

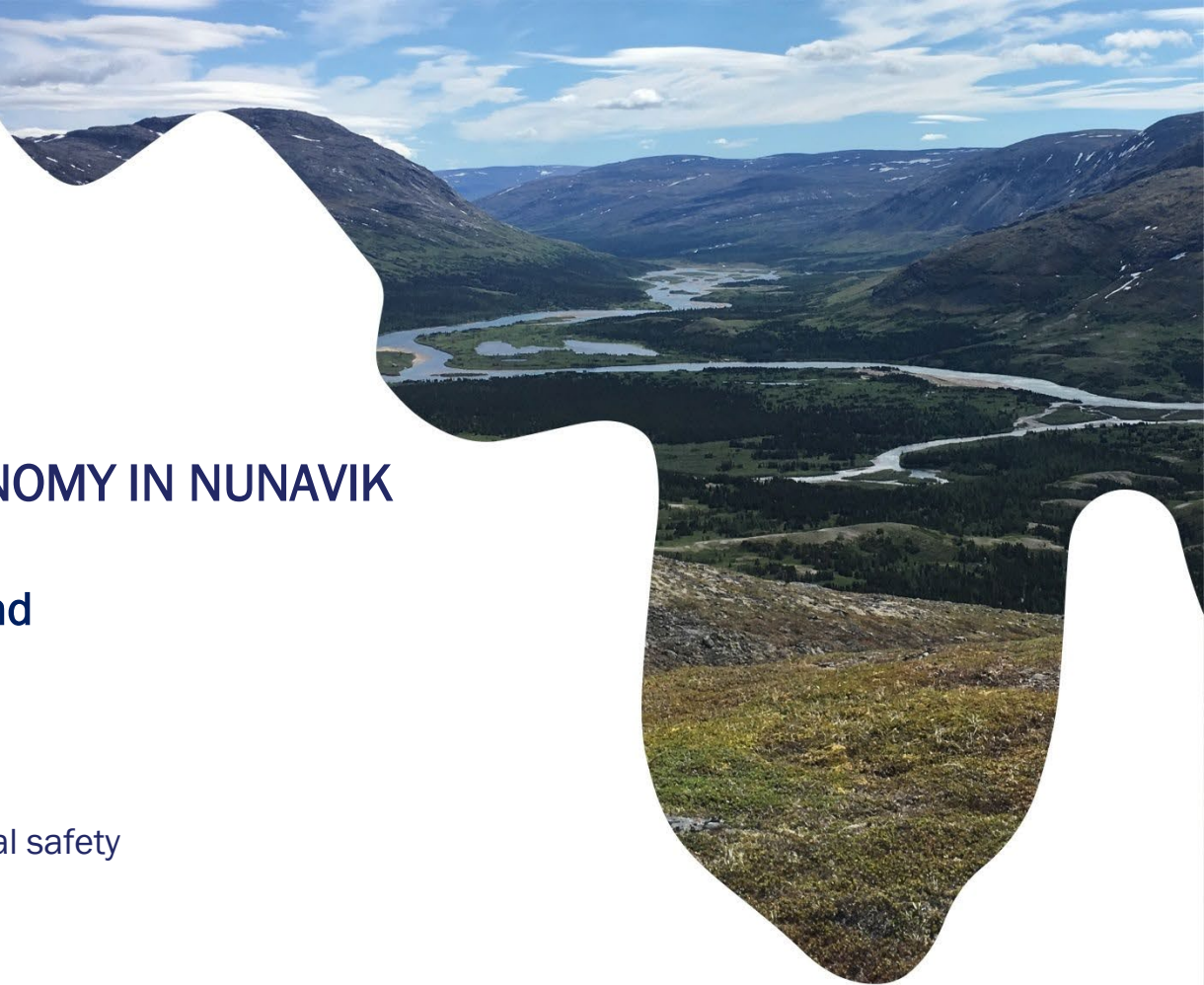


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FACT SHEET 13 – THE ECONOMY IN NUNAVIK

An Economy Shaped by the Land

Cultural Safety Team
Reference Guide on Nunavik and cultural safety
Sheet 13 of 16



In Nunavik, the economy is not limited to what is bought, sold, or paid for.

It also includes on-the-land activities, sharing, and family networks that contribute to the well-being of communities.

It is also closely linked to the external economy.

An economic activity may take place in Nunavik without all of its benefits remaining in Nunavik.





AN ECONOMY SHAPED BY DISTANCE

In Nunavik, almost everything that enters the communities must travel a great distance.



NO ROAD TO THE SOUTH

The 14 communities are not connected to Quebec's road network.



TRANSPORTATION IS EXPENSIVE

Air travel year-round; maritime transport during the shipping season.



THIS AFFECTS PRICES

Transportation, storage, and small markets contribute to the high cost of many products.

+33.6%

In 2023, grocery prices were, on average, **33.6% higher in Nunavik than in southern Quebec.**



Sealift, Kuujuaq.—Photo by Jeff Pelletier

LOOKING AHEAD

Distance is not just a geographical reality.

It directly influences the cost of living and the way Nunavik's economy functions.



A STRONGLY INSTITUTIONALIZED ECONOMY

In Nunavik, a large portion of economic activity and employment relies on the public and parapublic sectors.

This is particularly evident in Kuujuaq, where health care, education, and regional administration account for a significant portion of the labor market.



This structure provides relatively stable jobs, but it also contributes to a high degree of dependence on public institutions and funding.

LOOKING AHEAD

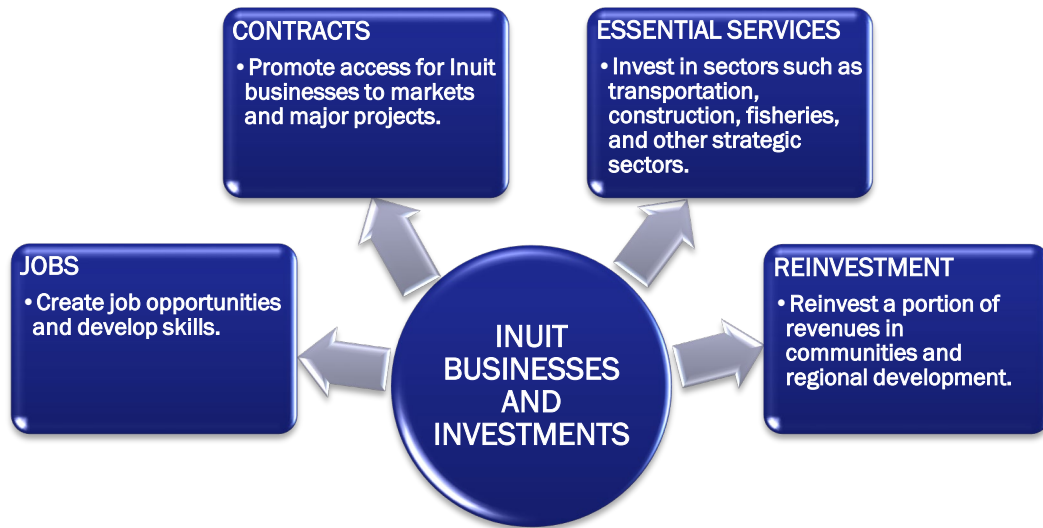
An economy can be vibrant without being entirely controlled locally.

A significant portion of jobs, investments, and economic decisions in Nunavik still depends on funding or organizations based outside the region.



AN ECONOMY DRIVEN BY THE INUIT

In Nunavik, Inuit organizations and businesses play a direct role in the regional economy as owners, investors, employers, and partners.



AN EXAMPLE: MAKIVVIK

Air and maritime transportation • construction • fisheries • resources • services

In 2023–2024, its subsidiaries paid dividends and royalties to Makivvik.

\$10 million was also allocated to various community initiatives in Nunavik, and **\$5 million** was disbursed by the Sanarrutik Fund to regional Inuit organizations.

LOOKING AHEAD

Economic self-sufficiency doesn't just mean having jobs in Nunavik.

It also means having a stake in businesses, securing contracts, developing skills, and deciding how a portion of the wealth is reinvested.



THE LAND IS ALSO PART OF THE ECONOMY

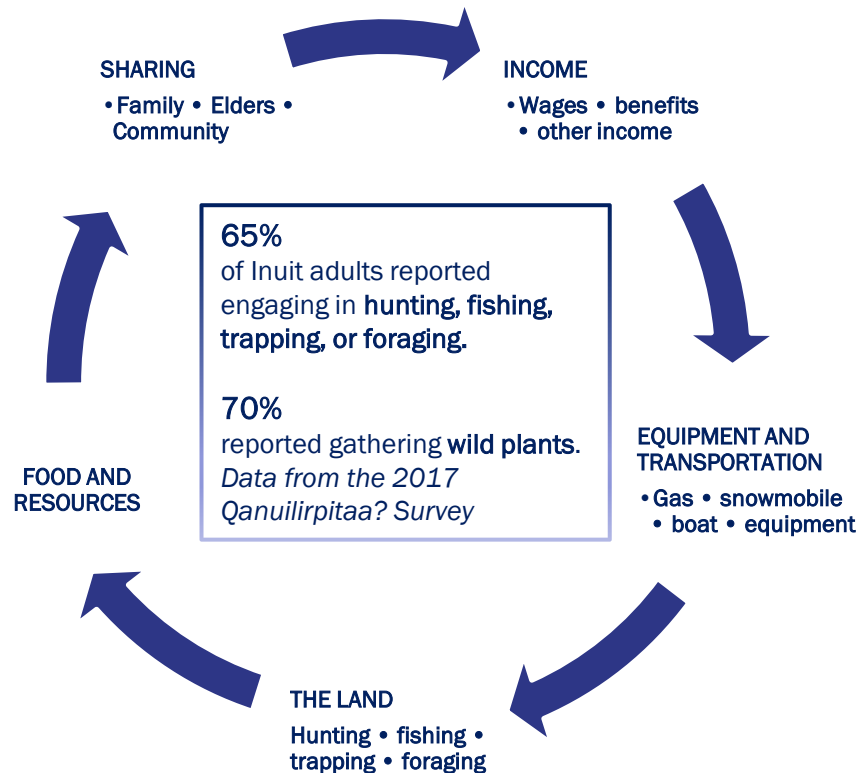
In Nunavik, the economy does not rely solely on wage labor. On-the-land activities continue to contribute to the food supply, sharing, and daily lives of families and communities.



LOOKING AHEAD

The wage-based economy and the land-based economy are not two separate worlds.

Income can make it possible to engage in on-the-land activities, while the food harvested and shared has economic, social, and cultural value that cannot be measured solely in dollars.





MINING: A MAJOR ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

Nunavik's subsoil contains significant mineral resources. Today, two nickel mining complexes are in operation in the northern part of the region: Raglan and Nunavik Nickel.

RAGLAN MINE

In operation since 1997

Northern Nunavik, near Salluit and Kangiqsujaq

- Nickel as the main product
- A complex comprising several mines and infrastructure facilities
- Operated by Glencore
- Operations largely based on a fly-in/fly-out model
- Raglan Agreement signed in 1995 with Makivvik, Salluit, and Kangiqsujaq.

NUNAVIK NICKEL

In production since 2013

Area also located in the far north of Nunavik

- Primarily nickel and copper
- Mines, concentrator, and associated infrastructure
- Operated by Canadian Royalties
- Operations also rely on a fly-in/fly-out model
- Nunavik Nickel Agreement signed in 2008 with Makivvik, Salluit, Kangiqsujaq, and Puvirnituk.

RESOURCE

MINING

JOBS &
CONTRACTS

TRANSPORT

EXTERNAL
MARKETS

LOOKING AHEAD

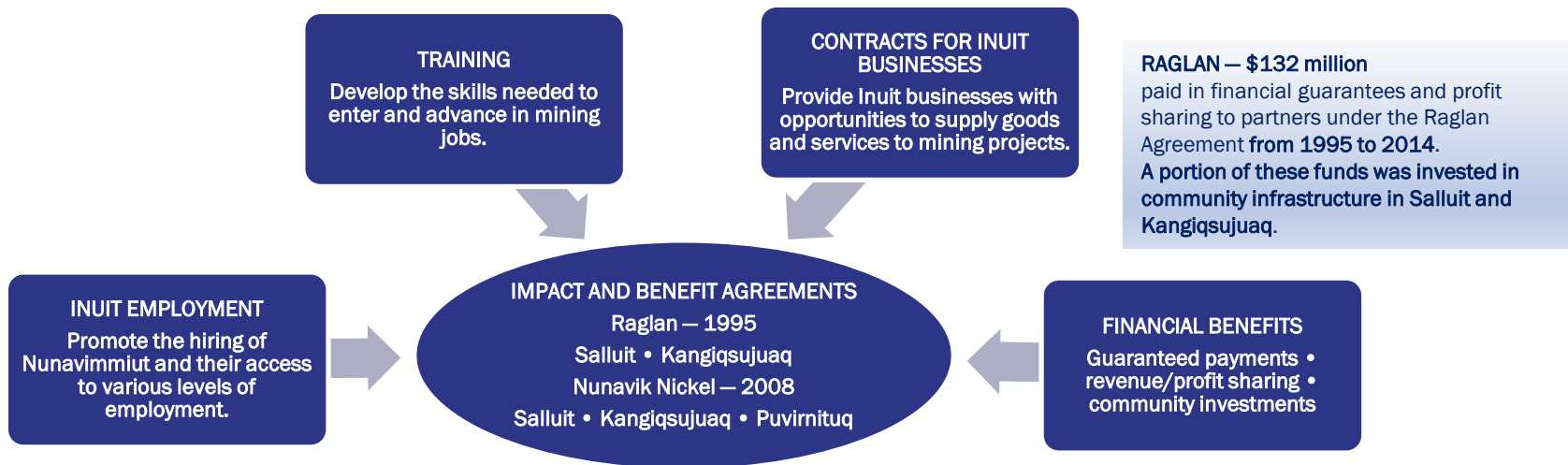
Mining generates significant jobs, contracts, and revenue, but it also makes use of the land and is part of an economy largely linked to areas outside Nunavik.

Understanding its impacts therefore requires looking beyond the value of the mined ore.



WHO BENEFITS FROM MINING DEVELOPMENT?

The mere presence of a mine does not guarantee that communities will reap the benefits. Agreements have therefore been negotiated to govern economic benefits and Inuit participation.



LOOKING AHEAD

There are benefits, but they are not necessarily distributed equally.

Access to jobs, contracts, and mining revenues varies among individuals, businesses, and communities. To understand a mine's economic impact, we must therefore examine who actually benefits from these benefits.



WORKING IN NUNAVIK WITHOUT LIVING THERE

The fly-in/fly-out model isn't limited to mining. In Nunavik, several sectors rely on workers who come from outside to work for certain periods and then return to their homes.

 **MINING**
Rotational workers at mining sites

 **HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES**
Professionals and employees coming to work in Nunavik for varying periods of time

 **CONSTRUCTION AND INFRASTRUCTURE**
Workforce present during construction projects

 **TRANSPORTATION AND SPECIALIZED SERVICES**
Staff and expertise, some of which comes from outside the region

WHAT THIS ACHIEVES

✓ Fill positions that are difficult to fill locally ✓ Maintain essential services ✓ Carry out projects requiring specialized expertise ✓ Meet temporary or seasonal needs

→ A portion of wages is spent outside the region → Skills acquired do not always remain in the region → Less continuity within organizations → Dependence on external recruitment → A portion of the economic benefits flows outside Nunavik

WHAT IT MAY LIMIT

The UTHC also relies on workers from outside Nunavik. This workforce is essential to maintaining many services. As a major employer, the UTHC also has a role to play in developing skills and employment opportunities that can remain in the region.

LOOKING AHEAD

Bringing in workers from outside meets real needs in Nunavik. The challenge is not simply to replace these workers, but to gradually build more local capacity.



THE UTHC ALSO CONTRIBUTES TO THE REGIONAL ECONOMY

To provide care and services in the communities, the UTHC must purchase, transport, build, maintain, and organize numerous services. These activities also generate economic benefits.

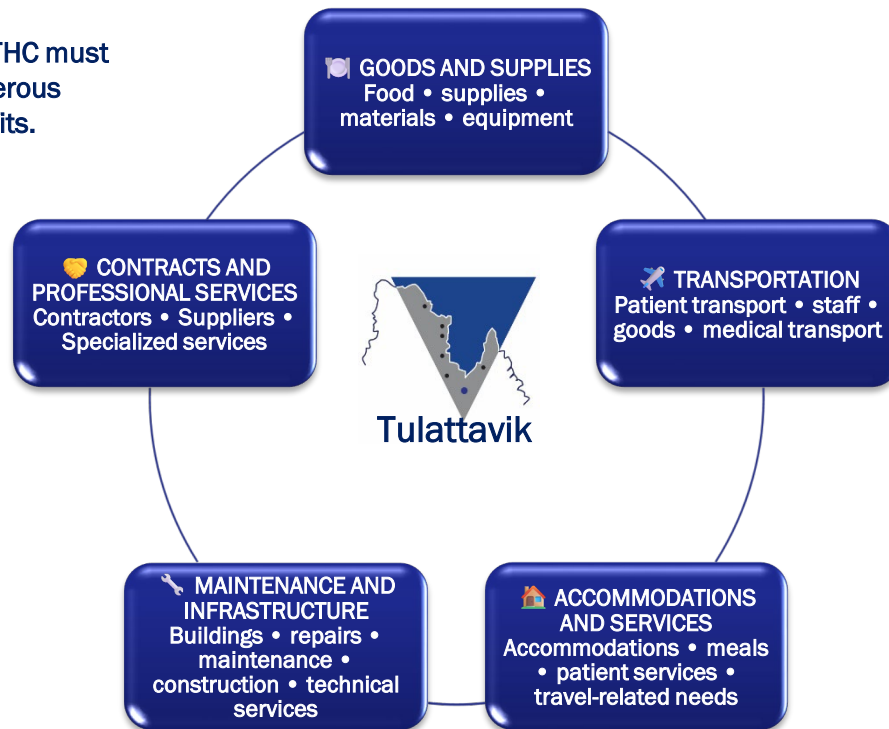
OUR ROLE

Where opportunities exist, our decisions regarding procurement, contracting, and service development can also contribute to regional economic development.

LOOKING AHEAD

The UTHC does more than just provide services in Nunavik—it also contributes to the region's economy.

The way we develop our services, skills, partnerships, and supply chains influences the share of economic benefits that can remain in the region.



A portion of these expenditures can support businesses and jobs in Nunavik; another portion must necessarily be spent with external suppliers.



IN MY WORK AT THE CSTU

Understanding Nunavik's economic realities can help us better understand certain situations experienced by our clients and colleagues.

Having a job or an income does not necessarily mean having much financial leeway.

High cost of goods •
transportation • housing •
family responsibilities •
equipment needed for life
on the land

**DO NOT ASSUME
ANYTHING ABOUT
FINANCIAL
CIRCUMSTANCES**



On-the-land activities can be part of family life, food provision, and sharing.

Time spent on the land, for example, is not necessarily viewed solely as "leisure time."

**RECOGNIZE THE
ROLE OF THE
LAND**



A person's resources can also support other members of their family or community.

An individual's income can also contribute to the family's needs or be shared.

**UNDERSTAND
FAMILY
RESPONSIBILITIES
AND SHARING**



Many of us come to work in Nunavik without living there permanently. Our presence helps maintain essential services, but it is also part of the economic reality.

**RECOGNIZING
OUR OWN PLACE
IN THIS ECONOMY**



LOOKING AHEAD

Understanding Nunavik's economy is not just about understanding numbers.

It also means gaining a deeper understanding of the choices, constraints, and responsibilities that can influence the daily lives of the people we work with.



DID YOU KNOW THAT...?

..... the cooperative movement is a major employer?

Each of Nunavik's 14 communities has a cooperative that is a member of the FCNQ-Ilagiisaq. The cooperative movement is now recognized as the largest non-governmental employer in Nunavik, with more than 930 full-time employees and 700 seasonal employees.

..... Air Inuit is collectively owned by the Inuit of Nunavik?

Air Inuit is a wholly owned subsidiary of Makivvik and is therefore collectively owned by the Inuit of Nunavik. Founded in 1978, it now has more than 1,175 employees and 36 aircraft.

..... do cooperatives do much more than just sell groceries?

They also provide banking services, hotels, fuel, communications, marketing of Inuit art, energy, construction, and transportation, among other things

..... is there a registry of Inuit businesses in Nunavik?

Makivvik developed the Nunavik Inuit Business Registry, in part to facilitate Inuit businesses' access to contracts for goods, services, and construction, and to contribute to the development of a permanent business base in Nunavik.



THE BASICS

Nunavik's economy is shaped by the land

Distance, the lack of roads to the south, and reliance on air and maritime transportation influence the cost of goods, business development, and the organization of services.

→ **In Nunavik, geography is part of the economy.**

it isn't measured solely in dollars

Wage labor coexists with hunting, fishing, trapping, gathering, and sharing. Income also helps fund the equipment and travel necessary for on-the-land activities.

→ **The wage-based economy and the land economy are closely linked.**

Creating wealth in Nunavik does not mean it stays there

Activities carried out in Nunavik generate jobs, contracts, and income, but a portion of wages, purchases, services, and skills also flows out of the region.

→ **To understand the economic benefits, we must look at where they go.**

Participating in the economy also means participating in decision-making

Inuit businesses and organizations help create jobs and skills, secure contracts, and reinvest a portion of their revenue back into the communities and the region.

→ **Economic self-sufficiency also involves ownership, participation, and the ability to make decisions.**

Our organizations are part of this economy

Like other major organizations in Nunavik, the CSTU employs people, makes purchases, builds facilities, transports goods, and uses a wide range of services. Some of these benefits remain in the region, while others are realized elsewhere.

→ **The ways we develop services also have economic impacts.**



THINKING ABOUT MY PRACTICE

When we meet a need today, what will remain in Nunavik tomorrow?

To operate, the CSTU must sometimes rely on workers, companies, suppliers, and expertise from outside the region. These resources are often necessary to maintain services.

But every decision can also be an opportunity to ask ourselves:

EMPLOYMENT

Can this activity create or support employment opportunities for people living in Nunavik?

SKILLS

Will the knowledge and expertise developed remain in the region and be passed on?

CONTRACTS

Always consider involving Inuit or regional businesses when they can meet the need.

LONG-TERM DEVELOPMENT

Are we merely addressing the immediate need, or are we also helping to build capacity that will serve us in the future?

The challenge is not to do everything locally. It is to ask ourselves, when we have choices, how a greater share of the benefits can remain in Nunavik.



CSTU RECOMMENDATION

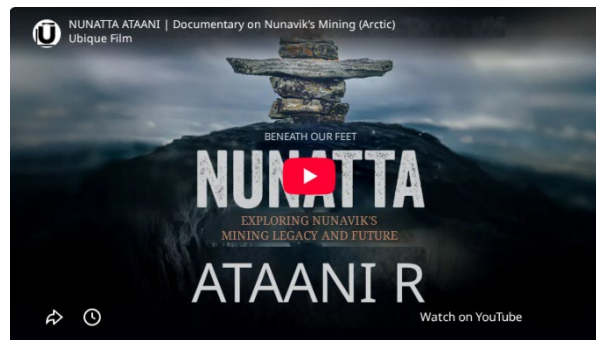
NUNATTA ATAANI — BENEATH OUR FEET

Jean-Philippe Brochu, 2024 — 105 min

Filmed in Nunavik, this documentary explores the history, operations, and contemporary issues of the mining industry through the perspectives of the Nunavimmiut.

Why the CSTU recommends it:

The film provides a better understanding of how mining development can create jobs, contracts, and revenue, while also raising questions on the land, about the environment, the impact on communities, and Inuit participation in decision-making.



This concretely illustrates a central question in this fact sheet: when wealth is created in Nunavik, who participates in the decisions, and how do the benefits reach the Nunavimmiut?

[Nunatta Ataani Official Website](#)



LEARN MORE



Building the Inuit Homeland – Episode 3: The Foundation (Building the Economy)

This documentary project traces the socioeconomic development of Inuit land. This episode focuses specifically on the “Inuit-led, Inuit-owned” principle: the development of businesses and organizations owned and run by the Inuit and their role in building a northern economy.



Why Inuit Self-Determination Is Key to Canada’s Future — Natan Obed, IRPP, 2025

An interview with Natan Obed, president of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, on Inuit self-determination, infrastructure, and the economic future of the Arctic. It offers insights into the connection between economic development, decision-making capacity, and long-term investments in Inuit Nunangat.



Pinasunnig: Reflections on a Northern Indigenous Economy — Yellowhead Institute, 2024

This work explores the economy from Inuit perspectives: hunting and gathering, food sovereignty, the arts, community work, and economic development. It also examines the role given to Inuit-led economic models.



The Economic Impact of Inuit Arts — Government of Canada

This study shows that sculpture, printmaking, crafts, the performing arts, film, and other forms of creative expression are not merely cultural expressions: they also generate income and jobs in Inuit Nunangat. The study estimated that in 2015, the Inuit arts economy as a whole contributed \$87.2 million to Canada’s GDP and supported more than 2,700 full-time equivalent jobs.

Nunavik's economy is shaped by the land, on-the-land activities, institutions, businesses, and the people who work there.

As an organization and as employees, we are also part of it. Our choices can help build local capacity and ensure that a greater share of the benefits remains in Nunavik.

Understanding Nunavik's economy also means understanding our place within it.

