tools and some of the methods of business, on a not-for-profit basis, to provide social, cultural, economic, health, and other services to communities. Separate from the private sector and government, the social economy includes non-profit organizations, the voluntary sector, charities, foundations, co-operatives, credit unions, and other social enterprises. They operate in areas ranging from housing to communications and in areas such

as recycling, home care, forestry, restaurants, catering, Aboriginal economic development, and manufacturing. These enterprises are flexible and sustainable tools that allow communities to address objectives related to social and economic concerns while furthering goals of community participation and control.

Once a definition was decided upon, a list had to be constructed based on this definition. This was done using several methods, often based on the region concerned. Each northern office began the task of compiling a list of northern social economy organizations in their respective territory. This involved searching the Internet, phoning and emailing key contacts, reviewing existing documents and resources, and reviewing materials at the legal registries offices.¹

It should be pointed out that the list of social economy organizations in the Canadian North is continually being updated. Researchers found that there are many groups that need to be researched in more depth before a decision is made to include them as a social economy organization. This is particularly the case with many Aboriginal organizations that undertake activities similar to social economy organizations but that are the products of treaties giving sovereign power to these communities. As was pointed out by at least one questionnaire respondent, to include these organizations as a social economy organization is to deny the legitimacy of these self-government initiatives.

Provisional lists of social economy organizations were established in 2006 and 2007 to serve as the sample frame for the initial questionnaire survey. Table 1 shows the numbers for each region of the Canadian North for these initial provisional lists. These lists included all potential social economy organizations and as such it was recognized at the time that the actual census list of social economy organizations would be smaller.

Information packages were distributed to as many potential groups as possible describing the social economy, the research network in the North, the upcoming questionnaire, and requesting input and guidance from these organizations. These mailings were also a means to highlight ways that they might benefit from the research program and to ensure that we have listed them appropriately as a social economy group. Information packages were also sent to organizations and government departments that provide support to social economy groups in the hopes that they would be able to assist in ensuring that we have targeted all social economy groups.

Table 1. Provisional list of social economy organizations in northern Canada

	Community Groups, First Nations & Inuit Organizations	Non-profit and Volunteer Organizations	Total
Yukon	40	482	522
NWT	153	475	628
Nunavut	35	309	444
Nunavik	19	46	65
Labrador	36	172	208

This provisional list served as the sampling frame for the initial questionnaire survey. In order to ensure that comparisons are eventually possible across Canada, the construction of the questionnaire was loosely based on a questionnaire designed by the social economy networks in both Atlantic Canada and southern Ontario. Elements were later borrowed from a questionnaire developed by the social economy network in British Columbia and Alberta. Once the initial questionnaire was constructed, a pilot test was done with a few non-profit organizations in the North. Based on comments from this pilot test, the questionnaire was modified to its final form.

Following the construction of the questionnaire, attention shifted to how best to deliver the questionnaire. Although SERNNNoCa has a coordination office in each of the northern territories, the cost to administer the questionnaire in person would be extremely high when considering the remoteness of many of the communities. The situation is vastly different between the three territories. Nunavut has no road connections between communities; all travel must be done by aircraft. It was decided to deliver the questionnaire using email where possible and mail where this was not possible. The questionnaire was sent out to approximately 1600 organizations. Just under half were mailed, a few were faxed, and the rest were emailed.

Problems were encountered with developing the lists of social economy organizations for both Nunavik and Labrador.² Discussions regarding results from these two regions would be premature at this point. Looking at the results for the three territories, it can be seen that a total of 153 questionnaires were returned from respondents identifiable as social economy organizations. This represents a response rate of 13%. Looking at each of the territories, the Yukon had a response rate of 14%, Nunavut had a response rate of 13%, and the Northwest Territories of 11%. These response rates make observations problematic. There are several explanations for the relatively poor response rates for this initial questionnaire but one of the most likely is that the project had just started and very few organizations were familiar with the notion

of the social economy let alone SERNNNoCa. As well, it is likely that the questionnaire, from which only a few questions are dealt with here, was too long for many respondents.

Before initial results from the questionnaire survey are discussed, it should be noted that the construction of the list of social economy organizations has given researchers quite a bit of information about northern social economy organizations independent of that gathered from the questionnaire. An extensive amount of information about these organizations can be gathered directly from the Internet. As concerns the territories, as of May 2008, 1190 organizations have been identified as being probable social economy organizations (Southcott, 2008). The Yukon has 516, the Northwest Territories 379, and Nunavut 295. It should be pointed out that this list was the first attempt at identifying social economy organizations in the territories and there are undoubtedly many changes that will be made as more information is gathered about each organization. In particular, in the Yukon and the Northwest Territories there are another fifty-two Aboriginal organizations that have the potential to be called social economy organizations but which have not been included in these totals until further information about them can be gathered.

While the response rate of the questionnaire survey makes use of the data problematic, Internet-based research done on the census has allowed researchers to identify the main activity of all but twenty-eight organizations. These results are shown in table 2.

We can use location quotients (LQ) to compare differences between the three territories in terms of the types of social economy organizations.³ The figures in table 2 show several important differences in the types of social economy organizations that exist in each of the territories.⁴ Compared to the averages for the territorial North, Nunavut has a much higher percentage of social economy organizations engaged in trade, finance, and/or insurance (LQ = 2.9). This is due primarily to the importance of co-operatives in the retail trade sector in Nunavut compared to the Northwest Territories and especially the Yukon. Another important difference concerning the social economy in Nunavut is the relative absence of organizations engaged in law, advocacy, and politics (LQ = 0.4). This can be partially explained by the fact that many of the national advocacy groups have not established branches in Nunavut. Finally, Nunavut has a larger than average number of organizations that are business associations, professional associations, or unions (LQ = 1.6). The main reason for this is the fact that each community in Nunavut has a hunters and trappers association. As well, there are more arts and crafts business associations in Nunavut than in the other territories.

Table 2. Social economy organizations in the territorial North by main activity

Activity	Nunavut		Northwest Territories		Yukon		Total Territories	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
Manufacturing, Processing and/or Construction	1	0.3	0	0	2	0.4	3	0.3
Trade, Finance and/or Insurance	29	10	8	2	3	0.6	40	3
Development and Housing	30	10	19	5	25	5	74	6
Sports and Recreation, Tourism	39	13	32	8	128	25	199	17
Arts and Culture	44	15	33	8	82	16	159	13
Education and Research	7	2	12	3	13	2	32	3
Health	11	4	19	5	15	3	45	4
Social Services	45	15	49	13	80	16	174	15
Environment	7	2	21	6	27	5	55	5
Law, Advocacy and Politics	14	5	70	18	49	10	133	11
Grant-making, Fundraising and Voluntarism Promotion	3	1	7	2	8	2	18	1.5
Religion	15	5	49	13	43	8	107	9
Business Association, Professional Association or Union	48	16	34	9	41	8	123	10
Unknown	2	1	26	7	0	0	28	2
Total	295		379		516		1190	
Undetermined Aboriginal	0		21		31		52	

The most noticeable particularity about social economy organizations in the Northwest Territories is the larger relative number of groups dealing with law, advocacy, and politics (LQ = 1.7). The primary explanation for this category is the larger number of community justice committees in the territory. Another difference from the other territories is the fact that the

Northwest Territories have few organizations dealing with sports, recreation and tourism (LQ = 0.5). As well, the Northwest Territories is different from the rest of the region in that it has a higher percentage of religious-based social economy organizations.

The Yukon differs from the other territories in terms of the number of social economy organizations involved in trade, finance, and/or insurance (LQ = 0.2). The reason for this is the almost total absence of co-operatives in the retail sector of the Yukon. The Yukon also has a higher percentage of social economy organizations devoted to sports and recreation than the other territories (LQ = 1.5). Finally, the Yukon has fewer business or professional associations relative to the other territories (LQ = 0.8).

As pointed out above, the relatively low response rate from the questionnaire survey means that the results from the survey may not be representative of all social economy organizations in the territories. At the same time, there is at least one indicator that suggests that it could be fairly representative.⁵ We do have main activity statistics for the entire territories. When these are compared to the activity statistics for the questionnaire respondents we see that the statistics for the two groups are remarkably similar as seen in table 3.⁶ As well, we noted above that the percentage of respondents from each territory is similar to the percentage of social economy organizations found in the census.

There is value, therefore, in examining the results of the questionnaire survey as an initial indication of the state of social economy organizations in the territorial North. Table 4 lists the responses concerning the type of organization. Over 90% are non-profits, over half are voluntary organizations, and less than 8% consider themselves co-operatives. We have already mentioned that co-operatives tend to be more popular in Nunavut and the Northwest Territories and are almost non-existent in the Yukon.

It is interesting to note that social economy organizations in the North tend to have relatively long periods of existence. The average age for all organizations responding to the questionnaire is almost twenty-one years with some variation by territory. The Yukon has the longest average age (twenty-four years) followed by the Northwest Territories (twenty-one years) and Nunavut (sixteen years).

The territorial capitals are the home base for most of the social economy organizations that responded to the questionnaire. Whitehorse is home to 34%, Yellowknife to 16%, and Iqaluit to 12%. In terms of percentage of the total territorial population, Whitehorse and Iqaluit are overrepresented while Yellowknife is slightly under-represented. In table 5 we see that other communities with relatively large numbers of social economy respondents

are Inuvik and Dawson City. Just over 21% of all respondents were based in the smaller communities of the North.

Table 3. Percentage of social economy groups by main activity

Activity	Census of Social Economy Groups	Questionnaire Respondents
Manufacturing, Processing and/or Construction	0.2	0
Trade, Finance and/or Insurance	4	4
Development and Housing	7	7
Sports & Recreation, Tourism	17	14
Arts & Culture	13	14
Education and Research	3	5
Health	4	3
Social Services	14	16
Environment	5	7
Law, Advocacy and Politics	11	11
Grant-making, Fundraising and Voluntarism Promotion	2	2
Religion	10	5
Business Association, a Professional Association or a Union	10	12
Unknown	1	0

Table 4. Type of organization

		Yes	No	Don't know	No answer
a non-profit?	Total	140	12	0	1
	%	92	8	0	1
a voluntary organization?	Total	80	37	2	34
	%	52	24	1	22
a co-operative?	Total	12	78	14	49
	%	8	51	9	32

Table 5. Location of organization

<i>In which community are you based?</i>		
	Total	Percent
Whitehorse	52	34
Yellowknife	25	16
Iqaluit	18	12
Inuvik	8	5
Dawson City	7	5
Rankin Inlet	3	2
Cambridge Bay	3	2
Haines Junction	3	2
Hay River	3	2
Other	31	21

Table 6 lists the revenue sources of the respondent organizations. Almost 85% received funding from another organization over the past three years. Grants and government contributions are the most popular source of revenue but other important sources are in-kind donations, monetary donations, other revenues, and revenues from sales of goods and/or services. Many respondents also stated that their revenues increased over the past three years. When asked, 47% said that their revenues over the past three years had increased, while 39% said that revenues had remained the same. Just under 12% stated that their revenues had decreased over the past three years.

Table 6. Sources of revenue

	Total	Percent
Organizations receiving funding from other organizations in past three years	129	84
Sources		
Government payments for goods and services	34	22
Grants and government contributions	112	73
Revenues from sales of goods and/or services (other than those paid by government)	59	39
Donations—monetary	87	57
Donations—in kind (volunteering, supplies etc)	91	60
Other revenues—membership fees etc.	79	52

Respondents were asked if they had human resource problems. Results are shown in table 7. The most serious problems in this area relate to obtaining and retaining paid staff. Just over 30% of respondents said it was an issue that did not apply to them. Generally this is because these particular organizations do not have paid staff. Of the ones to whom it did apply, almost 60% stated that this was either a serious or moderate problem. Only 25% stated that it was not a problem. Next in importance came training. Of those groups to whom the issue applies, 45% of respondents listed providing staff training and development as a serious or moderate problem against 31% who said it was not a problem. Obtaining and retaining board members does not seem to be that much of a problem in the North. While 42% of respondents to whom the issue applied agreed that it was either a serious or moderate problem, 37% said it was not a problem. Providing training to board members is the least serious problem. Of those who stated that the issue applies to them, only 37% claimed it was a serious or moderate problem compared to 36% who said it was not a problem.

Social economy organizations were asked about their overall general needs. Table 8 lists the responses to this question. Finding funding was clearly the most important overall need of the social economy organizations responding to the questionnaire. Of all the respondents, 140 stated that it was an issue that applied to them. Of this number, 59% listed it as either a moderate or serious problem. Only 16% said it was not a problem.

Getting volunteers is the next most serious problem faced by the respondents. Of the 133 respondents who stated that it was an issue that applied to them, 47% said it was either a serious or moderate problem. Just over 18% said it was not a problem. Providing staff training and development was the next most important issue to respondents. A total of 128 respondents

indicated that it was an issue that applied to them. Of this total just over 38% stated it was either a serious or moderate problem while just under 34% said it was not a problem. Following closely in importance was the issue of internal capacity. Of all the respondents, 118 stated that this was an issue that applied to them. Within this group 40% indicated it was a serious or moderate problem while 36% said it was not a problem.

The least serious issue for most respondents was collaboration with other social economy groups. A total of 131 respondents said it was an issue that applied to them yet less than 15% of this group said it was a serious or moderate problem. Just over 67% said it was not a problem.

Table 7. Human resource needs

		A serious problem	A moderate problem	A small problem	Not a problem	Does not apply	No answer
obtaining and retaining the type of paid staff your organization needs...	Total	32	29	18	26	46	2
	%	21	19	12	17	30	1
providing staff training and development...	Total	21	32	28	36	33	3
	%	14	21	18	24	22	2
obtaining and retaining board members...	Total	21	32	37	47	13	3
	%	14	21	24	31	8	2
providing training to board members...	Total	18	31	35	47	19	3
	%	12	20	23	31	12	2

Table 8. General needs of organizations

		<i>For your organization, is:</i>					
		A serious problem	A moderate problem	A small problem	Not a problem	Does not apply	No answer
collaborating with other	Total	2	17	24	88	19	3
social economy organizations ...	%	1	11	16	58	12	2
internal capacity ...	Total	20	27	29	42	32	3
	%	13	18	19	28	21	2
training ...	Total	15	34	36	43	17	8
	%	10	22	24	28	11	5
getting volunteers ...	Total	22	40	47	24	16	4
	%	14	26	31	16	10	3
finding funding ...	Total	35	47	35	23	10	3
	%	23	31	23	15	6	2

Observations

The existing research on communities in Canada's North indicates that the development of social economy organizations in the region have been impacted by several important socio-historic particularities. The most important of these are dependence on a mixed economy, dependence on the exploitation of natural resources, and the legacy of an omnipresent colonial state. Our initial investigation of the present conditions of the social economy in Canada's North have not yet allowed us to come to any positive conclusions in regards to their overall state. Still, results of our investigation have led us to some important initial observations. The first is the relative importance of social economy organizations in northern communities. Data from the 2003 National Survey of Non-profit and Voluntary Organizations showed that the territories had the highest percentage of social economy organization per population in Canada. In addition, average revenues were higher on a percentage basis than any other province. This indicates that social economy organizations have a greater economic importance than in other regions of the country. While co-operatives were not included in this survey, knowledge of the importance of co-operatives in the retail, tourism, communications, and artistic sectors of northern communities serve to

support the 2003 survey findings as to the importance of social economy organizations in the North.

Our initial census of the three territories showed 1190 organizations have been identified as being probable social economy organizations. This list excludes many new treaty related Aboriginal organizations that may be considered either state organizations or social economy organizations. Analysis of the main activity of organizations included in the census showed the dominance of sport, recreation, and tourism organizations; social services organizations; arts and culture organizations; and law, advocacy, and politics organizations. This analysis also showed variations by territory.

Results from our initial questionnaire survey indicate that most social economy organizations in the territories are non-profits while over half are voluntary organizations. The average age of the organizations is twenty-one years and most are located in the capitals of each territory. In terms of revenue, most organizations got funding from government sources but a large percentage received funding from other sources including sales of goods and services, donations, and membership fees. The most important human resource issues are obtaining and retaining paid staff and training. In terms of general needs, finding funding was the most important followed by getting volunteers, providing staff training and development, and problems related to internal capacity.

This research is still being done in order to broaden our understanding of the social economy and the number and types of organizations that operate throughout Canada's North.

Next Steps

This was an initial phase in the collection of information on social economy groups in the North. The low response rate indicates that additional mechanisms are required in order to get a more comprehensive picture of the social economy. The northern research institutes, based at colleges in each of the territories, will continue to collect data using various mechanisms including websites, organization reports, as well as telephone and in-person discussions. Additional case studies will be undertaken that are intended to examine and highlight operations of these organizations. Case studies are being undertaken in the areas of housing and homelessness, poverty, and food security. Additional studies will also examine the social economy of northern Indigenous communities. This will consider the relationship between subsistence production, wage and mixed economies, sharing and reciprocity, the role of the state in regulating and/or promoting economic production, and the emergence of new institutions in the North.

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Notes

1. Some of the sources of information include: 2007 Help Directory for the Northwest Territories; NWT Service Directory; Social Agenda Working Group—Programs and Services Inventory of the Northwest Territories, 2002; Yellowknife Health & Social Services Authority; Aurora Research Institute and Nunavut Research Institute guidebooks with lists of community, First Nations, and Inuit organizations; Essential Guide to Services in Whitehorse 2006-07; Northern Research Agendas; Labrador Inuit Association website; Labrador Community Directory; Directory of Services and Programs Addressing the Needs of Older Adult Victims of Violence in Canada—Yukon, NWT, Nunavut, Newfoundland and Labrador; volunteer agencies in the North—Volunteer NWT (NWT Service Directory) and the Yukon Volunteer Bureau.
2. The lack of a coordination office in these regions meant that the lists were harder to validate. In addition, a decision was made to delay work on the list in Labrador and to first go through the scientific licensing process that was being put in place by the new Nunatsiavut government. It is hoped that construction of the initial census lists can be finished in 2009 followed by a questionnaire survey specific to these two regions.
3. The formula for location quotient used here is $LQ_i = (A_i / \sum A_i) / (B_i / \sum B_i)$ where A_i is equal to the percentage of social economy organizations in an activity in territory i and B_i is the average for all the territories.
4. It should be pointed out that there are distinct types of communities in the Canadian North. The resource dependent communities would be expected to have different social economy structures than those dependent on mixed economies. While data available at the time this article was written does not allow us to adequately compare these types of communities, this is an area that later research will be examining.
5. As the survey was not based on random sampling, probability theory based indicators of representativity cannot be used.
6. It should be noted that the main activity responses for the questionnaire respondents were recoded according to the criteria used for evaluating main activities in the census of social economy groups.

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