Using the Social Economy in Tourism:
A Study of National Park Creation and Community Development in the Northwest Territories, Canada

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Abstract

The primary concern of social-economy organizations is the social and economic well-being of individuals in the communities where they work. However, social, economic, and environmental considerations also play a role in the wider community or regional spheres of development. In the Canadian North, local and regional development strategies are linked in many places to a growing number of large-scale conservation efforts, such as parks and protected areas, that can have important positive and negative roles. As a result of their social and economic interests, social-economy organizations might become involved in these community development strategies linked to conservation. This paper explores such involvement by outlining a collaborative community research project undertaken in Łutsël K'e, Northwest Territories, the gateway community to a proposed national park. The research is based on a series of interviews with community members and external parties with particular development responsibilities. The paper explores the ways in which social-economy organizations might facilitate rural community tourism development related to the creation of the park. The paper also considers several activities and approaches that could enhance the support provided by social-economy organizations for local tourism development relating to conservation in this community.

Keywords: social economy, community tourism development, social and economic development, Łutsël K'e, national park, northern Canada

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1.0 Introduction

The development of tourism is often seen as a rationale for communities to engage in the conservation of local areas and resources. In Łutsël K'e, Northwest Territories, both the creation of a national park in the traditional territory of the Łutsël K'e Dene First Nation (LKDFN) and the development of tourism are perceived as being supportive of local economic development and broader community development goals (see Bennett, 2009; Bennett, Lemelin, & Ellis, 2010). Both the park and tourism are seen as having the potential to contribute to the social, cultural, and economic development of the community. However, in the past a variety of community organizations and individuals have experienced difficulties in participating effectively in the market economy in a manner that benefits the community economically as well as socially and culturally (Specialists in Energy, Nuclear and Environmental Sciences [SENES] Consultants & Griffiths, 2006; Wildlife, Lands and Environment Department, 2002).

Currently, a number of organizations, including social-economy organizations, operate inside and outside Łutsël K'e and have some level of involvement in community tourism development, which is referred to as the social economy. The term *social economy* refers to organizations that exist outside the market economy (private sector) and the government economy (public sector) in a *third sector* of the economy (Restakis, 2006). The social economy is often defined to include institutions such as cooperatives, mutual organizations, and associations that operate democratically, have an independent management, serve communities and members, and focus on social over strictly economic outcomes (Borzaga, 2001). Various forms of social-economy organizations have made significant and ongoing contributions to community social, cultural, and economic development in northern and Aboriginal communities (see Elias, 1997; Hammond & MacPherson, 2001; Lewis & Lockhart, 1999; MacPherson, 2000; MacPherson, 2009; Myers & Forrest, 2000; Winther & Duhaime, 2002). Yet there have been no comprehensive studies of the past, current, or potential place of the social economy in supporting tourism development in this northern context. This paper, based on a study of park creation and community development, fills a gap in the literature: It focuses on the involvement of social-economy organizations in facilitating community tourism development in Łutsël K'e related to the proposed national park on the East Arm of Great Slave Lake. The paper begins with an introduction to the context of the study and then provides an overview of the social economy.

1.1 Statement of Purpose

This study was designed with consideration of (a) the high potential for developing tourism on the East Arm of Great Slave Lake, (b) possible increases in visitation resulting from the creation of a national park, (c) community interest in developing tourism, and (d) the limited levels of local support for economic or tourism development. In addition, various community representatives and organizations have identified a need to explore appropriate options and structures for supporting the future development of a viable tourism industry. Previous academic literature has explored various aspects of the social economy in supporting local social and economic development throughout the Canadian North, yet there is a gap in the literature focusing on the role of the social economy in supporting tourism

development in this context. The purpose of this paper is to fill both a practical community need and a gap in the literature through exploring the potential for current and future social-economy organizations to support tourism development in Łutsël K'e. This article presents one aspect of the results of a broader study that aimed to provide insight and usable information to the Parks Working Group of the LKDFN and to Parks Canada to support community development related to the creation of a national park on the East Arm of Great Slave Lake.

2.0 Literature Review

There have long been forms of human activity or organization that cannot be easily placed within market-based economic models (Bridge, Murtagh, & O'Neill, 2009; Cabaj, 2004). Yet some economic models separate the economy into three sectors: the private sector, the public sector, and the third sector (e.g., Pearce, 2003; Restakis, 2006). The private sector includes market-oriented businesses, and the public sector refers to government activities and organizations. The third sector of the economy includes a broad range of organizations (e.g., consumer cooperatives, credit unions, building societies, charities, associations, community development trusts, and community businesses) and activities (e.g., civic engagement, childcare, environmental protection, social housing, capacity building, business development, and family life) that can be operated in a manner that puts them outside either the public or private sectors. The authors posit that many of the types of organizations found in the third sector are created in response to social or economic phenomena, such as economic disempowerment, market forces, globalization, education, housing problems, childcare needs, health issues, or strains on the welfare state (e.g., Borzaga, 2001; Bridge et al., 2009; Cabaj, 2004; Fairbairn, Bold, Fulton, Hammond, & Ish, 1991; Quarter, 1992): "In many ways they represent the new or renewed expression of civil society against a background of economic crisis, the weakening of social bonds and difficulties in the welfare state" (Borzaga, 2001, p. 1). In recent decades, the literature on the third sector of the economy has tended to focus on community economic development, cooperatives, social enterprise, the nonprofit sector, and voluntary organizations (Borzaga, 2001). More recently, the concept of the social economy (from French research on the *économie sociale)* has emerged in the English-language academic literature as a way of bringing together these discussions of third-sector activities (Bridge et al., 2009).

Though recent Canadian literature describes a number of complex definitions and models of the social economy (e.g., Canadian Social Economy Hub, 2009; Canadian Social Economy Suite, n.d.; Chantier de l'économie sociale [CES], 2009; Lewis, 2003; Natcher, 2009; Quarter, 1992), this paper locates the social economy through Borzaga's (2001) description of the institutions and principles of operation that are common among the various definitions. Borzaga (2001) suggests that three institutional models are common to definitions of the social economy: cooperatives, mutuals, and associations. Molloy, McFeely, and Connolly (1999) differentiate the three institutions in the following way: Cooperatives focus on for-profit self-help; mutuals focus on not-for-profit self-help; and associations traditionally focus on philanthropy, not profit. Examples of each of these types of institution are shown in Table 1. Social economy is also often based on foundational principles that "cannot be considered as an optional complement" to the type of institution (Borzaga, 2001, p. 6). However, authors and organizations provide varying lists of these foundational principles (e.g., Borzaga, 2001; Canadian Social Economy Suite, n.d; Lewis, 2003; Moulaert & Nussbaumer,

2005). According to Borzaga (2001), four foundational principles are common to all of these definitions: (a) the provision of a service to members or community; (b) an independent management; (c) a democratic decision-making process; and (d) a focus on social over primarily economic outcomes.

Table 1. *Examples of Cooperatives, Mutuals, and Associations (adapted from Borzaga, 2001; Quarter, 1992)*

Institutional categories	Examples of organizations
Cooperatives	Agricultural, consumers, insurance, retail, housing, workers, marketing, and tourism cooperatives; credit unions
Mutuals	*Economic focus:* labour, business, professional, and tourism development associations; consumer organizations; community insurance systems (e.g., deaths, health, crop failure) *Social focus:* social clubs; ethno-cultural and religious organizations; neighborhood organizations
Associations	Nonprofit, voluntary, nongovernmental, and environmental nongovernmental organizations; service associations; foundations

Social-economy organizations such as cooperatives and development corporations have long been an integral part of the economic, social, and cultural development strategies of many northern Aboriginal communities (e.g., Elias, 1997; Lewis & Lockhart, 1999; Hammond & MacPherson, 2001; MacPherson, 2000; MacPherson, 2009; Myers & Forrest, 2000; Winther & Duhaime, 2002). For example, Southcott and Walker (2009) identified 1,190 "potential" social-economy organizations that operate in Canada's North and focus on a broad array of activities, including construction, law and advocacy, recreation and tourism, arts and culture, education, health, environment, volunteerism, religion, environment, finance and insurance, construction, and business. Approximately 20% of these organizations serve Canada's northern Aboriginal communities (Southcott & Walker, 2009). Several authors have also suggested that subsistence, sharing, and reciprocity activities that reflect the mixed economy of the North form an integral part of Aboriginal social economies (e.g., Natcher, 2009; Wenzel, Hovelsrud-Broda, & Kishigami, 2000). For example, Southcott and Walker argue that "the mixed economy is not the social economy" but might be "more easily integrated into a social economy paradigm" (2009, p. 18). It is beyond the scope of this paper to examine the history and scope of the social economy in a Canadian or northern context, but it can be said that despite the growing body of literature related to the social economy in Canada's North, there has been no comprehensive examination of the role of the social economy in supporting tourism development in Canada's Aboriginal or northern communities.

3.0 Study Context

3.1 Łutsël K'e

Historically, the Chipewyan (a.k.a., Dene) were a primarily nomadic people travelling the northern Canadian boreal forest from the Coppermine River to Hudson Bay to hunt, fish, and gather food (Ellis, 2003; Hearne, 1934; LKDFN, Parlee, Basil, & Casaway, 2001). Now the sedentary home of the once nomadic

LKDFN, the rural community of Łutsël K'e (previously called Snowdrift), Northwest Territories, is situated at the northwestern reaches of the Canadian Shield and boreal forest, approximately 200 km east of Yellowknife on the East Arm of Great Slave Lake (see Figure 1). Therefore there is no road linking the community to other places in the Northwest Territories: Access is either by air or water (boat in the summer or snowmobile in the winter). A road exits the community, passing the airstrip and continuing for 15 km to the landfill, the cemetery, and a small lake. The community has approximately 400 residents, most of whom are members of the LKDFN. Though the total LKDFN membership is approximately 700 individuals, approximately half of these individuals live outside of Łutsël K'e (personal communication, Chief Steven Nitah, June 11, 2008). A number of non–First Nation residents also reside full or part time in Łutsël K'e, filling many of the professional positions (e.g., teachers, nurses, and social workers) in the community. The town itself consists of approximately 150 buildings, including one store, a school, a college, a church, a bed and breakfast, a community centre, an arena, a health-care centre, a social services and healing centre, and several municipal buildings (NWT Bureau of Statistics, 2004a).

Map by Cathy Chapin, Department of Geography, Lakehead University.

Figure 1. Łutsël K'e in the Northwest Territories of Canada.

Until the 1950s many of the LKDFN members maintained a nomadic lifestyle, living in cabins or tents through the year and subsisting on hunting, fishing, and gathering, which was often supplemented by seasonal trapping income and treaty payments (SENES Consultants & Griffith, 2006; Van Stone, 1963). The construction of a school in the community meant that people had begun to settle more permanently in Łutsël K'e: "The nomadic lifestyle of always following the caribou and trapping continued until 1960 when the school was built and people moved into the permanent community" (SENES Consultants & Griffith, 2006, p. 178). Since the 1960s the community, and the North more generally, has experienced many rapid

changes, characterized by increasing pressure from resource development in the North, increasing engagement with the wage economy, decreasing reliance on social-support programs, shifting community political structures, and increasing political mobilization of northern indigenous groups (Bone, 2003; Ellis, 2003; NWT Bureau of Statistics, 2004a; SENES & Griffith, 2006; Weitzner, 2006). Alongside these developments, a number of social issues have persisted in the community, e.g., relatively high rates of violent crime, low high school graduation rates, declines in traditional skills, a large proportion of single-parent families, and high rates of alcoholism and addictions (NWT Bureau of Statistics, 2004b; SENES Consultants & Griffith, 2006; Weitzner, 2006). Though there has been increasing involvement in the wage economy, Łutsël K'e remains connected to the land and practices traditional harvesting, that is, hunting and fishing (Ellis, 2003; Parlee, Manseau, & LKDFN, 2005; SENES Consultants & Griffith, 2006). This is important culturally since "land is a, if not *the*, central feature of what it means to be Chipewyan" (Raffan, 1992, p. 176). SENES Consultants and Griffith (2006) suggest that "as communities rely more and more on a wage-based economy, consumerism increases, but so too does the gap between expectation and the means of achievement" (p. 204). Both the creation of a park and the related development of tourism in the community might offer it one means of achievement and a way to work toward economic sustainability and self-reliance that supports the land-based way of life and continuation of cultural traditions.

3.2 Łutsël K'e and the Proposed National Park

The current national park proposal has been in the works since 1969 and was not initially viewed as a positive development by the LKDFN. The convoluted history of the national park proposal began when Chief Pierre Catholique was accidentally forwarded meeting minutes that contained discussions about a national park proposal that were happening without LKDFN awareness and participation (News of the North, 1969). When Catholique started asking questions, a delegation of bureaucrats came to Łutsël K'e to announce the proposal to create a national park on the East Arm of Great Slave Lake (Griffith, 1987; News of the North, 1969). At that time the park proposal was not well understood locally and was seen as being an unnecessary designation and a development approach that was contrary to the local way of life (Bennett & Lemelin, 2009). Despite Chief Catholique's refusal to sign the park documents, an initial withdrawal of approximately 7,400 km^2 was taken by the federal government for the national park proposal. In essence, the land withdrawal disallowed further exploration or development in the area while the national park was being considered and negotiated. In the following years, several attempts were made to revive the national park proposal; however, these attempts were unsuccessful due to local skepticism about the park and the failure to ratify the comprehensive Dene-Metis land claim (Ellis & Enzoe, 2008). In 2001, 30 years after the initial withdrawal, Chief Felix Lockhart contacted Parks Canada to reopen discussions about the national park. The subsequent years led to the signing of a memorandum of understanding between the federal government and the LKDFN in 2006 and the withdrawal of a much larger area of approximately 33,000 km^2 in 2007 while park feasibility studies, a socioeconomic impact assessment, a mineral energy and resource assessment, land claim negotiations, and local and national consultations were all taking place (Ellis & Enzoe, 2008).

3.3 Tourism Development in Łutsël K'e and the East Arm

As mentioned previously, the development of a community-based tourism industry in Łutsël K'e is seen locally as a way to diversify the economy while supporting social and cultural development in the community (Bennett, 2009). Though the community is interested in developing a community-based tourism industry, community members have limited involvement in and receive little benefit from current tourism offerings on the East Arm of Great Slave Lake and the area that would be designated as the national park. Further, the community has little locally owned infrastructure to support the growth of tourism. The area is home to a number of sizeable fishing and hunting lodges, including Plummers Lodge, with a capacity of 45 guests and situated approximately 40 km from Łutsël K'e, and Frontier Fishing Lodge, with a capacity of 30 guests and situated approximately 2 km from Łutsël K'e, which are owned and operated by individuals from outside the region. Community members have had a long history of employment as fishing and hunting guides at these lodges; however, in recent years this type of tourism employment has declined, perhaps because of the low pay and long hours or perhaps as a result of faltering relationships with some of the local lodges (Bennett, 2009; R. Griffith, personal communication, November 22, 2007). There has also been a limited amount of involvement of community members with guided canoe and sea kayak trips run by outside tourism companies. Though pleasure crafts and sailing vessels stop in Łutsël K'e for fuel or to resupply, the community has not been involved in this segment of the tourism industry.

Yet high potential exists for the development of a tourism industry in the community and on the East Arm of Great Slave Lake, particularly in light of the future creation of a national park. The economy of the Northwest Territories has long benefited from the existence of the tourism industry (Val, 1990). In 2005, tourism represented "the third largest export behind mining and petroleum products and the largest renewable resource industry" (Government of Northwest Territories Industry, Tourism and Investment [GNWT ITI], 2005, p. 1). Between 2000 and 2006 the tourism industry saw steady growth in revenue, with an average annual increase of 5.4% (GNWT ITI, n.d.). The largest segments of the Northwest Territories tourism industry include visiting friends and relatives, fishing and hunting, outdoor adventure, general touring, aurora viewing, and business travel (GNWT ITI, n.d.). Given the tremendous natural resources in the East Arm region, Łutsël K'e is in an excellent position to provide tourism experiences for three of the most profitable sectors of tourism, that is, hunting, fishing, and outdoor adventure (see Figure 2; GNWT ITI, 2007). Furthermore, the community and area have significant natural and cultural assets that could be incorporated into tourism products. These assets include ecological features, such as wildlife and birds, that would be attractive to photographers, bird watchers, fishermen, and hunters; landscape features that would be suitable for canoeing, hiking, sea kayaking, and snowmobiling; and cultural assets, such as villages, spiritual sites, and traditional skills, that could be incorporated into cultural and eco-tourism experiences (see Bennett & Lemelin, 2009).
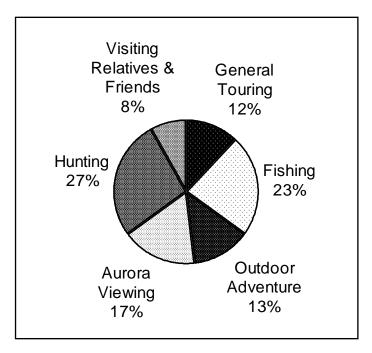
Figure 2. Northwest Territories leisure visitor spending by sector of tourism industry, 2006–2007 (adapted from GNWT ITI, 2007).

Despite extensive previous tourism planning efforts and a feasibility study that was completed 20 years ago (i.e., Lutra, 1987, 1989), at present the community is not prepared to host more than a small number of tourists. At the time that this research was conducted a few locally owned tourism businesses had been or were being developed, including a bed and breakfast establishment (Bertha's Bed & Breakfast) and two small tourism operations (Artillery Lake Adventures and Sa'yezi Expedition), which were offering mainly hunting, fishing, and ecotourism experiences (e.g., wildlife viewing, visiting cultural sites, and photography). The levels of success of these operations are not clear. Otherwise, local tourism-related infrastructure is limited to a small pier, a general store (run by Arctic Cooperatives), and an airstrip. A derelict building used for storage stands as a reminder of a previous failed attempt by the local co-op store to operate a hotel in the community. Fuel for boats can also be bought in Łutsël K'e, although the fueling station was recently relocated to a spot away from town and approximately 3 km from the water for a combination of health and environmental reasons. However, some people question the practicality of the new location. Perhaps the largest barrier to the successful development of tourism is that there is limited support within the community for *local* community economic development and no organizations currently oversee the development of a community-based tourism industry (Bennett, 2009).

3.4 Current Social-Economy Organizations in Łutsël K'e

The social-economy organizations that currently operate in or with Łutsël K'e can be placed into three categories: (a) social-economy organizations with an economic mandate, including Arctic Cooperatives Ltd., the Denesoline Development Corporation, and Thebacha Business Development Services; (b) social-economy organizations with a social mandate, including the Łutsël K'e Housing Authority and

the Łutsël K'e Community Wellness Agency; and (c) social-economy organizations with an environmental mandate, including the World Wildlife Fund and the Canadian Boreal Initiative. In addition, one local social-economy organization is focused on the environment and culture, the Wildlife Lands and Environment Committee of the LKDFN. While many of these organizations had a role in supporting broader community development initiatives related to the park, only three social-economy organizations emerged as having a central role in supporting tourism development: Arctic Cooperatives Ltd. (hereafter referred to as "the Co-op"), the Denesoline Development Corporation (hereafter, "the Corporation"), and Thebacha Business Development Services (hereafter, "Thebacha").

The board-operated Łutsël K'e Co-op is a subsidiary of Arctic Cooperatives Ltd., an organization that runs cooperatives through Nunavut and the NWT. The Co-op operates the only retail store in Łutsël K'e, the post office, the freight service, and residential and vehicle fueling services (Arctic Cooperatives, 2007) and provides a number of informal services to the community (e.g., transport to the airport; rooms for rent in the home of the manager). The LKDFN member-owned Corporation focuses on economic development opportunities that will benefit its membership. The Corporation has a number of labour contracts for firefighting, ice road maintenance, research, and mining and exploration industries and has investments in several mining- and exploration-related businesses (e.g., East Arm Aviation, East Arm Surveying and Mapping Services Ltd., Denesoline Western Explosives Ltd., Ke Te Whii Ltd., and I&D Management Services Ltd.). Previously, the Corporation made an unsuccessful attempt to offer fishing-related tourism experiences out of Łutsël K'e. At the time of this research, Thebacha was the Community Futures Development Corporation (CFDC) responsible for supporting economic development in Łutsël K'e, as follows:

> CFDCs support community economic development by assisting communities to strengthen and diversify their economies. CFDCs foster local entrepreneurship, promote, coordinate and implement a variety of development initiatives within their respective communities. CFDCs offer entrepreneurship training, business counseling, loan programs and information to suit the needs of community members interested in starting or expanding their own business. (Thebacha, 2009, n.p.)

Thebacha is part of both national and NWT networks of CFDCs that are supported through Industry Canada and the Western Economic Diversification Initiative. Though one community member sits on the board of Thebacha, the main Thebacha office is located in Fort Smith, a town 200 km from Łutsël K'e (accessible via a 1-hour charter flight). Employees of Thebacha make infrequent visits to Łutsël K'e to support local community economic development efforts.

4.0 Methods

In recognition of previous criticisms of research in an Aboriginal context (e.g., Freeman, 1993; Kirby & McKenna, 1989; Simpson, 2001; Smith, 1999), this study was designed collaboratively, the research agenda was codetermined, and the research was conducted for and with the Parks Working Group of the LKDFN. Action research methodologies are participative, grounded in experience, and action oriented (Reason & Bradbury, 2000) and have been used previously in Łutsël K'e (i.e., LKDFN et al., 2001; LKDFN & Ellis, 2003; Parlee et al., 2005).

In consideration of the social and cultural context and community development focus of this study, we chose to employ an action research methodology guided by the philosophy of appreciative inquiry. Appreciative inquiry (AI) was developed in response to the negativity often associated with problem-oriented community development processes (Adkere, 2005; Raymond & Hall, 2008). AI encourages practitioners and researchers to examine problems through "a positive rather than a problem oriented lens" (van Buskirk, 2002, cited in Grant & Humphries, 2006, p. 403) and to focus on positive potential, empowerment, fostering social capacity, community mobilization, and generating community change (Bushe, 2008; Koster & Lemelin, 2009). Ultimately, AI is focused on improving the quality of life of research participants.

Given the specific cultural contexts of the study's participants, qualitative interviews were used as recommended by Hodgson and Firth (2006) in order to "provide a framework within which respondents can express their own viewpoints" (p. 15). Two types of interviews were used: in-depth, informal ethnographic interviews (Fontana & Frey, 2003) with band members and formal interviews with other participant groups. The interview schedule was flexible, open ended, and theme based. Interviews were recorded whenever possible, and/or field notes were written from memory after the interview. As recommended by Ryen (2002) for work in a cross-cultural context, a community research assistant was hired as both a cultural and language translator and to mitigate and limit cultural misunderstandings. All interviews and field notes were later transcribed, and an initial read-through was done to search for overarching themes and codes. Transcripts were then imported into NVivo 8 qualitative research software, where in-depth analysis and coding was done.

In order to gain the greatest insight into the study's various lines of inquiry, a "triangulation of perspectives" (Neuman, 2000) was utilized through selecting participants from four groups: (a) LKDFN band members, (b) long-term nonband community members, (c) short-term or transient professionals in the community, and (d) external participants. This design also allowed for a convergence of insider and outsider perspectives on the study's questions, which Lockhart (1982) and Caine, Salomons, and Simmons (2007) suggest is beneficial when examining and researching socioeconomic development in indigenous communities. A total of 26 LKDFN band members, 5 long-term community members, 5 short-term community members, and 9 external participants were selected based on a combination of snowball and purposive sampling. Snowball sampling procedures involve starting with initial contacts and identifying potential participants, who in turn recommend future participants (see Hodgson & Firth, 2006). In addition, purposive sampling was utilized to identify external participants who might be particularly informative or knowledgeable on topics related to the study (see Neuman, 2000), including conservation, community development, and tourism development.

Normal ethical considerations associated with anonymity, confidentiality, security, and balance of risk and benefit were taken into account in this research. Potential participants were informed of the study's rationale and focus and were asked to indicate their free and informed consent as well as whether they wished to remain anonymous in publications and presentations prior to participating in an interview. Ethical approval was sought through Lakehead University's research ethics board and through the LKDFN prior to conducting research. All interviews took place between May and July 2008.

5.0 Results

Through using direct quotes from the interviews and results from qualitative analysis, the potential mandates of the above organizations in supporting tourism will be examined next, followed by an exploration of areas where expansion of social-economy organizations might support local tourism development.

5.1 Potential Roles of Current Social-Economy Organizations in Supporting Tourism

As discussed previously, neither the Co-op nor the Corporation currently focuses on tourism development, and Thebacha maintains a marginal presence in the community. Table 2 summarizes the current mandates and results focusing on the potential roles of the Co-op, the Corporation, and Thebacha in supporting future tourism development efforts in the community; it also notes areas where study participants' opinions diverge. The current foci of the Co-op and the Corporation

Table 2. *The Current Mandates and Potential Roles of Current Social-Economy Organizations in Łutsël K'e Tourism Development*

Current mandate	Potential roles in tourism development
Arctic Cooperatives Ltd.	
Operates retail and food store, post office; holds fuel contract	Build and operate hotel; provide goods (food and gas) to tourists; sell arts, crafts, and souvenirs; build and operate restaurant (*disagreement*); coordinate tourism experiences (*disagreement*)
Denesoline Corporation Ltd.	
Contracts for firefighting, ice road maintenance, general contracting; labour; invests in mining and exploration; operates East Arm Air Services Ltd.	Support tourism, business and local economic development (*disagreement*); set up arm of corporation to support tourism development and coordinate operations (*disagreement*); invest in community tourism-related developments, e.g., businesses and a hotel (*disagreement*)
Thebacha Business Services	
Supports community economic development, entrepreneurship training, business counseling, loan programs	Support community economic development; entrepreneurship training; business counseling; loan programs; increased local presence in the community; increased local knowledge of services offered

would need to change markedly if they were to become active in supporting tourism development. Qualitative analysis of results from the interviews showed that provision of goods to tourists and the building and operation of a hotel should clearly

be part of the mandate of the Co-op; however, interview participants disagreed about whether or not the Co-op should become involved in operating a restaurant or coordinating tourism experiences. Interview participants also did not concur about whether the Corporation should become involved in the development of tourism in Łutsël K'e at all, with interviewees disagreeing on whether the Corporation should invest in tourism through its trust fund, coordinate tourism through an arm's-length body, or support local tourism and economic development initiatives. In order for these two organizations to effectively support the development of tourism, further clarification of their roles will be necessary. While the mandate of Thebacha would remain essentially the same, results suggest that Thebacha would need to increase its presence in the community through improving communication strategies to increase local knowledge of the services it offers and through having an increased and active presence to support the development of tourism.

5.2 *Expansion of the Social Economy to Support Tourism Development*

In addition to clarifying the roles and increasing the effectiveness of current social-economy organizations, the social economy could be expanded to support the development of tourism by (a) creating a locally focused community economic development office or body; (b) forming a tourism cooperative; and (c) creating a community development trust fund. The following section outlines these three potential areas of expansion.

A community economic development body. Frequently, interview participants commented on the lack of support for the development of local businesses in the community and the need to create some sort of office or body with a clear mandate to support community economic development *within* the community. Though the Corporation originally had a mandate to support local community economic development, its current mandate is focused on engaging in economic activities and generating revenues outside the community. Chief Steven Nitah recognized this need for a

> "… body that helps out individuals to develop business plans and to support them. To keep going to financial institutions and/or the governments to get the financing to purchase or build their product. That's the kind of support service you need. The Denesoline Corporation was set up to do exactly that, but because of the tremendous opportunities outside of the community, it has changed its whole business direction. It doesn't provide that service anymore and doesn't have the time to provide that service."

Ron Fatte, the owner of Sayezi Expeditions (the first tourism company to be solely owned and operated out of Łutsël K'e), echoed the sentiment that increased and ongoing support was needed for economic development in the community. Many participants felt that a community economic development body could be set up as an arm's-length segment of the Denesoline Corporation, as a side office of the LKDFN, or as a separate entity. Depending on the format that this community economic development body takes, it might be considered part of the social economy.

A tourism cooperative. There was significant talk in the interviews of the potential for the creation of a "tourism cooperative," a "tourism development corporation," or a "tourism association" (hereafter "tourism cooperative") that would support

and coordinate the development of tourism. The potential roles for this tourism cooperative, as suggested in interviews, include the following:

- Providing tourism-related training and education
- Providing administrative and accounting support
- Assisting community in procuring start-up funds
- Securing licensing and insurance
- Handling bookings
- Developing a website; marketing
- Networking with tourism wholesalers and travel agents
- Hiring local people to deliver tourism experiences
- Incorporating local cultural activities into tourism
- Developing local human and physical resources
- Representing tourism development in local and park governance organizations

For many interview participants, the creation of a cooperative to coordinate tourism development was seen as a best-case scenario for overcoming community and individual barriers to engaging in tourism businesses: "They're people with phenomenal land skills, and that sort of knowledge is very attractive, but the business management is not there, because it's not part of their background or their training" (Richard Zieba, external participant). A cooperative model, interview participants said, might facilitate the development of tourism through coordinating "the business end of things," pooling human and physical resources, and reinvesting in community capacity building. As suggested by long-term resident Ray Griffiths, a cooperative model for tourism development might support "the whole idea of community development … which is basically the training and slow gradual building of skills and infrastructure and a social society that is functional."

Yet a cooperative model of development might also have its drawbacks, including a requirement for voluntary engagement, susceptibility to being influenced by community politics, and restrictions related to a limited community capacity for sitting on boards. Several interviewees said that a cooperative model of tourism development would be economically unsustainable because of a lack of individual risk. For example, Kevin Antoniak, an instructor at Aurora College in Fort Smith, NT, stated, "The only way tourism survives is if the operator, if he doesn't make money, he doesn't survive. You can't have it any other way, you can't be in the private sector, if you're not in the private sector … from a business point of view, unless the people involved have something to lose, you can't have a business." In other words, some interview participants felt that tourism development should remain within the realm of the private sector. Table 3 provides an overview of study participants' perceived advantages and disadvantages of utilizing a cooperative model to support the development of tourism.

A community development trust fund. An additional area where interview participants suggested that the social economy might be expanded is through the creation of a board-operated community development trust fund similar to the Gwaii Trust Fund. "The Gwaii Trust Fund was established as a locally controlled, interest-bearing fund to advance economic diversification and sustainable development on Haida Gwaii/Queen Charlotte Islands" (Gwaii Trust

Table 3. *Advantages and Disadvantages of Utilizing a Cooperative Body for Tourism Development, As Perceived by Participants*

Advantages	Disadvantages
Coordinating body for tourism	No personal risks for community members
Coordinate the pooling of human and physical resources	Community board decisions can negatively impact cooperatives
Overcome challenges to small businesses (e.g., insurance, licensing, financing)	Could contribute to or be affected by small-town politics
Land claims or Parks Canada seed money could provide initial financial capital	Some people would rather operate their own businesses
Marketing of a number of businesses	Too many boards, not enough capacity
Locals need business, administrative, and financial support to get involved in tourism	Requires voluntary engagement
Potentially more suited to close-knit community: A cooperative spirit might be easier to foster	
Reinvestment of money back into the community	
Building community capacity for tourism	

Society, 2009). The Łutsël K'e community development trust fund, participants suggested, could be created from seed funding gained as a direct result of negotiations with Parks Canada. Several participants also offered that perhaps Akaitcho territory negotiations and/or the Denesoline Corporation could contribute to the creation of a larger fund controlled under one board. This trust fund could contribute to the development of tourism through supporting educational initiatives, cultural education, capacity building efforts, and tourism-related infrastructure development, and through providing business loans and grants. Additionally, interviewees posited that community-controlled funding was needed to support a broad array of social, educational, cultural, and infrastructure development initiatives in the community. Many of these noneconomic initiatives were seen as having an overall positive impact on the success of tourism development efforts in the community.

6.0 Discussion

This paper has presented the results of a collaborative research project that examined, in part, the role of the social economy in facilitating community tourism development related to the creation of a national park. Three current social-economy organizations emerged as having potential to be central in the development of tourism in Łutsël K'e: the local Arctic Cooperatives store, the Denesoline Development Corporation, and Thebacha Business Development Services.

Interviewees suggested that the Co-op could be responsible for building and operating a hotel in the community and providing goods to tourists. A more in-depth examination is needed to determine whether it would be feasible for the Co-op to operate a restaurant in the community and whether it should coordinate tourism experiences. It is noteworthy that many other northern branches of Arctic Cooperatives Ltd. operate hotels (through Inns North Ltd.) and coordinate tourism experiences in communities such as Ulukhaktok (Northwest Territories), Pangnirtung (Nunavut), and Cambridge Bay (Nunavut; Inns North, 2009). Clarification of whether the Corporation should be involved in tourism development at all, through supporting local business development, investing in tourism businesses, or creating an arm's-length body to coordinate tourism, is essential. Thebacha's mandate would remain focused on supporting economic development in Łutsël K'e, but analysis suggests that an improved communication strategy and an increased presence in the community would assist in fulfilling this mandate.

This paper also examined three areas in which the social economy could be expanded to support the development of tourism: (a) a community economic development body, (b) a tourism cooperative, and (c) a community development trust fund. While the Corporation supports economic development for the benefit of community members, it is currently focused outside the community. Some interviewees suggested that the Corporation should have a renewed focus in the community, but it was more often suggested that a new economic development office should be created to support tourism business development.

The results also focused on the potential creation of a tourism cooperative to increase the involvement and benefit of community members and to coordinate tourism development. While a cooperative model may have many disadvantages, it may also have a high potential to overcome the individual barriers to private business ownership and engagement in the market economy and tourism. Considering the collective orientation of Dene culture and the importance of hearing all voices in decision-making processes that affect the collective, development through the institutions (i.e., cooperatives, mutuals, and associations [Borzaga, 2001]) and foundational principles (i.e., democratic functioning, focus on social over economic outcomes, and focus on serving members and the community [Borzaga, 2001]) of the social economy might be more culturally appropriate in this context. Yet it appears that the *actual* (as opposed to *perceived*) effectiveness of utilizing social-economy organizations to support tourism development in this context is still unknown. Though varying formats of social-economy organizations currently support the development of tourism in the North (i.e., Artic Cooperatives Ltd. through Inns North Ltd.; Southern Lakes Marketing Cooperative Ltd., Yukon Territory; Cree Outfitters and Tourism Association, Northern Quebec; and Nunavut Tourism), it is unclear what role these organizations fill beyond marketing local products and whether they are effective in supporting local tourism development. Further research is needed in this area.

The idea of creating a trust fund that would focus on local community development is not a new one for northern national parks—for example, such a fund is part of the *Inuit Impact and Benefit Agreement for Auyuittuq, Quttinirpaaq and Sirmilik National Parks* (Inuit IBA, 1999)—nor is it new within a community development context (Bridge et al., 2009). Trusts are legal, nonprofit entities that have "their own source of funds which they spend according to their own judgment on projects or activities of public benefit. They are entirely independent of government or other

public authorities and are run by independent management boards or trustees" (Bridge et al, 2009, p. 97). There might be significant potential and capacity for such a trust fund to support local tourism development initiatives, particularly if a synergy is created with seed money from both Akaitcho and Parks Canada negotiations processes; however, a lack of local business expertise, limited capacity for sitting on boards, and a local requirement that meeting attendees are reimbursed to attend meetings (local and external) might interfere with the effectiveness and sustainability of a trust fund. Creating a board of directors with representatives from outside of the band membership, outside of the community, or from the Parks Canada agency might increase the effectiveness of the fund and reduce potential conflicts of interest. Since social development and education were seen as important supporting contributors to the success of tourism development efforts in the community (Bennett, 2009), the role of other social-economy organizations (e.g., health, wellness, childcare, housing, or education) should also be examined.

7.0 Conclusion

Through an exploration of the potential contributions that various current and future social-economy organizations could have in supporting the development of a sustainable tourism industry in Łutsël K'e, this case study has attempted to fill a gap in the literature. This research suggests that social-economy organizations such as cooperatives, development corporations, associations, and trust funds might have significant potential for supporting community tourism development initiatives in northern Aboriginal communities. The results of this research are also practical and could inform tourism planning and development efforts in Łutsël K'e as the creation of a national park proceeds. Furthermore, this information could be useful and applicable for other rural northern and indigenous communities near parks or protected areas that have aspirations of developing community-based tourism products. Yet a comprehensive exploration of the mandates and effectiveness of current social-economy organizations in supporting tourism development is needed. Further attention, both within the community and in academic literature, could also be given to the careful planning and development of culturally and socially appropriate tourism products that would contribute to and support the mixed economy, the continuation of subsistence activities and, ultimately, support "aboriginal social economies" (see Natcher, 2009).

8.0 Acknowledgements

9.0 References

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