

# **NWT Voluntary Sector Development - The Emerging Third Sector**

*“Volunteer participation is an indicator of community wellness.”*

Consultation Report

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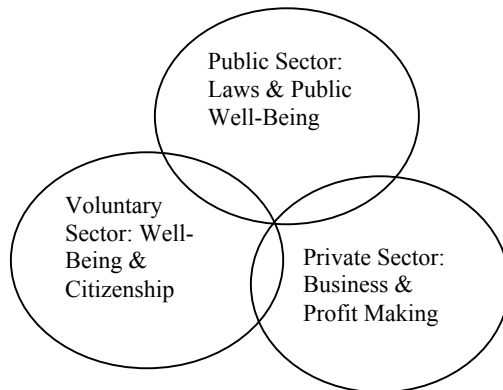
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## 1. An Introduction to the NWT Voluntary Sector

Canadian society has three main sectors – the government or public sector, the private or business sector, and the non-government or voluntary sector. The notion of three sectors is a relatively new concept in Canadian society and in the NWT. Historically, government fulfilled governance functions, operated commercial enterprises and advocated for active citizenship and well-being in many NWT communities. After decades of living in a predominantly, single sector or government-driven society, many northerners now recognize the existence of the business or private sector. Recognition is also being given to new Aboriginal government and business organizations and to the new relationships that these groups are developing with public governments and private enterprise. The non-government or voluntary sector is also emerging in the NWT and is most recognizable in Fort Smith, Hay River, Yellowknife and Inuvik.

The roles and responsibilities of the three sectors are distinct yet complementary.

1. The **public or government sector** makes and implements laws and policies, and provides public programs and services for the education, health, safety and well-being of all citizens.
2. The **private or business sector** builds and profits from commercial enterprise.
3. The **voluntary sector** supports and promotes active citizenship and well-being.



Since the late 1980s, more research and discussion have occurred to give a better understanding of the voluntary sector, its work and its relationship with other sectors. The research shows that the roles and responsibilities of each sector are beginning to merge or overlap due to:

- the diminishing role of government in responding to the social needs of citizens,
- trends toward privatization of community and social services,

- more global influences on business, governance and service decisions,
- less citizen involvement and sense of community,
- greater emphasis on knowledge and professionalism as a valued commodity,
- persistent poverty and marginalization of significant segments of society,
- greater difficulty deriving sustainable social solutions, and
- shared concern for public health and participation in communities.<sup>1</sup>

### ***What is the Voluntary Sector?***

The voluntary sector is made up of two inter-related parts – volunteers and voluntary organizations. Definitions of the sector are debated across the country. Some definitions include organizations such as hospitals and universities that are structured as non-profit groups but in practice, function as government institutions. Non-profit groups engaged in commercial activities to generate revenues in a manner similar to the business sector, may also be included. Persons who are required to undertake community service for voluntary organizations may also be included.

For this consultation, the following definitions of volunteers and voluntary organizations were used.

- *Volunteers* - people who make the choice to help others and their community without expecting any payment; and
- *Voluntary Organizations* – non-government (NGO), non-profit, third sector and community organizations/groups, which operate with volunteer boards or committees. Governance is not a paid function and government legislation or corporate policy do not predetermine the work done. Quasi-government organizations such as district education councils, local housing organizations, regional health and social services boards, and band and municipal councils are not part of the voluntary sector even though volunteerism may be apparent in them.

The actual capacity and activities of the NWT voluntary sector are unknown. An inventory of volunteers and voluntary organizations in the NWT has not been prepared. It is known that:

- 41% of NWT adults aged 15 and over engage in some kind of volunteer activity through a group or organization.<sup>2</sup> This exceeds the Canadian rate of 31% reported in the 1997 *National Survey of*

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<sup>1</sup> **The Draft NWT Volunteer Strategy – Summary of Workshop Discussion.** June 9-10,1999, Yellowknife

<sup>2</sup> **NWT Labour Force Survey, 1999**

*Giving, Volunteering and Participating.* Only Saskatchewan has a higher rate (47%) of volunteer activity than the NWT.

- Volunteering in the NWT may be under-estimated as the extent of informal individual acts of giving and helping have not been enumerated.
- Throughout the NWT, voluntary activity is focused on organizing special events such as spring carnivals, summer festivals, traditional games and community feasts.

Non-profit societies registered under the NWT Societies Act are the only record of voluntary groups in the NWT. This registry includes quasi-government organizations and excludes unincorporated volunteer groups and informal committees. There may be 550 registered societies “*in good standing*” in the NWT. National data on voluntary groups with charitable status indicate that there may be 100 registered charities in NWT and Nunavut, half of which are located in Yellowknife.<sup>3</sup> Other data on northern charities have not been collected, mainly because the NWT is excluded from the *National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating*.

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<sup>3</sup> Charitable status refers to those voluntary groups registered under the Income Tax Act and exempt from income taxes and able to issue receipts for donations that can be claimed as tax credits.

## 2. NWT Voluntary Sector Development Consultation

“Government and the voluntary sector are independent and interdependent parts of society”.<sup>4</sup> The Federal Government has a vision of the two sectors working together.<sup>5</sup> By working together, governments and the voluntary sector can build sustainable, healthy and safe communities.

The 13<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories’ *Agenda for the New North* (1999) for the 21<sup>st</sup> century recognized the need for northerners to work together to manage political, social, fiscal and economic change in the new NWT. The current 14<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly of the NWT’s vision in *Towards a Better Tomorrow*, seeks to “*build upon a common vision and work in partnership towards a vibrant, prosperous territory*” where self-reliant individuals, families and communities are working with governments toward improved social and economic well-being. A social agenda is currently under discussion as one vehicle for achieving this vision. The voluntary sector can make an important contribution to this agenda. Voluntary action and participation is a primary indicator of health and well-being.

The GNWT Department of Municipal and Community Affairs (MACA) recognizes that communities are changing and capacity is limited to accommodate and respond to change. A host of local, national and global factors will increase demands and pressures on NWT communities. MACA supports the development of strong communities that can manage and thrive in an environment of change. The Department has a vision of “*capable, accountable and self-directed community governments providing a safe, sustainable and healthy environment for community residents.*”<sup>6</sup> The voluntary sector can be a major player in helping communities and MACA to achieve this vision.

Research has shown that the most successful societies harness the energies of voluntary action and recognize volunteers and voluntary organizations. MACA is seeking to harness these energies to build safe, sustainable and healthy communities. To this end, MACA has undertaken consultations with the

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<sup>4</sup> **Working Together: A Government of Canada/Voluntary Sector Joint Initiative**, 1999

<sup>5</sup> **Social Union Framework Agreement**, 1999

<sup>6</sup> **GNWT Municipal and Community Affairs 2001-2004 Business Plan**

voluntary sector, the general public and other governments to determine the GNWT's role in supporting the voluntary sector. Specifically, the consultations sought to:

1. identify issues affecting the voluntary sector in the NWT,
2. secure feedback and recommendations on a draft NWT Volunteer Strategy, and
3. provide direction for the development of a volunteer policy.

The two-phase consultation process extended from June 1999 to February 2001. In Phase 1, a two-day workshop heard from approximately 40 volunteers, representatives of voluntary organizations and government staff who work with the sector. The workshop involved participants from throughout the NWT and from a variety of big and small voluntary groups. Participants were involved in the sector as youth volunteers, volunteer board members, managers or program staff of voluntary organizations, fundraisers, coaches and group leaders, to name a few. The workshop was held in June 1999 in Yellowknife.

Phase 2 consultations began in September 2000 and extended to February 2001. Phase 2 consultations overlapped with the official launching of the International Year of the Volunteer, on December 5, 2000. In Phase 2, 180 people were involved in twenty-one (21) consultation sessions throughout the NWT. The consultations took place as part of existing venues and/or regular meetings (see attached list of consultations). The consultations sought a variety of perspectives, in recognition of the broad role the voluntary sector plays in NWT communities. First Nations government and non-government organizations, recreation leaders, community volunteers, tourism marketers, local and territorial voluntary organizations, educators, social service staff, career development staff, and trainers were among the perspectives heard in Phase 2 consultations. Focus groups, cracker-barrel sessions, individual interviews, community/public meetings and workshops were the methods used to undertake the consultations. Consultations took place in Fort Providence, Deline, Inuvik, Fort Simpson, Fort Smith, Hay River and Yellowknife.

While Phase 1 and 2 consultations have been extensive, all citizens in the NWT were not invited to participate and may not share the views presented in this report.

### **3. Issues Affecting the Voluntary Sector in the NWT**

The consultation process found that the following 14 interrelated and complex issues affect the voluntary sector in the NWT. These issues are not unlike those documented about the sector in southern Canada. The consultations also found that many of the issues confronting the voluntary sector in the NWT are similar to those encountered by Aboriginal government, business and voluntary organizations. While the issues facing the sector are complex, persons participating in the consultations were helpful in offering a variety of ideas for addressing them. These ideas are summarized in this chapter.

#### ***3.1 Role, Responsibilities and Expectations***

*“Valued social services should not be off-loaded on the voluntary or private sector.”* (from Yellowknife consultations)

##### The Main Issues:

The voluntary sector takes action to support and promote active citizenship and well-being. More often than not, the sector works with persons who are disadvantaged or vulnerable or on ideas or causes that are under-represented in society. Public advocacy and advice to government are among the actions taken to promote citizenship and well-being.

Voluntary organizations and volunteers provide many of the social, leisure, sport, arts, education, health, environmental, spiritual and emergency services available in NWT communities. They encourage and support citizen participation in them. The efforts of the voluntary sector express the democratic principles of Canadian society in that they stimulate citizen cooperation and sharing for the common good. They help to build healthy, safe and sustainable environments for community residents.

In the NWT and elsewhere in the country, the voluntary sector is playing an increasingly larger role in providing community and social services, particularly to disadvantaged or marginalized members of society. Governments are moving away from providing community and social services. Businesses are providing more community and social services to people who are able to pay for them.<sup>7</sup> The voluntary

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<sup>7</sup> In this report, community and social services are used in the broader context of human and public services.

sector is providing for those who cannot pay. These people tend to be women, children, youth, older persons and persons with disability. They may be members of communities or families that are unwilling or unable to take responsibility for them. They may lack skills and have special physical, emotional or intellectual needs. They are also likely to be poor.

The voluntary sector sees the demand for community and social services increasing at the same time that financial resources are dwindling. Volunteers and voluntary organizations often lack the leadership, management and/or program capacity to meet the burgeoning demand. The demand for services and lack of capacity are two factors causing the sector to become more structured and to seek money to provide services. More voluntary organizations are entering into contracts or fee-for-service arrangements with government and to a lesser extent, the business sector. These activities are giving rise to a perception that some voluntary organizations are more like government or business entities than voluntary groups.

Changes within the voluntary sector in the NWT are creating stresses for volunteers, paid staff, clients and funders. They are also causing segments of the sector to actively question their role in community and social service provision. Some members of the sector suggest that if social and community programs are valued, governments rather than voluntary organizations should be delivering them and ensuring that there is equal access to them.

Unlike public governments, self-government regimes developing for example, in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region, seem to be taking back responsibility for community and social programs. They are beginning to roll-up the various and assorted types of community and social organizations under local government councils. These actions are helping the voluntary sector to deal with such critical issues as lack of capacity, volunteer burn-out and accountability. These activities are also clarifying the role and responsibility for social and community services at the community level. The abandonment of some voluntary agencies in favour of government services also raises concerns for citizen participation and opportunities for advocacy in northern communities. Some community members and sector representatives wonder if government should be doing everything, and if there will be alternatives or an avenue of recourse if government services do not serve them. Others suggest that self-government

regimes that take responsibility for community and social services, create an opportunity for the voluntary sector to return to its roots, that being, helping others through purely volunteer efforts and advocacy on behalf of those people whose voices are not heard in NWT society.

Ideas for Addressing the Issue:

Persons participating in the consultations suggest that issues related to the role, responsibility and expectations of the voluntary sector could be addressed through:

1. government-business-voluntary sector discussion that answers the questions - *what should the voluntary sector be doing now? what should the voluntary sector be doing in the future in light of new governance structures and new forms of economic or business development?* (It should be kept in mind that Aboriginal organizations span all three sectors and all should be involved in this discussion.)
2. public dialogue that clarifies the moral, ethical and legal role of all sectors and citizens in addressing community and social service needs and issues in the NWT.

### **3.2 Giving and Volunteering**

*“There is great difficulty finding and involving volunteers because everyone expects to get paid. It wasn’t always like this but when people started to get paid to do things for other people, the whole notion of helping others changed.”* (from Fort Simpson consultations)

A long time volunteer suggests:

- Know the skills and interests of people.
- Give clear and concise direction.
- Set realistic and attainable goals.
- Provide materials needed to do the job.
- Check in to make sure all is well.
- Give trust and flexibility to make decisions.
- Recognize a job well-done. (Long-time volunteer, Fort Providence)

*“Volunteer participation is an indicator of community wellness.”* (from Yellowknife consultations)

The Main Issues:

The term “volunteering” is not widely used or understood in all NWT communities. “Helping out” is a more widely understood concept, particularly in Aboriginal communities. Volunteers are often thought of as people who come from outside the community to help, like Operation Beaver or Katimavik. “*The first time I heard of volunteers I was amazed that these people (Operation Beaver) would come from around the world to work so hard for the Dene for only food and a place to sleep.*” (from Fort Simpson consultations)

Volunteer activity is a continuum of informal, independent unstructured helping out to formalized giving through big or small organizations. All forms are equally valuable and valued. Volunteering and helping out occur in every NWT community. They happen when needed and on a regular, ongoing basis. Nationally, volunteer action tends to be concentrated among a core group of citizens. In fact, one-third of all volunteers in Canada contribute 81% of the total volunteer hours and one-third of all volunteer donors account for 86% of all donations. A similar situation may exist in the NWT. On average about 15% of NWT/Nunavut tax filers make charitable donations.<sup>8</sup>

Among the 41% of NWT adults who engage in volunteer activity through a group or organization, about 30% participate in one to three different volunteer activities; 8% are involved in four to six activities; and 2% in seven or more.<sup>9</sup> There seems to be a core group of volunteers in each NWT community. In small communities, the core group may be as small as 4 to 10 people. In larger communities, 30-50 people may form the core group. Core volunteers seem to always help out. They volunteer for boards, special events, to coach baseball teams, and to take elders to community feasts. They are visible and identifiable as volunteers or community helpers. Many other northerners help out at times of crisis and dire need. Still others are virtually invisible in their helping, giving and caring contributions to neighbours and the community in general.

Volunteers or people willing to help are attracted to activities that are needed and well-supported in the community. They participate where they feel safe, and know that they have the skills, empathy or

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<sup>8</sup> **National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating**, 1997 (NWT and Nunavut data are not disaggregated.)

<sup>9</sup> **NWT Labour Force Survey**, 1999

knowledge to make a difference. They are encouraged by people/groups who know how to receive or accept help and by experiences that make them feel good. They are recognized for their effort. In some Dene communities, recognition of community helpers or volunteers is done in a collective rather than individual way, in keeping with Dene tradition. Volunteers are encouraged by the celebration of successes such as the NWT Literacy Council's volunteer tutoring program.

People volunteer to help others, support a cause, do something enjoyable, gain a sense of accomplishment, realize self or family benefit, learn new skills, and/or acquire work experience. Many northerners say they volunteer or help out because it is a way of living. Volunteering is something done as a family member. *"We give to our communities because they are like an extension of our family."* (from Yellowknife consultations) Others give because *"it feels good to do something good"*. (from Deline consultations) Others give in order to be part of something larger and to feel good about it. *"The spirit and good feelings that come from lots of people helping to make something (a special event) happen is very powerful."* (from Fort Simpson consultations)

The 1999 *NWT Labour Force Survey* describes the main characteristics of NWT volunteers who make contributions through groups or organizations as:

- more likely to be female (44%) than male (37%).
- between 40-59 years of age (46%) or 25-39 (44%).
- employed (46%) rather than unemployed (32%).

Those who are visible and participate in structured, ongoing volunteer efforts are viewed by the sector as likely to be middle-class, functional and healthy. The portrait of the many other people who help out informally is unclear. Northerners agree that people whose own basic needs have not been met, are ill-equipped to help others. *"People must be empowered to participate."*(from Hay River consultations)

Northerners say that the number of volunteers and people willing to help out is declining. This is occurring while the demand for volunteers is growing as a result of new groups, fewer or less comprehensive free services, more people in need, and/or greater expectations of the voluntary sector. They say that the ethic of giving is changing and/or is not being developed. Families seem to be too busy to volunteer. Nurses, teachers, RCMP and other transient professionals who were once a ready source

of volunteers, may no longer give due to workloads and workplace morale. Existing volunteers are burning-out. *“Everyone is stretched to the limit”*. (from Inuvik consultations)

Work and money are two factors that seem to have the most impact on volunteerism in the NWT. Families are too busy working or trying to get enough money to get by, to volunteer or give to others. Bingo is one of the ways that some northerners try to secure money. *“Bingos are not good for the community. They keep people busy, too busy to volunteer.”* (from Inuvik consultations) Securing money not only seems to discourage volunteerism, it also poses difficulties for voluntary organizations. Persons seeing others who are paid for work that they are being asked to volunteer for, are unwilling to give. They question the value of their contributions. Similarly, activities that were once done by volunteers and are now paid functions, also discourage volunteerism. Individuals or families whose traditional function was to organize and lead social activities (e.g. community foreman in the Dogrib communities) have seen this work performed by paid personnel. Mixed messages about paid work and volunteerism create difficulties for front-line service staff such as Recreation Coordinators. These people are likely to invest as much volunteer time as paid time. They say that the lack of volunteers is the reason for this. They note that families who pay a fee for a service are particularly reticent to volunteer.

In NWT communities, paid work tends to have a higher value than volunteerism. Persons receiving pay seem to have greater influence and higher status than those who volunteer. Communities with a high demand for and a shortage of paid work opportunities, worry that volunteers will replace paid workers and further limit opportunities to make money. Unionized environments also support the use of paid workers over volunteers and advocate strongly to ensure that volunteers do not take work that would otherwise be done by paid professionals such as social workers or teachers. Voluntary sector groups worry about the potential for conflict, for example when they are asked to provide volunteer services that otherwise might be provided by paid workers.

Northerners deliberate on how to engage citizens in volunteer activity in a way that builds strong communities. The voluntary sector is particularly preoccupied with the challenges of recruiting volunteers. In the NWT as elsewhere in the country, youth and persons who are unemployed are seen as the main source of volunteer effort in the new millennium. Tapping this source of volunteers requires

special community-wide effort. Northerners say that youth must see the direct benefits of volunteering. Developing the ethic and the good feeling of giving starts at a very young age. It requires families to actively participate in volunteering and northern leaders to model this behaviour in NWT communities. It also requires supports that enable and promote meaningful, safe and positive community service and volunteer experiences.

*“The value of giving and helping is not promoted in the home today.”* (from Fort Providence consultations) *“People need to grow up with volunteerism. Start young and start with families.”* (from Hay River consultations)

Currently, two opportunities exist to engage youth and unemployed persons in the voluntary sector - Career and Life Management (CALM) and the NWT Income Support Program. CALM studies within the NWT high school curriculum require each student to contribute 25 hours of community service in order to graduate from high school. The pursuit of productive choices under the NWT Income Support Program requires individuals receiving financial assistance to work, go to school or perform community service. Persons with court orders or community justice diversions may also be required to perform community service. These initiatives are inconsistently implemented and little if any, distinction is made between mandated/required community service and volunteer activities born of freedom of choice. Lack of distinction between these two very different concepts creates confusion and threatens to undermine or devalue volunteerism, and give a punitive and/or negative connotation to volunteering.

#### Ideas for Addressing the Issue:

Persons participating in the consultations suggest that issues related to giving and volunteering in the voluntary sector could be addressed by:

1. preparing community voluntary sector inventories and/or registries to improve understanding of the sector and using these to plan recruitment strategies.
2. each community creating opportunities for everyone to contribute in ways that they believe are important, and promoting the feeling and the spirit of giving. *“It feels good to volunteer and feeling good is something we all want.”* (from Deline consultations) *“If we could capture the feeling of giving and feeling good, volunteerism would increase ten-fold.”* (from Yellowknife consultations)

3. promoting the value, benefits and reasons for volunteering, giving and helping. *“People need to understand that the social and personal benefits of volunteering are great.”* (from Hay River consultations)
4. providing opportunities for families to volunteer and promoting the ethic of giving within families through “Helping Hands”, “Make it Count”, “Do Something for Yourself and For Your Kids” campaigns that challenge families to give together and to each other. Promote and encourage parental responsibility, modelling behaviours, healthy families and families that volunteer. Confront and address parental apathy/feelings of intimidation, discomfort and/or inadequacy about volunteering.
5. recognizing that youth are the future volunteers. Promote volunteerism at Career Fairs and in schools.
6. developing the capacity in each community to recruit, train and manage volunteers and implement strategies to reduce volunteer burn-out (e.g. mentoring, volunteer buddies, fewer demands/groups, and clearer expectations/demands).
7. ensuring that travelling training resource kits begun by GNWT MACA during the International Year of the Volunteer are continued and promoted widely in NWT communities to give tools to the sector. Kits should include a list of resources available to support the sector and examples of some of these resources.
8. recognizing and celebrating volunteers and community helpers in the same way that they give, and in keeping with the traditions of the community. *“Name volunteerism and feel good about it.”* (from Yellowknife workshop) *“Recognition is a key motivating factor.”* (from Fort Providence consultations)
9. encouraging northern leaders to set examples and be role models of giving and volunteering.
10. restructuring and refocusing CALM and Income Support programs to support rather than undermine volunteerism.
11. investigating and implementing viable incentives to encourage volunteers in very tangible ways (e.g. mechanisms for banking volunteer hours for tax deductions, group liability insurance, legislation such as the Good Samaritan’s Act to protect volunteers, tax-breaks for employers with employees who volunteer, payroll deductions matched by the employer, expanded definitions of civic duty, and secondment of skilled public and private sector employees to the voluntary sector).

12. encouraging public dialogue about “*what constitutes paid and unpaid work*” (from Inuvik consultations).
13. ensuring that persons who volunteer are not penalized through a loss of employment insurance, disability pension, income support or other benefits.

“*Volunteers are the spice of communities otherwise we would only have meat and potatoes.*” (from Hay River consultations)

### **3.3 Capacity of the Sector**

“*Volunteer labour is not a freebie either in the sense of free labour or free of (organizational) effort.*” (from Yellowknife consultations)

#### The Main Issues:

The volunteer sector lacks adequate and sustained capacity to recruit volunteers, advocate, provide advice to government, account to government and the community, and deliver programs and services. The sector lacks capacity to manage volunteers and community services workers, a task that is made more difficult given that some people forced to participate in the sector require an inordinate amount of supervision. The voluntary sector is a valuable source of work and career development skills, and help for individuals to take social action for and with others. However, the sector lacks capacity to provide positive and meaningful experiences for youth and others seeking skills, confidence and support. “*Poor experiences can backfire*” (from Fort Smith consultations) on the sector, clients, the community and on the individual. Unstable, project-specific funding, lack of core funding and difficulty recruiting volunteers with the skills to commit to governance, management or fundraising activities on a regular basis contributes to capacity issues in the sector.

The voluntary sector is becoming more structured and professional in its organization as well as in the skills required to meaningfully participate. The expertise required to effectively manage more structured organizations and recruit skilled volunteers and helpers is often lacking. The demand for higher level skills and more structure within the sector may be discouraging volunteers. Volunteers may be afraid or intimidated by these changes or feel that their way of giving or helping is less valuable.

*“Organizations walk a very fine line when dealing with volunteers and volunteer issues.”* (from Yellowknife consultations)

Capacity issues facing the voluntary sector are shared by many Aboriginal organizations in all sectors. Poor wages and benefits diminish opportunities to attract skilled professionals for management and program functions, and with the sophistication, expertise and skills to partner and negotiate with other sectors and within the sector. Segments of the sector suggest that organizations able to pay competitive wages/benefits and train staff/volunteers are likely to have access to government funding and have more capacity than purely volunteer organizations. Regardless of funding arrangements, few organizations have the resources for volunteer coordinator, fundraiser and in some cases, administrator positions.

Some segments of the voluntary sector believe that governments, businesses and communities do not adequately invest in, or share a commitment to dealing with community and social issues. Others suggest that NWT communities, governments and business are contributing adequate resources to respond to social issues but are unwilling to invest in advocacy or in building the management and organizational capacity needed to make the best use of resources. Proponents of this latter view say that *“people are not working together”* (from Inuvik consultations) and no agency is doing developmental work at the community level to support cooperative philosophies and approaches. Without cooperation, sector representatives agree that capacity cannot be strengthened and social and community issues cannot be addressed.

A variety of short-term and somewhat isolated efforts have been undertaken to address capacity issues in the sector. The GNWT Education, Culture and Employment funded a volunteer network coordinator in Fort Smith during the 2000/2001 fiscal year.<sup>10</sup> Unfortunately, this is a one year commitment and developmental work required to establish and promote this position and its usefulness to the sector have not been accomplished in this short period. Youth Canada’s Youth Volunteer Program funded a volunteer coordinator position in Yellowknife. This service was extremely valuable to both volunteers

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<sup>10</sup> funded under the Labour Market Development Agreement. A similar position was funded in Hay River the previous year for the purposes of working within community schools.

and organizations. The Status of Women Council provides administrative support to the evolving Yellowknife Social Planning Coalition<sup>11</sup> and supports volunteer-based women’s groups in various NWT communities. Prior to its closure, the Storefront for Voluntary Agencies helped to promote awareness and build capacity in the sector in Yellowknife. Currently, a group of Yellowknife volunteers is examining the possibility of developing a United Way chapter, as a means of strengthening organizational and financial capacity within the sector. Communities in need of sport and recreation leaders and coaches looked to Sport North in the past, to build capacity. Today, community-based sports groups say that capacity-building supports are inaccessible to them. Efforts to encourage high schools to offer level 1 and 2 coaching (through modules of the Career and Technology Studies programs) have also met with little success. “*Why isn’t Sport North developing volunteer coaches?*” (from Inuvik consultations)

Ideas for Addressing the Issue:

Persons participating in the consultations suggest that capacity issues in the voluntary sector could be addressed by:

1. community-based skills development in writing proposals, voluntary sector governance and management, and volunteer recruitment and management.
2. continuing to provide comprehensive travelling volunteer resource kits launched by GNWT MACA in the International Year of the Volunteer, and making them accessible to all NWT communities.
3. promoting literacy among board members.
4. undertaking community resource assessments to assess needs and enable communities to better apply resources.
5. enhancing the capacity of Recreation Coordinators and other front-line workers to work with and help to develop the voluntary sector.
6. continuing MACA’s initiatives of offsetting the costs of voluntary sector training.
7. documenting and promoting best practices for building capacity in the voluntary sector.
8. lobbying Sport North to invest in and have a stronger presence in NWT communities.

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<sup>11</sup> Human service agencies in Yellowknife’s voluntary sector have been working together for over a year to address common issues, share resources and find mechanisms for working more closely among themselves and with government.

9. lobbying for funding for volunteer coordinators in larger NWT communities and ensuring that positions are filled by individuals with community/human resource development and marketing skills.
10. using technology to improve management, accountability and promotional functions.

### **3.4 Understanding and Profile of the Sector**

*“Staying connected and exchanging information locally is really important to the sector. Even this consultation process offered opportunities for people to get together.”* (from Hay River consultations)

*“There are no opportunities to get together and talk or know what others are doing ....this was a good meeting because it helps us to connect with each other.”* (from Hay River consultations)

#### The Main Issues:

The voluntary sector has little or no profile within the government and business sectors. The sector is also not understood or recognized by many NWT volunteers or voluntary organizations. Mechanisms to create a collective sense among volunteers and voluntary organizations, are emerging in Yellowknife and to a much lesser extent in Fort Smith, Hay River and Inuvik. Still, there is little connectiveness among volunteers or voluntary organizations throughout the north. Lack of opportunities to dialogue and communicate the role, value and the place of the sector combined with few venues to connect contribute to lack of understanding, profile and recognition.

The profile and understanding of the sector is influenced by its history. In the NWT, many voluntary groups and collective volunteer effort are perceived as having been spawned by government policy or program funding. These same groups may have their strongest relationship with the funding/sponsoring agency and not be distinguished as a voluntary group. Other reasons that contribute to poor understanding and lack of sector profile include:

- the wide diversity in the type and size of formal and informal voluntary organizations.
- the diversity of voluntary sector activities.
- the lack of local focal points such as volunteer centres, for volunteers and people who help out along the whole continuum of volunteering and giving.
- the many labels or names given to voluntary organizations such as community, non-profit, third sector, and non-government organizations (NGOs).

- the generic label given to Aboriginal organizations, without differentiation between Aboriginal business organizations, Aboriginal government organizations and Aboriginal voluntary organizations.
- lower wages and benefits than in the government or private sectors, suggesting to the public and to persons in the sector that work done by the sector is of less value or “*lower or not as good*”.  
(from Inuvik consultations)

Segments of the voluntary sector suggest that the ambivalence of government policy, program and funding frameworks have a significant influence on public understanding and profile of the sector. The absence of core funding, the competitiveness of project funding, and the lack of involvement of the sector in public policy decision making are frequently cited as examples of governments’ approach and attitude toward the sector. The protracted voluntary sector strategy consultations have also been interpreted as an indication of government according a low priority to recognizing and working with the sector to address community and social issues despite International Year of the Volunteer activities and the GNWT Premier’s recent call for a social agenda.

There are signs that more northerners are beginning to identify a third sector in the NWT. As more essential community and social services are provided by volunteers and voluntary organizations, the profile and value accorded to the sector is increasing. Groups that publicly recognize the work of volunteers also strengthen recognition and understanding of the sector. Individuals who have positive, fun experiences in the sector also help to strengthen the profile. Innovative and creative communications, linkages with International Year of the Volunteers activities, and meaningful information (e.g. in media, directories, community/special event displays) are also helping to promote profile and understanding.

#### Ideas for Addressing the Issue:

Persons participating in the consultations suggest that understanding and profile of the voluntary sector could be improved by:

1. more opportunities at the community, regional and territorial levels for volunteers and voluntary organizations to connect, communicate and work together to understand themselves and the voluntary sector.

2. a promotional campaign that clearly defines the voluntary sector, and communicates what the voluntary sector is, how it works for and in the community, and how it works with other sectors.
3. promoting the costs and benefits of the sector and improving the analysis by completing a comprehensive inventory and tracking investments and outputs.
4. creating opportunities for the three sectors to dialogue at the community, regional and territorial levels.

### **3.5 Funding**

*“The increasing competition for funding is driving wedges between organizations that should be working together.”* (from Inuvik consultations)

#### The Main Issues:

The voluntary sector lacks a stable base of funding. Competition for individual and corporate donations is fierce. Membership fees are inadequate. Government funding is fragmented and competitively based. Funding has become a main source of conflict within the sector, and with quasi-government organizations such as school boards and with First Nations groups.

National statistics suggest that governments recognize their responsibility to financially support and promote active citizenship, social change and advocacy. In Canada, about 60% of funding within the voluntary sector comes from government sources.<sup>12</sup> Ten percent is from foundations and the remaining funds come from fund-raising, individual and corporate donations. If the distribution of revenues for a sample of Yellowknife voluntary organizations is typical throughout the NWT:<sup>13</sup>

- 36% of voluntary sector revenues in the NWT come from government (20% from GNWT),
- 8% from individuals,
- 3% from corporations,
- 18% from fees,
- 10% from gambling,
- 15% from product/service sales,

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<sup>12</sup> **Third Sector, Second Thoughts? Key Issues and Challenges Facing Canada’s Voluntary Organizations.** 2000

<sup>13</sup> **Storefront for Voluntary Agencies Training Needs Assessment for Governing and Management Functions in Yellowknife’s Third Sector,** 1998

- 9% fundraising/special events, and
- 4% from other sources/activities.

Outside of Yellowknife, revenues from gambling may form an even bigger portion of revenues.

Core funding of voluntary organizations in the NWT is virtually non-existent, and government and corporate funding to voluntary sector organizations rarely provides resources for advocacy, training or capacity development. NWT's voluntary sector groups struggle to build and maintain capacity to support core activities. This takes place in an environment in which government, corporations and other donors are tending toward targeted or project-oriented short-term funding. Short-term funding creates insecurity in activities from year to year, destabilizes staff, limits training and longer-term accrual of the benefits from these activities, affects the performance of management, and hinders the development and implementation of plans. Short-term funding creates administrative burdens that the sector is ill-equipped to handle. Scarce resources are spent identifying sources of funding, dealing with vague eligibility criteria and responding to accountability demands. Unlike the Yukon, the NWT does not have a policy that ensures open, consistent or rational funding of voluntary organizations.

The voluntary sector has grave concerns about dependencies that arise through fundraising ventures. Major funders can influence the direction of the organization; put an organization in jeopardy if funding is withdrawn; and influence activities and credibility. Revenue from gaming is another major concern within the voluntary sector. While a small number of organizations “*don't do bingos*”, it is a main fundraiser for many groups. Bingo is viewed among segments of the sector as “*feeding off addictions*” and detrimental to community health and the motivation to participate and volunteer. Fundraising activities especially gaming, are frequently cited as reasons that some northerners may not want to volunteer. In some communities, gaming has become quite competitive. Community governments who license gaming are criticized for not taking responsibility for ensuring cooperative fundraising activities that contribute to the health and well-being of the whole community.

Ideas for Addressing the Issue:

Persons participating in the consultations suggest that funding issues in the voluntary sector could be addressed by:

1. distributing lottery funds among all voluntary sector groups in the NWT (e.g. sport and recreation; arts and culture; and social organizations).
2. a policy to promote fair, equitable and non-competitive approaches to public funding allocations to the voluntary sector, including clearly defined eligibility criteria.
3. a clearinghouse or central source of information on funding and fundraising activities available to the sector.
4. cooperative arrangements between community governments, Chambers of Commerce or other community groups to collaborate on fundraising (e.g. on a cost-sharing or finders' fee basis).
5. moving away from a dependency on bingo as a main fundraiser through 'caps' on the number of bingos per organization, more restrictive bingo/gaming licensing requirements, and more mechanisms to encourage and support collaborative fundraising activities. *"There is a bingo every night in this community."* (from Inuvik consultations)
6. lobbying community governments to reinvest in the sector (from gaming licence fees) and to more actively manage community fund raising events to ensure community benefit.
7. more accountability to the public, tying funding and fundraising to the benefits it creates for the community.
8. investigating the feasibility of establishing local/regional and non-bureaucratic community/regional foundations and/or United Way chapters as a way to pool or consolidate resources and stabilize support for voluntary groups.
9. launching a public relations campaign about corporate and government responsibility for building healthy communities, to address the limitations posed by project-specific and short-term investments, and to educate the private sector about the positive benefits of investing in social and community solutions.

### **3.6 Advocacy**

*"How can the voluntary sector advocate against government policy while under contract to government to deliver a service?"* (from Yellowknife consultations)

The Main Issues:

Advocacy is a cornerstone of a healthy democracy. Advocacy enables voices to be heard that may otherwise be ignored. The strength of the voluntary sector and the extent to which it is able to advocate for less fortunate individuals or about issues not addressed by government or the business sector, is an indicator of the health of a society. The NWT voluntary sector is not distinguished by its role in advocacy on broader societal needs and issues. Lack of capacity is the main reason for this. For example, to effectively advocate, those in need of a voice should participate. However persons in need often lack literacy, confidence or the ability/experience to speak for themselves or to work with others to better their circumstances. Few voluntary organizations in the NWT have the resources to mobilize persons who are disenfranchised or marginalized. Most voluntary organizations in the NWT are more effective in individual or case by case advocacy. This individually focused and arguably more minor role in advocacy is likely due to government funding for example, for Income Support client advocacy.

*“Organizations have to be selective about the battles they choose to fight because they lack capacity.”*

(from Inuvik consultations)

Limited capacity to undertake advocacy functions is creating tensions within the voluntary sector and between the sectors. Those groups with a clear mandate but without the capacity for advocacy, worry about gaps in credibility, ownership and accountability to the community. They also worry that public discussion and under-represented voices are being silenced. Some voluntary organizations have sought out funded service delivery contracts with the hope of generating resources for advocacy. Others may affiliate with larger groups in the NWT or southern Canada to enhance their capacity for advocacy. For example, the Yellowknife Association for Community Living looks to its national association for support and direction on advocacy for the rights of persons with intellectual disability.

While segments of the NWT voluntary sector have had successes advocating for environmental or social issues, advocacy as a needed or valued function in society or as a function of the voluntary sector, may not be well-understood or supported in the NWT.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, segments of the voluntary sector suggest

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<sup>14</sup> This may change as the NWT moves to adopt human rights legislation in the near future.

that this may also be the case throughout Canada given that advocacy organizations may be ineligible for charitable status.<sup>15</sup> Further, northerners suggests that:

- The voluntary sector as a recipient of devolved service delivery at the community level has strengthened its ties to product rather than process (services rather than advocacy).
- Aboriginal organizations in all sectors may see it as their role to advocate on behalf of their Inuvialuit, Dene or Metis members. They may view the voluntary sector as usurping this role.
- The role and responsibility of business and government in supporting advocacy is unclear.

#### Ideas for Addressing the Issue:

Persons participating in the consultations suggest that concerns about advocacy could be addressed by:

1. educating government, business and the general public about the value and role of advocacy in healthy, democratic communities.
2. lobbying for funding to ensure that all citizens have free access to advocacy supports should they be needed.
3. core funding the voluntary sector to ensure that every NWT community has access to a community and social services advocate.

### **3.7 Partnerships**

*“We are funded to fix the problem but we don’t have any input into decisions, program design or policy nor are we funded adequately to fix the problem.”* (from Yellowknife consultations)

#### The Main Issues:

Partnerships are the new way of doing business in each of society’s three sectors. A variety of mechanisms are used to formalize partnerships including contracts, memorandum of understanding, partnership protocols and contribution agreements. Partners share authority, risk, responsibility, accountability, investment and benefits. Partnerships are formed for mutual benefit. One of the greatest benefits is enhanced capacity. Partnerships also create significant challenges particularly with respect to accountability.

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<sup>15</sup> Changes in taxation mean that organizations applying for charitable status may be ineligible for charitable status if advocacy is their main function.

NWT's voluntary sector is entering into more partnerships with groups within the sector and with governments and businesses. Partnerships within the sector are formed to share information, maximize resources, better respond to community needs, advance positions, conduct research or deliver programs and services. Segments of the voluntary sector regularly partner with health and social services boards and district education councils to deliver human services. Sport and recreation groups regularly partner with communities and local committees to sponsor tournaments, special sporting or recreation events, or skills clinics. Segments of the sector also partner with big and small businesses to provide specific services for example, employee and family counselling.

Strong, mutually beneficial partnerships evolve from a *Ashared passion*”, an openness and willingness to work together, and recognition of each partner's interests, mandate and capacity. They form after considerable dialogue and negotiation. Partnerships are strengthened by umbrella organizations such as Sport North that have the capacity to bring partners and their clients together.

Partnership experiences and successes vary. Voluntary groups have found that partnerships can influence the focus and direction of voluntary action and organizations. In some circumstances, partnerships have reshaped voluntary organizations, changing them from purely volunteer groups to ones with paid staff. Partnerships can add capacity. They can also increase administrative burdens. Voluntary organizations that are under-resourced to take on additional responsibilities (e.g. meetings, coordination) that come with partnerships, may have negative views about partnerships. Partnerships with government to implement programs or services are often fraught with difficulty. This is mainly due to the absence of opportunities for service deliverers to input into program policy, design or funding guidelines.

Good partnership models include the Yellowknife Social Planning Coalition, sport and recreation partners groups, the Inuvik Interagency Committee, and the early childhood coalition forming in Fort Smith among Sutherland House, the Salt River First Nation and the Healthy Children program. The voluntary sector wants to build on these successes to work in full partnership with government, business and other groups within the sector. At the present time, there are no mechanisms to facilitate dialogue

among potential partners. The voluntary sector lacks capacity to enter into unsupported partnership development activities.

Ideas for Addressing the Issue:

Persons participating in the consultations suggest that partnerships could be encouraged and supported by:

1. adapting mechanisms used in other sectors to bring the voluntary, business and government sectors together to discuss common interests, challenges and potential partnership opportunities. (For example, the Federal Government provides resources to First Nations to negotiate arrangements with resource development industries.)
2. supporting mechanisms such as volunteer coordinators and partnership funds, to enable voluntary sector groups to communicate, network and partner.
3. developing new strategies to attract private sector partners. (Strategies should target the reasons behind corporate partnerships.)

**3.8 Accountability and Evaluation**

*“We spend a lot of time accounting for very little money.”* (from Fort Smith consultations)

The Main Issues

In the voluntary sector, accountability means that information about the effectiveness and relevance of voluntary action is openly available. Evaluation is an integral part of accountability. Evaluation enables investors or partners to make sense of their investment and to measure if they are achieving a return, and if not, why not.

Historically, the voluntary sector has been accountable primarily to the community or membership that it serves. With the devolution of government program and services responsibilities, voluntary organizations are now accountable to government funders, taxpayers, as well as a specific membership or community segment. Voluntary organizations receiving corporate or individual donations must also account to these parties. Throughout Canada and to a lesser extent in the NWT, the integrity of the

sector seems to rest on monitoring projects and communicating outcomes.<sup>16</sup> Less than successful efforts to do so, have led to suggestions that the sector is not maintaining high quality program/service standards.

Accountability is becoming an increasingly critical issue for NWT voluntary sector organizations. The voluntary sector is experiencing great difficulty balancing and responding to accountability demands. Governments concerned about the quality of, for example health and social services, require contract service providers to demonstrate that services are making a quantifiable difference in the lives of clients. In some cases, the task of evaluating or measuring outcomes is relatively easy but measuring interventions particularly in human services, on long-term health, social security or sustainable communities, is more difficult. Voluntary sector agencies struggle with their own lack of monitoring and research capacity, and exclusion from research and evaluation activities that take place in their communities or in government. They struggle to link interventions with intended outcomes with short-term unstable funding. Accountability is made even more difficult by the complexity of community and social issues in the NWT.

Financial accountability is a particular challenge for the sector, especially if a variety of project-specific funding has been secured from a number of organizations. Accounting can use up scarce resources and take time away from the objects of the organization. Accountability influences the skills needed by the organization. It requires a greater level of professionalism among staff, boards and other volunteers that are not easily attainable in northern communities with a scarcity of skilled human resources. Accountability requirements may also intimidate and dissuade potential volunteers.

Concerns about accountability and evaluation capacity within the voluntary sector have lead to a new partnership between the Canadian Evaluation Society (CES) and the Coalition of National Voluntary Organizations (NVO). The relationship between the two voluntary organizations is designed to raise awareness of the importance of evaluation and to build capacity in the sector to evaluate its activities and be accountable for them. The author is unaware of any similar relationship that may have developed between the NWT chapter of CES and the voluntary sector.

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<sup>16</sup> **Third Sector, Second Thoughts? Key Issues and Challenges Facing Canada's Voluntary Organizations**, 2000

Ideas for Addressing the Issue:

Persons participating in the consultations suggest that accountability and evaluation issues in the voluntary sector could be addressed by:

1. improving understanding within the voluntary sector of the role and value that monitoring, evaluation and communicating evaluation results have in increasing funding, capacity, profile and accountability.
2. shifting the rationale for evaluation and accountability from how it serves the funder, to how evaluation and accountability serves the organization and its clients.
3. listening to and collaborating on holistic responses to community needs on their terms.

**3.9 Governance**

*“Governments require that we have a certain structure (in order) to provide programs.”* (from Yellowknife consultations)

The Main Issues:

In 1998, the Federal Government Panel on Accountability and Governance in the Voluntary Sector described the growing complexity of governance issues in the sector. These circumstances are mirrored in NWT’s voluntary sector and are likely to be shared by Aboriginal organizations in all sectors and by many municipal councils.

Many communities describe local boards, committees and community councils as “*very weak*”. Persons in governance positions may not know their responsibilities or understand their liabilities. Weak boards have difficulty communicating their purpose in the community, garnering ownership and engaging volunteers. They may also put themselves and others at risk. The governance function is also challenged by the following circumstances.

- Formal and informal voluntary groups follow various governance and decision-making approaches and structures, for example issues driven, administrative, policy, functional or committee-based. Many voluntary groups do not examine the approach or structure that might work best for them nor do they seek agreement among members to consistently apply an

approach. As a result, boards, staff and volunteers may not share the same understanding or expectation of their roles, responsibilities and relationships.

- Few resources exist to train governors/directors and develop governance capacity, particularly in small organizations.
- Board or committee members may lack literacy skills and the knowledge to understand their roles and responsibilities. Organizations may lack resources such as policy manuals and other tools to assist in governance functions.
- Burn-out is high among board members. Recruitment and retention of board members is made difficult by the extent of personal and fiduciary liability that is associated with governance functions.

#### Ideas for Addressing the Issue:

Persons participating in the consultations suggest that governance issues in the voluntary sector could be addressed by:

1. more emphasis on community development activities in all NWT communities that enhance the governance function in the voluntary and public sectors.
2. funding for board and management training, and training in strategic planning.
3. innovative ways to engage volunteers in decision making and governance functions that are inclusive to persons with all types of skills and interests.

### **3.10 Relationship with Government**

*“We have to establish a relationship (with Aboriginal and public governments) to decide what we should be doing. Right now, there is no basis to have this discussion. Relationships are haphazard, polices are haphazard and so is funding.”* (from Yellowknife consultations)

#### The Main Issues:

The relationship between the government and voluntary sectors is founded on a common interest in the safety, security and health of all citizens. Government institutions such as health, hospital and education boards report that the voluntary sector is integral to the way they do business in NWT communities. They depend on the voluntary sector to provide public programs and services. The voluntary sector relies on government for funding.

Relationships between the government and voluntary sectors are becoming more formalized as interdependence increases. The British government has entered into compacts with the voluntary sector in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. In Canada, the notion of a government-voluntary sector accord was raised in a 1998 discussion paper<sup>17</sup> as a mechanism for defining new relationships between the two sectors and addressing such inter-sector issues as:

- § program and service responsibility;
- § collaboration on needs assessments and program planning;
- § funding and regulatory regimes;
- § responsibility for advocacy on public policy; and
- § accountability mechanisms.

The GNWT has also considered a voluntary-government sector accord as a means for the two sectors to work together.

NWT voluntary sector groups say that the absence of any central government policy or mechanism for the two sectors to communicate and work together has negative consequences for northern society. The lack of a formal relationship between the two sectors results in ad hoc, uncertain and at times, adversarial relationships. It also creates uncertainty about program/service quality and availability. Segments of the population fall through cracks in the system and the voluntary sector itself, continues to be unstable. Building and strengthening capacity or providing high quality programs/services to support healthy, sustainable communities is virtually impossible in this environment.

Community governments may donate or administer funding and licence gaming activities that impact on the sector. Ongoing dialogue and active partnerships between community governments and voluntary organizations are however, virtually non-existent. The voluntary sector identifies the need for healthy relationships with local governments in order for the two sectors to work together to address community and social issues. Stronger relationships within communities can be mutually beneficial to the sector, the work of community governments and to the health and well-being of local citizens. Stronger

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<sup>17</sup> **Helping Canadians Helping Canadians: Improving Governance and Accountability in the Voluntary Sector – A Discussion Paper.** 1998

relationships with evolving self-government regimes would also encourage discussion about if and how these new entities and the voluntary sector can co-exist to benefit the community they serve.

Ideas for Addressing the Issue:

Persons participating in the consultations suggest that relationships with governments could be strengthened by:

1. examining and implementing tools and best practices for cooperative relationships.
2. an accord between the GNWT and the sector to define working relationships and engage in discussion on mutual concerns.
3. giving the voluntary sector a voice in public policy and program decisions so citizens don't fall through cracks in the system.
4. funding for a policy development process that involves all three sectors and ensures that Aboriginal organizations in all sectors are involved.

***3.11 Relationship with Business***

*“The ATCO Group of Companies through the Echo Foundation will match dollars raised if funds are spent locally.”* (from Hay River consultations)

The Main Issues:

The voluntary and business sectors share a mutual interest in citizen participation. The business sector has traditionally relied on the voluntary sector to create a healthy environment and citizenship so it can reduce the costs of doing business (e.g. resulting from lower employee turn-over and absenteeism). In the NWT, businesses have looked to the voluntary sector to minimize or manage negative impacts from its activities. The voluntary sector has sought donations and financial assistance from businesses.

Nationally, only 1% of the revenues of registered charities come from corporate donations. Research into the sector elsewhere in Canada suggests that the increasing presence of multinational firms in Canada may be weakening corporate connections and responsibility to the local community.<sup>18</sup> There is

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<sup>18</sup> **Third Sector, Second Thoughts? Key Issues and Challenges Facing Canada's Voluntary Organizations.** 2000

no research to suggest that a similar pattern is occurring in the NWT. In the NWT, it is estimated that 3% of voluntary sector revenues come from corporations.<sup>19</sup> Anecdotal evidence of the contributions that major companies make to community and social events also indicate that the NWT business sector may be more supportive to the voluntary sector than in the case elsewhere in the country.

The voluntary sector appreciates the contributions of big and small business. Contributions may help to offset the high costs of utilities, communications, travel and accommodation. Segments of the voluntary sector are anxious to strengthen relationships with northern businesses, expand corporate contributions and ensure that all contributions are recognized, no matter how large or small. They are anxious to engage in public discussion that clearly articulates the moral and ethical responsibility that businesses operating in the NWT have in supporting healthy, safe and sustainable communities. The need to engage in dialogue with the business sector is particularly urgent in communities affected by industrial development. In these communities, the voluntary sector sees itself as having to respond to negative social effects associated with industrial activities but being unfunded or unsupported to do so. In particular, voluntary organizations are unlikely to receive impact funds issued under Impact Benefits Agreements but be called upon to serve members who are party to these agreements. “ *We have to serve people who have drank up their pay cheque and their families that have no food because no one else is doing it.* ” (from Inuvik consultations)

#### Ideas for Addressing the Issue:

Persons participating in the consultations suggest that relationships with businesses could be strengthened through mechanisms to:

1. recognize and encourage corporate donations.
2. enable businesses to invest in voluntary sector groups that provide social and community services.

#### ***3.12 Relationship with the Community***

“*When a community works together as a team then it is a healthier community.*” (from Yellowknife consultations)

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<sup>19</sup> **Storefront for Voluntary Agencies Training Needs Assessment for Governing and Management Functions in Yellowknife’s Third Sector.** 1998

The Main Issues:

A community is generally defined as a group of people in a particular place, subject to the same laws and having common interests, characteristics, ownership and/or identity. Examples of communities may be a geographic community, a religious community, a language or cultural community, or the arts community. Historically, the primary relationships of the voluntary sector have been with specific communities, for example to serve the needs of the homeless community, the hockey community, the environmental community, the literacy community or the community with disability.

As relationships with the government and to a lesser degree, business sectors have become more demanding, volunteer sector relationships with the communities they serve, have become more fragile. For instance, some communities may view voluntary organizations as extensions of government, intent on serving government needs rather than those of the community. Uncertain accountability and governance mechanisms combined with lack of capacity within the sector seem to contribute to weaker relationships with members or the communities served. Weaker community relationships are resulting in less local support and lower levels of volunteerism. It is raising questions within the sector as to its role in and responsibility to communities.

Ideas for Addressing the Issue:

Persons participating in the consultations suggest that volunteer sector relationships with the community could be strengthened by:

1. more proactive efforts to engage, communicate and involve members or communities in the affairs of the sector.
2. enhancing public profile and understanding of the work of the sector.
3. improving accountability functions so that the membership and community better understand the value and role of the sector, and see their needs and interests reflected in the work of the sector.

**3.13 Relationship with Aboriginal Organizations**

*“The Dogrib leaders told the Deh Cho First Nations to pay attention to social ills in our communities..... We are just developing self-government organizations so it is hard to say how the voluntary sector and First Nations can work together.”* (from Fort Simpson consultations)

The Main Issues:

Sharing and helping others is a common interest of Aboriginal people and individuals who serve in the voluntary sector. Despite a shared ethic, Aboriginal people are under-represented in the sector and seem to be reluctant to become involved in certain types of volunteer activities (e.g. structured, ongoing/regular and governance activities). Factors impacting on the participation of Aboriginal people in business and government sectors have been identified in numerous studies on the subject.<sup>20</sup> Similar studies have not been conducted in the voluntary sector. However, MACA recently assisted the Gwich'in and the Dogrib to document traditional knowledge about giving and helping in an effort to better understand Aboriginal views on these topics.

A wide variety of issues seem to affect relationships between the voluntary sector and Aboriginal people and Aboriginal organizations in all sectors. There may be values or practices within the voluntary sector that create discomfort or are unattractive to Aboriginal people. Aboriginal people may not share approaches to giving and helping that are common in the voluntary sector. Methods for advocating may not be acceptable to Aboriginal people. Concepts about structured giving and the growing professionalism and responsibility of the voluntary sector may be intimidating or viewed as unnecessary among Aboriginal groups and individuals. Issues around paid and unpaid work may further complicate these relationships.

Aboriginal organizations in other sectors may view voluntary sector groups as having limited understanding of or not sharing the aspirations or best interests of Aboriginal people. Aboriginal organizations may also view the voluntary sector as competing for scarce program and service dollars, or as unable to appropriately meet the community, social, cultural or linguistic needs of their members. Voluntary sector organizations observe that in some cases, Aboriginal governments responsible for program and service funding allocations have chosen not to contribute to voluntary sector groups.

Voluntary groups are concerned that management and governance functions in the sector are mainly undertaken by persons of non-Aboriginal ancestry but the community served is primarily persons of

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<sup>20</sup> For example, the federal Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development has prepared a series of case studies and supported a variety of other initiatives to encourage/increase Aboriginal participation in the mining industry.

Aboriginal ancestry. This situation challenges the sector to deliver services in a manner that best meets the cultural, linguistic and social needs of clients. It also challenges the sector to evolve meaningful relationships with the communities it serves. Weak relationships with the Aboriginal community lead many sector organizations to question their ability to serve and be accountable to clients. It leads others to ask whether the voluntary sector is inclusive, relevant and meaningful to Aboriginal people when giving and receiving is unbalanced. It leads others to question whether the voluntary sector in the NWT is perpetuating the colonial relationships that have shaped government-community relationships for so many decades.

Ideas for Addressing the Issue:

Persons participating in the consultations suggest that voluntary sector relationships with Aboriginal people and organizations could be strengthened by:

1. more effort by the voluntary sector to understand the socio-cultural and political background and contemporary views of the Dene, Metis and Inuvialuit about helping and giving, and reflecting this understanding in its structures and relationships with Aboriginal organizations and communities.
2. more discussion with Aboriginal people to clarify roles, responsibilities and relationships and determine common ground for community and social service delivery and advocacy.
3. piloting new ways for the sector to be more accountable and relevant to Aboriginal communities.
4. conducting research into issues and solutions for improving Aboriginal participation in the voluntary sector.
5. considering options in consultation with Aboriginal communities and organizations, for restructuring or reorganizing the voluntary sector to better respond to the needs of the Aboriginal community.

**3.14 Technology**

*“It is scary to walk in off the street to find out how to volunteer and get involved in the community..... Technology could really help to connect people.”* (from Hay River consultations)

The Main Issues:

Technology has the potential to help volunteers and voluntary organizations address some of the issues that they face. Electronic communications and technology can improve monitoring, evaluation, accountability and promotional functions. It can serve to facilitate volunteer recruitment. It can be used to encourage corporate and individual donations. New computer technologies offer opportunities to better manage client databases, more efficiently fundraise, and pursue more cost-effective approaches to advocacy functions. One of the greatest opportunities that technology offers is a mechanism to facilitate and maintain networking among local volunteers and voluntary organizations.

There is a growing awareness of and access to new technologies throughout northern society. Initiatives such as Wire North are helping northerners get connected. Greater use of these technologies is beginning to emerge in the voluntary sector however persons in the sector tend to lack the time, skills and the equipment to even conceptualize the possibilities that technology offers.

Ideas for Addressing the Issue:

Persons participating in the consultations suggest that:

1. technology information sessions should be held in each community.
2. training and technology equipment funding program information should be compiled and made available to all communities.
3. the voluntary sector should be supported to acquire and apply skills to enable the effective use of new technologies.

## 4. NWT Volunteer Policy and Strategy

The GNWT Department of Municipal and Community Affairs has released two versions of a volunteer strategy. One version, prepared in June 1999, was reviewed in Phase 1 consultations and direction provided was reflected in the second version. The second version, prepared in February 2000, was reviewed to some extent, in Phase 2 consultations.<sup>21</sup> Neither version of the volunteer strategy has been widely distributed nor has the general public had the opportunity to comment on these documents.

The consultations point to a need to engage the government, business and voluntary sectors in ongoing discussion about roles and responsibilities for responding to community and social issues in the NWT. In other jurisdictions, an accord is the vehicle that enables this dialogue to occur. A longer-term result of ongoing dialogue may be a voluntary sector policy or strategy. Persons participating in the consultations suggest that whatever instrument or mechanism that emerges from inter-sector discussions should consider the following.

1. Clear **definitions** are important. The definition of a volunteer as a person who makes the choice to help others and their community without expecting any payment, is acceptable. The definition of voluntary organization must be broad to accommodate the diversity of groups that stimulate and support active citizenship and well-being in NWT communities.
2. **Principles** should recognize volunteerism and helping as unique and individual acts, and ensure that all contributions and forms of volunteering, giving and helping are equally valuable and valued. Principles should stress shared responsibility for active citizen participation and well-being, and reinforce cooperation and collaboration.
3. Initiatives should **target** families to build an ethic of volunteering, giving and helping among all members, and promote opportunities for and benefits of volunteering to youth, families and communities.

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<sup>21</sup> While Phase 2 consultations were initially designed to secure feedback and recommendations on a draft NWT Volunteer Strategy and policy, part way through Phase 2, MACA issued direction to de-emphasize this aspect of the consultation.

4. The **goal** of voluntary sector initiatives should be to strengthen the sector and enable it to work more closely with governments and businesses to achieve full citizenship and healthy, safe and sustainable communities. Societies that work together are stronger and healthier.
5. **Roles, responsibilities and relationships** should be clearly delineated and recognize that everyone has a role to play in achieving full citizenship and healthy, safe and sustainable communities.
6. Key **voluntary sector initiatives** should focus on: dialogue and ongoing communications within the sector and among the sectors; recognition of all volunteer contributions in the same manner in which they are given; stable funding and financing arrangements; and capacity building through training, use of technology and partnerships.

## 5. Recommendations

1. The consultation process yielded a variety of suggestions to government and others for supporting the development of the voluntary sector.

*It is recommended that the suggestions offered by persons participating in the consultation process be considered as part of an action plan or strategy to support and encourage the development of a strong voluntary sector in the NWT.*

2. Roles, Responsibilities and Expectations: The GNWT has a primary role in ensuring the overall health and well-being of northern society.

*It is recommended that the GNWT lead a public process that engages northerners in a dialogue about how the three sectors in the NWT can work together to encourage active citizens and healthy communities. This dialogue should clarify the roles and responsibilities of the voluntary sector in providing community and social services. This dialogue may form a central part of activities leading to a social agenda for the NWT.*

3. Volunteering and Giving:

*a) It is recommended that the GNWT assess the current capacity of the voluntary sector as a basis for planning actions to strengthen and develop it.*

*b) As part of healthy families and early childhood initiatives, it is recommended that the GNWT include new and strengthen existing components that teach and support an ethic of family and individual giving.*

*c) It is recommended that well-supported programs be implemented in schools and NWT communities to enable youth to participate in rewarding volunteer experiences.*

*d) It is recommended that volunteering and helping out be encouraged among youth through the integration of these experiences in field assignments tied to core school curricula (e.g. social studies).*

*e) It is recommended that the GNWT work with the voluntary sector to develop the capacity to manage and provide quality volunteer experiences (e.g. funding for volunteer coordinators, volunteer management training).*

*f) To promote understanding of volunteering and giving, it is recommended that the GNWT facilitate public discussion and awareness about paid and unpaid work, volunteering and community service.*

*g) It is recommended that the GNWT expand current volunteer recognition activities and encourage volunteer recognition by each of the three sectors.*

#### 4. Capacity of the Sector:

*It is recommended that the GNWT School of Community Government and Aurora College collaborate with other GNWT departments and agencies and the voluntary sector to develop and deliver a skills development program that addresses critical capacity issues in the sector (e.g. board and management training, volunteer coordination, use of technology).*

#### 5. Understanding and Profile of the Sector:

*It is recommended that the GNWT establish a voluntary sector secretariat to coordinate and encourage cooperation among the government, business and voluntary sectors to build an active and healthy citizenship. The secretariat could be a focal point for fostering greater connectiveness within the voluntary sector at the community and territorial levels. The secretariat could also coordinate promotional activities to increase public understanding and support for the sector.*

#### 6. Funding:

*It is recommended that the GNWT and the voluntary sector formalize an arrangement to work together to assess the current funding environment for social and community services with the view to developing a system for ensuring financial stability within the sector.*

#### 7. Advocacy:

*It is recommended that public discussion respecting roles and responsibilities (as may be anticipated with the development of the NWT social agenda) for providing social and community services focus in part, on the role and value of advocacy for the poor and under-represented in NWT society.*

8. Partnerships:

- a) *It is recommended that the GNWT lead by example and engage in initiatives to actively facilitate successful partnerships with and within the voluntary sector.*
- b) *To assist the sector to build successful partnerships, it is recommended that the GNWT fund volunteer coordinator positions and that these positions be placed strategically (e.g. placed in regional centres) throughout the NWT.*

9. Accountability and Evaluation:

- a) *It is recommended that the GNWT consult with professional organizations such as the Canadian Evaluation Society (NWT Chapter), Certified General Accountants Association and Aboriginal Financial Officers Association, and with the voluntary sector to identify viable approaches and supports to strengthening the capacity of the voluntary sector to address accountability and evaluation requirements.*
- b) *It is recommended that the GNWT work with the voluntary sector to refocus accountability activities to de-emphasize accountability to the funder and heighten accountability to the general public.*

10. Governance:

*It is recommended that GNWT Municipal and Community Affairs undertake extensive community development activities to strengthen governance capacity within NWT communities including the governance capacity within the voluntary sector.*

11. Relationships with Government:

*It is recommended that the GNWT enter into an accord with the voluntary sector that sets down the framework and protocol for the two sectors to work together to build a certain, harmonious and cohesive system of community and social services in the NWT.*

12. Relationships with Business:

*It is recommended that the GNWT facilitate discussions between the business and volunteer*

*sectors to examine ways that the three sectors can work together at all levels to build healthy, sustainable communities.*

13. Relationships with Communities:

*It is recommended that the GNWT assist the voluntary sector to develop and implement mechanisms to rebuild relationships with the communities it serves.*

14. Relationships with Aboriginal Organizations:

*a) It is recommended that research be done to identify factors, issues and solutions for addressing under-representation of Aboriginal people in the voluntary sector.*

*b) It is recommended that Aboriginal organizations in all three sectors be encouraged to actively participate in discussions about the role and responsibilities of the voluntary sector in the NWT.*

*c) It is recommended that all three sectors give higher priority to recognizing and supporting informal giving and collective giving in Aboriginal communities.*

15. Technology:

*It is recommended that the GNWT promote and facilitate the use of technology within the voluntary sector (e.g. through Wire North and the use of NorthWin).*