

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Tourism is not new to Nunavik. Hunting and fishing outfitting camps were the first products offered to tourists. Today, the region is increasingly receiving inquiries and visits from those who want to see and experience Arctic Québec.

The region is vulnerable to a negative assault on its culture and language, as well as negative ecological impacts on the land. Care must be taken to ensure that tourism is sustainable and beneficial to local economies, and that it provides not only a protection for the culture, traditions and language of Nunavimmiut but that it reinforces them.

Tourism has been identified as a major driver for economic growth by regional stakeholders, as well as the governments of Québec and Canada.

The development of an authentic cultural, eco-friendly and sustainable tourism industry will have a number of positive effects, including community development, youth employment and cultural reinforcement.

The type of coordination and policy-making needed to meet the challenges presented by the potential negative and positive impacts of tourism should be undertaken by an organization that has no vested commercial interests in the industry. The KRG, which has a mandate for the regional administration of government programs, is the appropriate organization to assume this role.

A sustainable tourism industry based on community-driven products and activities, with minimum negative impacts on the land and residents, can only evolve if there is a regional strategy for its development and a firm commitment from governments to provide the necessary resources.

BACKGROUND

In 1994, a position paper on tourism entitled *Tourism in Nunavik* was produced by the KRG, the Kativik Regional Development Council and the Makivik Corporation. This document was submitted to the *Secrétariat aux Affaires autochtones* (Aboriginal affairs). It recommended:

- that the Québec government make a commitment to the development of tourism in Nunavik;
- that the Québec government recognize Nunavik as a separate region for tourism purposes;
- that the Québec government enhance the specific identity of Nunavik as the Arctic tourism destination in the province and provide the necessary technical and financial resources;
- that parks be established in the region;
- that tourism be funded through five-year agreements and that these agreements be block funded;
- that funding from the Québec government be made available to the KRG in order to establish and fund a regional tourism association, to provide local entrepreneurs with technical support, to market and promote the region, and to create a special research and development fund on tourism products.

Some of these recommendations have been met, others have not.

The Québec government has recognized the importance of a specific tourism strategy for Nunavik. The Nunavik Tourism Association (NTA) was created and is funded directly by the Québec government as well as by the KRG and Makivik.

In 2002, Makivik, the KRG and the Québec government signed the *Partnership Agreement on Economic and Community Development in Nunavik* (Sanarrutik Agreement). One of the objectives of this agreement is to “accelerate the development of the (...) tourism potential of Nunavik” through the creation of national parks. Indeed, national parks are becoming a reality with the creation of *Parc national des Pingualuit* in 2007 and the opening of an interpretation centre in Kangiqsujuaq, the creation of *Parc national Kuururjuaq* in 2009, and a plan for the creation of others parks over the next few years. Funding for park development as well as the management of the two newly created parks is provided for under the *Agreement concerning Block Funding for the Kativik Regional Government* (Sivunirmut Agreement). The KRG moreover receives funding for park infrastructure construction through specific agreements.

The only other tourism funding secured by the KRG to date has been for training and employment initiatives.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

From 1994 to 2005, tourism was limited to products offered by outfitters and hotels.

Today, the region is experiencing a surge in tourists' interest. The Arctic has become the destination of choice for many. The search for authentic cultural, eco-friendly and sustainable adventure tourism products is focusing on Nunavik.

Influential travel and tourism media is showing increased awareness of the uniqueness of the region and is providing a window for international exposure. Cruise ships make stops at different communities on a regular basis during the summer season, adventure and endurance activities are available and business tourism is becoming a viable proposition.

Tourism has been identified as a major driver for future economic growth by regional stakeholders, as well as the governments of Québec and Canada. The development of an authentic cultural, eco-friendly and sustainable tourism industry is expected to have a number of positive effects, including community development, youth employment and cultural reinforcement.

The main types of tourism products provided in the region are sports hunting and fishing, ship cruises, business tourism, hospitality (hotels, restaurants and catering), and national parks.

REGIONAL PLAYERS

The KRG promotes tourism through its Employment, Training, Income Support and Childcare Department (ETISC Department), its Research and Economic Development Department and its Renewable Resources, Environmental and Land Use Planning Department. The KRG's support takes many different forms:

- funding for the NTA;
- employment and training initiatives;
- community tourism pilot projects;
- park development and management;
- business development support.

For its part, the *Ministère du Tourisme* is actively promoting tourism in the Nord-du-Québec Region. The ACCORD is a Québec-government initiative to develop niche industries in various regions. A subcommittee on tourism development in Nunavik was recently set up. It is chaired by the KRG and composed of various stakeholders including the NTA, Makivik, Air Inuit, and the Federation of Cooperatives of Northern Québec (FCNQ). The subcommittee has a mandate to propose a five-year tourism strategy and action plan for Nunavik to be presented to the Québec government.

The Government of Canada provides funding to train Nunavimmiut for employment in tourism. The funding is paid to the KRG by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada through an Aboriginal human resource development agreement.

The Makivik Corporation is an important tourism stakeholder. It owns and operates the two airlines that service the region (First Air and Air Inuit), and it has controlling interest in Cruise North Expeditions.

The FCNQ coordinates the operation of cooperative hotels in every Nunavik community and operates the only Inuit-owned travel agency. It offers short-term tourism products and operates hunting and fishing outfitter camps.

The NTA is the regional tourism association. It provides vital information for those interested in visiting the region and participates in various promotional activities both in and outside of Nunavik.

Different landholding corporations and municipal councils have also expressed interest in developing their local economies based on tourism. Some have even partnered with Southern companies to develop products that appeal to tourists, employ local people and provide training. These products include guiding, dogsledding, hospitality services, adventure excursions and risk management.

The Avataq Cultural Institute is involved in the development of both cultural and historical components of tourism products.

Finally, the Saputiit Youth Association works with the KRG to enable youth to benefit from the economic impacts of tourism through training and employment opportunities.

TRENDS AND OPPORTUNITIES

In 2007, extensive consultations with regional and local stakeholders were carried out by the KRG. The results of the consultations were recorded in the document entitled *Nunavik Tourism Trends and Opportunities*. The report is a comprehensive overview of tourism today and future avenues. It also proposes the following aim for tourism development:

“To create a unique, world-class, sustainable tourism industry that drives economic growth and focuses on Nunavik culture and the natural beauty of the region; and to position Nunavik as a premier international destination for Arctic tourism.”

The report identifies areas with specific potential:

- outdoor tourism, which includes adventure tourism, ecotourism and cultural activities;
- cultural tourism which includes activities for which an individual or an organization provides services focused on culture such as history, arts, crafts or regional cuisine;
- outfitting for sports hunting and fishing;
- business tourism with specific products for short-term stays in the region.

CHALLENGES

There are many challenges to the development of an authentic cultural, eco-friendly and sustainable tourism industry.

These challenges can be met by:

- securing financial commitment for the development of the infrastructure, training, products, branding and marketing needed for a strong tourism industry;
- coordinating the various stakeholders in order to link them to an effective tourism development strategy;
- funding pilot projects that support community-driven tourism products;
- developing and promoting a strong, recognizable and unique regional brand identity;
- supporting the cruise ship industry by preparing and training communities to receive guests;
- expanding business tourism to capitalize on existing travellers with the development of appropriate products and activities;
- incorporating a strong, authentic cultural component in all tourism products;
- supporting Nunavik Parks in the area of tourism and infrastructure development;
- supporting outfitters to diversify their products;
- supporting and coordinating apprenticeship programs for young entrepreneurs and workers;
- developing catering businesses with community organizations;
- finding and maintaining partners for the delivery of various adventure products;
- securing funding for the building and maintenance of visitor and interpretation centres;
- providing training in risk management and developing a risk management plan for various tourist activities;
- identifying and enforcing appropriate certification in various sectors of the tourism industry.

An important consideration for the development of tourism is the coordination of the industry's various sectors and activities. Training, economic development, short- and long-term planning, funding, insurance coverage, certification, risk management, marketing and branding are elements that need to be addressed in a coherent way that meets the needs not only of tourists but those of the residents of the region.

COORDINATION AND POLICY-MAKING

The coordination and policy-making needed to meet the above-mentioned challenges should be undertaken by an organization that has no vested commercial interests in the tourism industry and that has a mandate for the regional administration of government programs. As a non-ethnic public organization having jurisdiction over nearly the entire territory of Québec north of the 55th parallel, and administering public affairs in the region in the areas of municipal matters, transportation, the environment, policing, employment, labour training, income security, childcare services, renewable resources, land-use management, civil security and economic development, the KRG is the appropriate organization to assume this role.

Furthermore in order for the KRG to be effective, an agreement with the Québec government would have to be negotiated and integrated into the Sivunirmut Agreement. The agreement would need to clearly identify the role of the KRG as well as provide funding for its related operations and for the development of tourism activities, products and infrastructure. This agreement would enable the KRG to develop a policy concerning tourism and, based on the policy, a strategy could be fine-tuned and implemented.

A sustainable tourism industry based on community-driven products and activities, with minimum negative impacts on the land and residents, can only evolve if there is a regional

strategy for its development and a firm commitment from governments to provide the necessary resources.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The KRG should assume responsibility for coordinating the development of a sustainable tourism industry in Nunavik—in cooperation with regional stakeholders—that is community based, that promotes Inuit culture and language, that is ecologically sustainable, and that provides economic benefits to the communities and the region;
2. Agreements should be negotiated by the KRG with the Québec government to support tourism development in the region;
3. Both a short- and long-term strategic plan for tourism development should be prepared by the KRG.

KATIVIK REGIONAL GOVERNMENT

The Kativik Regional Government (KRG) is a non-ethnic public organization created in 1978, under the *James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement*. It is governed by the *Act respecting Northern Villages and the Kativik Regional Government* (R.S.Q., c. V-6.1). The KRG administers public affairs in the Kativik Region (the territory of Québec located north of the 55th parallel, excluding the Category IA and IB lands intended for the Cree community of Whapmagoostui) in the areas of municipal matters, transportation, the environment, policing, employment, labour training, income security, childcare services, renewable resources, land-use management, civil security and economic development.

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