

TOWARDS A CULTURALLY-SUSTAINABLE INDIGENOUS TOURISM MODEL:
THE *DESTINATION DELINE* PILOT PROJECT

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ABSTRACT

TOWARDS A CULTURALLY-SUSTAINABLE INDIGENOUS TOURISM MODEL: THE *DESTINATION DELINE* PILOT PROJECT

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In August of 2014, the Sahtú Dene community of Délı̨ę launched a first-of-its-kind, collaborative pilot project entitled “Destination Deline”. Fortuitously, the launch coincided precisely with the field research component of this research project, which had originally sought to investigate the marked lack of Indigenous participation, employment and partnership in the Northwest Territories’ adventure tourism industry. The primary research objective then shifted, to explore whether *Destination Délı̨ę* could serve as a cogent model for developing culturally-sustainable Indigenous tourism in the region. This objective served also as a point of entry into a broader academic discussion about Indigenous-Settler relations, Indigenous resurgence, the tourism imaginary, and the role of government in mediating between private sector and Indigenous community interests. Through a series of in-depth, one-on-one interviews with Indigenous tour operators, non-Indigenous adventure tour outfitters, government officials, and community members, this thesis presents a complex and vibrant portrait of an industry in flux.

Keywords: Indigenous tourism, Indigenous-settler relations, co-management, Indigenous Knowledge, cultural sustainability, Indigenous resurgence, sustainable adventure tourism, tourism imaginaries.

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I would like to thank my parents, and my brother and sister for their patience, and for their unwavering confidence that one day this thesis would be written—their gentle nudges prevented me from ever truly setting it aside. And I would like to dedicate this effort to my wife, Ella, and our daughters, Io and Fia, who gave me the space, time, and motivation to write, despite all the other wonderful stuff we were trying to get done.

Finally, and most importantly, I would like to thank all the people in Yellowknife, Norman Wells, and Délı̄nę who participated in this research project, who entrusted me with their stories and perspectives, and showed me such welcome, curiosity, and care. In particular, the Kenny and Baton families, who kept and fed me, and introduced me to their extraordinary community.

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Chapter One

Introduction: Against the Current

People have travelled this land for thousands of years. No matter where you go, you see where they've been and their presence. I think, you know, if you don't get to meet people, if you don't get to learn about their history and culture and their ways you've lost so much, you missed out on so much" (Morin, 2014, 3)

In August of 2014 the Sahtú Dene community of Délı̨ne launched a tourism pilot project entitled "Destination Délı̨ne". The package provided 8 tourists from southern Canada and the United States the opportunity to explore and participate in the daily activities of a northern Indigenous community, with special emphasis on the cultural, economic, and spiritual life of local people. The week-long, culturally immersive tour was a collaborative effort involving the community of Délı̨ne (represented officially by the Délı̨ne Land Corporation), the Government of Northwest Territories' (GNWT) Tourism and Parks Department, and Hotkey Marketing Group—a Vancouver-based marketing company specializing in developing and advertising package tours for seniors and retirees. One important factor that set the pilot project apart from pre-existing tourism products in the region was that it had been generated by the community itself. The size, scope, and schedule of the tour, and, more importantly, the sorts of activities included in the program, were determined by the community and reflected the interests and capacities of people 'on the ground'. As the first such tourism product introduced in the territory,

GNWT and industry stakeholders hoped that it might serve as a model for generating 'cultural tourism'¹ in other communities throughout the region.

The primary objective of this thesis is to investigate whether *Destination Déline* serves as a cogent model for developing Indigenous cultural tourism in other remote communities throughout the Northwest Territories, and beyond. However, this objective serves also as a point of entry into broader discussions about Indigenous-Settler relations, the role of government as a mediating force between private and public interests, and how best to evaluate and legitimize community interests in the process of economic development. What does culturally sustainable Indigenous tourism look like?

First, to reach for some definitions we turn to Bunten and Graburn who identify *Indigenous Tourism* as "any service or product that is a) owned and operated at least in part by an Indigenous group and b) results from a means of exchange with outside guests" ("Guest Editorial", 2009, 4); and also to Wall, who, in his article *Is Ecotourism Sustainable*, claims that tourism is considered sustainable if it is "economically viable; ecologically bearable; and ethnically and socially equitable for local communities" (1997, 485). But how has the benchmark for sustainability changed within the sector of Indigenous or Aboriginal tourism over the last thirty years, and in light of the findings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission? Does it require more active and substantive

¹ In short, tourism that seeks culture as its primary product, instead of simply a 'value-added' for tourism activities otherwise unrelated to culture.

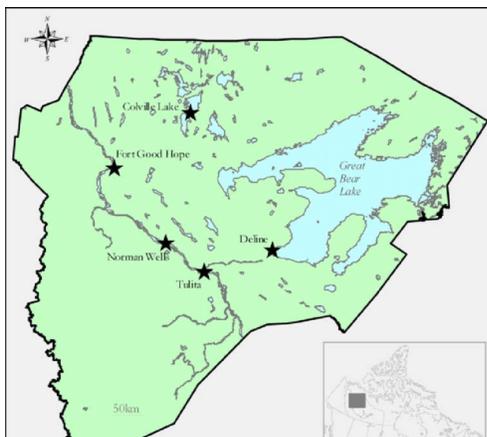
participation on the part of Indigenous community members and stakeholders? Also, why is cultural sustainability a valuable goal for NWT's tourism sector? Is it simply a question of ethics, or is there a market incentive for achieving cultural sustainability within the sector? Do non-Indigenous tour operators have an obligation to adjust their own corporate practices to foster respectful and reciprocal relationships within communities, and is there a role for government to encourage this sort of relationship-building?

These questions are critical to understanding the contribution *Destination Déline* makes to the tourism milieu in the Sahtú region, as well as to a broader discussion of settler colonialism, decolonization, reconciliation, and Indigenous resurgence. My discussion of these issues is intended not only to aid in outlining the constraints and possibilities for future tourism development in the Northwest Territories, but also to contribute to a broader dialogue around Indigenous-Settler relationship building.

Positioning the Research and the Researcher

In the summer of 2012, I was fortunate to co-guide a group of ten teenagers from an Ontario-based youth camp (Camp Wanapitei) on a 52-day expedition through Northwest Territories and Nunavut (<https://www.wanapitei.net>). Our route began in the Sahtú region of the Northwest Territories at the confluence of the Great Bear and Mackenzie Rivers, and would conclude at Kugluktuk, Nunavut nearly two months later. The

Northwest Territories (NWT) is situated in Canada's northwest, bordered by Yukon Territory to its west, Nunavut to its east, and the provinces of British Columbia, Alberta, and Saskatchewan to the south. To its north is the pack-ice and frigid waters of the Arctic Ocean. The territory is made up of five administrative regions, and this thesis is primarily concerned with the Sahtú region, located in the central northwest of the territory, one major geographical feature of the area being Great Bear Lake.



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Figure 1. Sahtu Settlement Area – Including the five charter communities

Déline, the site of the *Destination Déline* pilot project, is a town of roughly 500 people on the southwest shore of Great Bear Lake near the headwaters of the Great Bear River. Its inhabitants are predominantly Dene, with some Metis, Inuit, and non-Indigenous community members. The main languages spoken are North Slavey and English.³

My experiences throughout the 2012 expedition introduced me to a critical dysfunction in the relationship between the tourism providers operating in the Sahtú, and the Indigenous communities and people of this extraordinary region. I observed that

² [The-Sahtú-Settlement-Area-within-the-Northwest-Territories-and-the-five-communities.png](http://www.researchgate.net/publication/312511111-The-Sahtu-Settlement-Area-within-the-Northwest-Territories-and-the-five-communities.png) (850×551) (researchgate.net)

³ <http://destinationdeline.com/>, retrieved February 20, 2017.

as tour providers we enjoyed the incredible natural resources of the land and waters of Sahtú, with little regard for the interests and narratives of the people whose traditional territory we travelled upon. As a professional guide I was, in a direct sense, perpetuating the *status quo*. The discomfort I felt regarding my own involvement ultimately served as impetus for my application to Trent University's Canadian Studies and Indigenous Studies Master's program, and in time gave rise to this thesis project.

The whitewater trip I led in 2012 began with a two-week segment lining and tracking⁴ our heavily-laden boats up Great Bear River towards Great Bear Lake. Our initial itinerary bypassed the community of Délı̄nę by about 8 kilometers, ensuring we would remain isolated from any communities until we reached Kugluktuk, and the Coronation Gulf. The ethos of these trips presumes a remote wilderness tourism experience requires an untouched, uninhabited, virginal terrain. Traditionally, this narrative has provided an enhanced perception of risk, a sense of increased self-reliance, and an atmosphere of 'conquest light', wherein colonial tropes of manifest destiny and individual self-actualization play out against a blank and savage canvas—*terra nullius*. Typically, contact with local communities is avoided, in order to preserve a sense that the group will reach its final destination on its own merits, across an empty and unforgiving

⁴ Lining involves walking along the bank of a river, guiding the canoe by way of ten-foot rope lines, attached at the bow and stern of the craft. Tracking involves a 'hands-on' approach, requiring canoeists to wade in the river next to the canoe and maneuver it directly, holding its gunnels to push or pull it where they want it to go. These techniques are most often employed to safely avoid dangerous hydromorphic river features (or whole sections of rapids) or, as in our case, travel upstream against current that is too powerful to effectively paddle against.

wilderness. This approach affects an erasure of the people who call the recreated land home, at best snubbing their culture and way of life, at worst enabling the continued exploitation of their land and marginalization of their communities. The philosophy and practice of ‘no-trace camping’⁵ supports this narrative to re-create the illusion of a pristine route, so that each subsequent tour group may experience the thrill of an explorer’s imaginary (Mullins, 2011; Benedickson, 1982). This narrative was implicit in our plan to avoid Délı̄nę.

A few days into the trip we were approached by a motorboat carrying the Chief (or *Ekwatide*) of Délı̄nę, Leonard Kenny, and members of his family. We had noticed the boat traffic steadily increasing as we moved upriver, and Ekwatide Kenny explained that people from Délı̄nę were travelling to Tulita⁶ to aid in the search for a teenage girl who had gone missing from that town. After visiting with our group for a short time Ekwatide Kenny invited us to Délı̄nę to re-provision, explore the community, and learn about the lives of its members. Without sufficient thought, we explained that our schedule wouldn’t allow such diversions, that we had more than a thousand kilometers to traverse in only six weeks, but that we appreciated the invitation. He politely repeated the offer and

⁵ The practice of packing garbage out from each campsite, burying organic and human waste, and burning deadfall instead of harvesting firewood from live trees.

⁶ One of the five communities in the Sahtú administrative region, situated on the Southeast bank of the Mackenzie River, at the confluence of the Mackenzie and Great Bear Rivers, near the floatplane put-in for our trip.

emphasized the various services we could enjoy in the community (including its two stores: the Northern Store and the Co-op), insisting that it would be well worth the delay.

Again, we declined.

As we continued upstream, a number of boats from Délı̄nę stopped by our campsite and people gave us gifts, including smoked trout, candy and pop, and hand-made arts and crafts. Many people expressed their excitement about our journey, and commented on how similar our efforts were to the traditional work Elders from Délı̄nę had done in their youth to bring non-Indigenous explorers, adventurers, and industrialists up-river before the wide-spread use of motorboats came to dominate the river. It soon became clear that our group was creating a degree of *buzz* in town, and that failing to visit Délı̄nę would represent an insult to our would-be hosts and disappoint community members wanting to showcase the community they loved. We decided to amend our route and visit Délı̄nę.

After two weeks of extremely difficult travel, we paddled into Délı̄nę and were met by a large group of well-wishers, including a number of people we had met on the river. We stayed in town for two days and were given a warm welcome that included a large community feast, an impromptu drum-dance and hand-game⁷ tournament, a series

⁷ 'Hand-games' are traditional games involving two teams, in which one team attempts to find a hidden charm, or trinket, that the opposing team passes covertly behind their backs. Both the choosing and the hiding is obscured through individualized dance and theatrics, encouraged by the beat and singing of a drum group. Customarily only men and boys are allowed to play, in keeping with the belief that women's inherent power will give them an unfair advantage.

of smaller private meals, and finally concluded with an Elders' prayer and song of safe passage intended to guide us safely through the rest of our trip. The experience in Délı̄nę had a profound and lasting impression on our teenaged participants, and certainly on me and my co-guide, Shauna Kearns. It served to frame the narrative for the rest of our expedition and provide a human context for the landscape through which we were travelling. Instead of undermining our sense of connection to the subarctic landscape, establishing a relationship with Délı̄nę had enriched and deepened the experience in an immeasurably valuable way.

The following winter⁸ I returned to Délı̄nę to live and volunteer in the community and was again met with great welcome and friendship. My interest in reciprocating this friendship in a practical way led me to pursue the master's degree at Trent, and I've attempted within this thesis to put my academic capabilities and professional acumen at the disposal of the community.

Rationale

At the time I conducted this research, the Sahtú tourism industry largely excluded Indigenous community members in terms of employment, consultation, and partnership. As a personal case in point, while my co-guide and I were planning our 2012 expedition, it never crossed our minds to contact people in Tulita or Délı̄nę, despite the fact that they

⁸ February, 2013.

were best situated to provide us critical logistical information⁹, to say nothing of seeking permission or the blessing of the community before travelling through their traditional land and waters. Instead, we opted to meet with southern-based tourists and guides who had travelled short sections of our route (in some cases only as recently as the 1980s). This was not a deliberate choice, but points to a self-referential bias within the canoe tripping/adventure tourism industry that ensures it remains insular. It is also, fundamentally, an act of settler-colonialism wherein the erasure, if not the outright expulsion, of Indigenous people and culture occurs while permanently co-opting Indigenous resources/lands, and recategorizing traditional Indigenous modes of travel and subsistence in order to define the settler present. In his introduction to *Settler Colonial Studies*, Veracini describes the unfolding of settler colonialism this way: “The successful settler colonies ‘tame’ a variety of wildernesses, end up establishing independent nations, effectively repress, co-opt, and extinguish indigenous alterities, and productively manage ethnic diversity. By the end of this trajectory, they claim to be no longer settler colonial (they are putatively ‘settled’ and ‘postcolonial’ – except that unsettling anxieties remain, and references to a postcolonial condition appear hollow as soon as indigenous disadvantage is taken into account). Settler colonialism thus covers its tracks and operates towards its self-supersession” (2011, 3). This process, the late-stage

⁹ Such as water levels, shoreline conditions for lining up Bear River, potential campsites, best routes into the barrens, etc.

settler colonial entrenchment, is what the adventure tourism project is underwriting— however subconsciously, or unintentionally. As we take young paddlers into this ‘unpeopled wilderness’, and guide them through a journey of self-discovery, we unwittingly foster in them a claim on the land itself, as well as a sense of place and purpose on a landscape that they do not actually belong to.

Most adventure tour companies running trips in and through the Sahtú are owned by non-Indigenous people based outside of the Northwest Territories and operate largely in isolation from local people. There are a number of reasons for this, but considering that adventure tourism (camping and canoeing, fishing and hunting) dominates the tourism milieu in the Sahtú region, the economic and social impact of exclusion may be significant. This situation fostered my desire to explore the adventure tourism industry in Northwest Territories generally, and once my research began, to analyse *Destination Déliṅę* as a model for culturally sustainable tourism in the Sahtú—be it as a stand-alone product, or an added feature to traditional adventure tour products. By investigating the potential economic, social, and cultural benefits of developing culturally sustainable tourism, and the harms associated with ignoring this imperative, I hope also to contribute to a broader discussion of Indigenous-Settler relationship building in Canada.

While developing my research plan, my original intent was to problematize the lack of Indigenous employment, consultation, and collaboration within Sahtú’s tourism industry. As my research unfolded however, the role that the *Destination Déliṅę* pilot

project could play in changing the established tourism narrative became evident. As such, I pivoted my focus to centre around this initiative. This shift was in keeping with my desire to reflect the specific interests and aspirations of the community itself. Any generalized appeal to increase Indigenous participation in tourism, without consideration for the specific interests, aptitudes, and priorities of Sahtú Dene people themselves, perpetuates the power imbalance it nominally seeks to overturn and, besides, would likely prove unsuccessful. The power imbalance I am referring to, specifically, is the lack of financial, social and political influence Sahtu Dene and Metis people have over the type, amount, and character of adventure tourism taking place in their region, contrasted against the immense control and influence exercised by settler-owned businesses based largely in Southern Ontario. The industry is functionally governed, and self-regulated by these ‘foreign’ companies, shaping the very character of the region’s tourism milieu. In the introduction to her book *The Psychic Life of Power* Judith Butler points out that power is never static but must be continually reconstituted in the present tense. She writes: “Power is never merely a condition external or prior to the subject, nor can it be exclusively identified with the subject. If conditions of power are to persist, they must be reiterated; the subject is precisely the site of such reiteration, a repetition that is never merely mechanical. As the appearance of power shifts from the condition of the subject to its effects, the conditions of power (prior and external) assume a present and futural form” (1997, 16).

It is this reiteration I seek to avoid in my own work.

As Erve Chambers states in his book *Native Tours: The Anthropology of Travel and Tourism*: “The question of who has the right to “make” tourism is hotly contested and seldom settled ... tourism is much more culturally intimate than nearly any other industry. Its business involves bringing into close contact people of widely different means, class, ethnicity, and religious and cultural backgrounds” (2010, 35). At face value the impact of tourism may seem somewhat more innocuous when compared to more invasive or physically destructive industries, such as forestry, oil and gas extraction, and mining, but considering the important connection between Indigenous cultural integrity and the land on which traditional cultural expression takes place, any activities exploiting traditional territory must be developed with local Indigenous consultation.

In 2015 the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) released its Calls to Action. The document presents 94 recommendations developed by the TRC to “redress the legacy of residential schools and advance the process of Canadian reconciliation”; while this document had not yet been released at the time initial interviews were conducted, it is useful as a standard by which to measure corporate conduct within Sahtú’s tourism milieu, and to see how relationships between companies and communities have advanced in the intervening years. Drawing upon the TRC’s Calls to Action, it seems clear that businesses that wish to engage in economic activity upon traditional Indigenous territory, as well as specific lands where Indigenous people hold

title to the land under historic treaties and modern land claim agreements, have a duty to engage with local communities. Call to Action 92, sub-section i, states that corporations are called to “commit to meaningful consultation, building respectful relationships, and obtaining the free, prior, and informed consent of Indigenous peoples before proceeding with economic development projects”. Sub-section ii calls for corporations to “ensure that Aboriginal peoples have equitable access to jobs, training, and education opportunities in the corporate sector, and that Aboriginal communities gain long-term sustainable benefits from economic development projects”. Further, the duty to consult is protected under the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which Canada became signatory to, somewhat grudgingly, in 2016. Yet, while it might seem likely that most tourism operators in the Sahtú would wish to be perceived as complying with federal law and the spirit of reconciliation—the extent to which they are, remains to be seen.

While elements of this project speak to topics within tourism and recreation, and economic development theory, I deliberately lean on scholarship around Indigenous-Settler relationship building in the hope that this project will contribute to Indigenous Studies and Canadian Studies through the lens of reconciliation. The primary reason for this relates to the sorts of excuses made against intervening to alter the *status quo*, which are predominantly economic and practical in nature. There exist significant challenges to increasing Indigenous participation in tourism, related to certification, capacity, logistics, economics, etc. However, these hurdles are not insurmountable, and when weighed

against the potential gains in Indigenous cultural resurgence, stronger and more balanced Indigenous-Settler relationships, and increased cultural understanding, economic and logistical considerations are of secondary importance.

Embedded within the term 'culturally sustainable tourism' is a complex set of relationships, implications, and expectations. Soini and Birkeland present cultural sustainability as a fourth pillar in the framework of sustainable development, following economic, social, and ecological (2014, 214). A culturally-sustainable tourism industry does not damage, distort, or erode the cultural integrity of a particular group or community; by contrast, it may even seek to participate in culture's flourishing, and contribute to its transmission from one generation to the next. Throughout my field research in Sahtú, the question of cultural sustainability was ever-present, though it was not expressly identified as such. Instead, I was told, countless times and by a wide variety of people, that the most pressing concern around tourism was whether an influx of tourists would alter the social and cultural make-up of the community; that the most important thing their community had to show the outside world was its cultural heritage; and that, with an increased outside interest in Sahtu Dene culture and language, it was more likely that young people would stay in the communities and take an interest in their cultural heritage.

In the case of the Sahtú region, relevant indicators of cultural sustainability might include the degree to which traditional economic activities, social narratives, and cultural

expression are preserved or enhanced through tourism in the five Sahtú Dene communities of Norman Wells, Délı̨ne, Colville Lake, Fort Good Hope, and Tulita. In Soini and Birkeland's work, these indicators are most closely associated with an emphasis on cultural heritage, vitality, diversity, and eco-cultural resilience (2014, 216-18). Based on the work of Bunten, Notzke, Graburn, and others, I intend to stretch the term somewhat further, to anticipate that culturally sustainable tourism will not only preserve culture, but actually celebrate, encourage, strengthen, enhance and transmit Sahtú Dene culture in ways that reflect the priorities of Sahtú Dene people. I contend that generating culturally sustainable tourism in the Sahtú region requires the direct participation of Sahtú Dene communities and their members, such that their interests and objectives guide the development and delivery process. Ideally, existing non-Indigenous tour companies would work to enhance their community relations through increased hiring of Indigenous workers and, by engaging in active consultation and partnership with Indigenous communities, begin to recognize Indigenous political and territorial sovereignty. It may prove beneficial for the GNWT's tourism department to mobilize resources to nurture and facilitate relationships between the private sector and local communities and prioritize the development of Indigenous-owned and operated cultural tourism initiatives.

Methodology: The Power of Narrative

While the results of my field research will be interwoven with elements of a literature review, I have chosen to privilege the personal testimony of research participants to acknowledge Indigenous oral tradition as a legitimate epistemological source.

I drew upon a wide variety of perspectives throughout the course of my research. I interviewed: the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT), and Parks Canada employees and officials who are engaged in tourism development and policy; Indigenous tour operators in Yellowknife, Norman Wells, and Deline; non-Indigenous tour operators active in the Sahtú region; community members interested in, or effected by, tourism development in Deline; community members, leaders and stakeholders involved in the development and delivery of *Destination Deline*. I contacted prospective interviewees through email and by telephone, and expanded my list of contacts through a snow-ball technique stemming from pre-existing relationships in Yellowknife, Norman Wells and Deline, as well as introductions made by Alice Legat, who sat on my initial thesis committee. While pre-established interview questions served as points of entry into the conversations, interviews evolved naturally into more open-ended and divergent discussions. As such, the testimony presented in this document does not always relate directly to tourism but does provide important cultural context expressed through fragments of the personal histories of research participants.

Beyond the epistemological contribution personal narrative plays in this thesis, the power of narrative to inform and constrain reality was a recurrent feature in my research. The stories we tell each other and ourselves about tourism can limit what is possible within the industry or, conversely, generate new and productive opportunities for tourism development. Dene cultural narratives may enrich the experience of non-Indigenous tourists travelling through Sahtú, but so too may tropes of an uninhabited, virgin landscape. Alternatively, and more negatively, knee-jerk responses to the challenges present in integrating Indigenous communities and community members in tourism delivery serve to reinforce negative colonial stereotypes and prevent positive change, and so taking steps to ensure NT's tourism products engender a positive and inclusive narrative of Indigenous life is incredibly important. On a number of occasions, I was asked by non-Indigenous interview subjects whether I had identified a real desire in Indigenous people to engage in the tourism industry; was I perhaps imposing upon the Sahtú Dene a desire for participation that did not actually exist? These questions caused me to reflect on my role as an allied non-Indigenous academic, and raised some real concerns about how my biases and goals were impacting the research process. While these concerns never vanished completely, I found that by remaining flexible in my investigatory approach and following interviewees where they led in conversation, I am now able to present a story of tourism in Sahtú that better reflects the priorities of community members.

Perhaps the most rewarding and gratifying testimony I received throughout the research¹⁰ was that the support for developing *Destination Délı̄nę* came about in response to Deline’s experience of hosting our youth expedition in summer of 2012. I’m conscious of not taking credit for this development, indeed the success of that interaction was due to the community’s implicit capacity to welcome visitors and showcase its vibrant cultural life, but I am proud to have been involved in a moment of spontaneous relationship-building between the tourism industry and Délı̄nę that led to a novel approach to culturally sustainable tourism. I highlight this testimony because it demonstrates the link between narrative possibility and positive change. Délı̄nę’s capacity to develop and deliver a viable tourism product was already in place, but it took a shift in the narrative to reveal the possibilities of cultural tourism development in the community.

Literature Review

Because this project winds its way through a variety of distinct topics and disciplines, including economic development theory, Indigenous-Settler and Indigenous-Corporate relations, Indigenous Resurgence, Anticolonial and Decolonization efforts in private and public sector institutions, Traditional Environmental Knowledge, as well as Tourism,

¹⁰ Introduced first by Richard Zieba, Director of Tourism and Parks GNWT, and corroborated by Ekwatide Leonard Kenny in Délı̄nę and other community members some weeks later.

Indigenous Tourism, and Recreation and Leisure Studies, I believe that a comprehensive and self-contained literature review, separate from the presentation of results, would have been overly cumbersome and unwieldy—especially considering my desire to encourage a narrative ‘flow’, in the presentation of my field research, that is similar to the natural rhythm of the conversations I had with many gracious interview respondents.

As such, instead of including a separate literature review section, I have weaved a literature review into the fabric of my field research in a way that provides support and context to the topic at hand. In some instances, issues raised by interview respondents are backed up or fleshed out by relevant academic research; in other cases, the relationship will be inverted, so that after a deeper exploration of a theory or observation made within an article or book, I will then validate the academic’s argument with the corroborative first-hand testimony of people on the ground.

While this approach makes for a more compelling read, it also goes some distance to empowering the perspectives of Indigenous research participants, whose opinions and beliefs have, for too long, been deemed unscientific, unproven, unreliable. Through the interweaving of oral narrative and textual analysis, the voices of the research participants are elevated to a position of authority, and ultimately provide specificity and subjectiveness to an academic gaze that is often overly general, and unmoored from the daily life of Indigenous people.

In approximate terms, however, the textual arc of my literature review begins with a discussion of our colonial legacy, and is grounded in authors such as Leanne Simpson, Dale Turner, Taiaiake Alfred, and Paula Sherman, who have collectively guided me towards a research ethic that privileges the desires and expectations of research participants and their home communities. From this point I move towards Indigenous-Settler relationship building and ongoing settler colonialism, within both academic and corporate environments, via Margaret Kovach, T.C. Goetze, Heather Shpuniarsky, Alexis C. Bunten, Lynne Davis, and Adam Barker. From here I go deeper into official relationship-building, such as through co-management regimes set up between resource extraction companies (for instance), and Indigenous communities. Claudia Notzke, Alison M. Johnson, Gabrielle Slowey, and Scott Nickels et al. guide us through best practices for this section, often confronting prejudicial claims made by academics such as Hensel, Morrow, and Tom Flanagan, who push the corporate agenda and delegitimize Indigenous sovereignty on the grounds that remote, Indigenous communities lack the wherewithal or capacity to effectively partner with large corporations. Finally, I move into a discussion about tourism imaginaries, and the role that narrative plays in shaping expectations for local tourism markets. Here I rely on the research of Noel Salazar, Nelson Graburn, Alexis C. Bunten, John A. Baptista, and Dimitrios Theodossopoulos, to explore these topics and support my novel presentation of the concept of the 'market imaginary'

in which a community may unlock its own market potential only after an initial imaginative spark gets things cooking.

Structure

This thesis is comprised of five chapters, oriented around the chronology of the field research process and, by extension, geography. The first chapter is this introduction. Chapters Two, Three, and Four will present the field research results from Yellowknife, Norman Wells, and Délı̄ne, interwoven with relevant components of a literature review, a government policy review, and methodological/anecdotal¹¹ field notes, organized into overarching themes within each section. Certain themes will recur across chapters (e.g. Indigenous-Settler relations, challenges/successes of cultural tourism, importance of traditional territory to Dene socio-cultural health) and others of isolated geographical applicability will be confined to a single section.

In Chapter Two I discuss themes that emerged in the interviews I conducted in Yellowknife, including policy directives emanating from GNWT's Tourism and Parks department, and Indigenous owned/operated tourism companies based in the Yellowknife area that may serve as constructive examples for tourism development in the Sahtú region. Chapter Three draws on my interviews in Norman Wells with non-

¹¹ Anecdotes relating to field research setting, context and observations.

Indigenous stakeholders in the tourism industry, revealing challenges and opportunities to better Indigenous-corporate relations in Sahtú, and introduce the implications of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's findings on the tourism sector. In Chapter Four I draw on my interviews and experiences in the community of Délı̨ne with community members, leaders, and partners in the *Destination Délı̨ne* pilot project, highlighting aspects of Sahtú Dene cultural and social life, and the factors that contributed to or hindered the successful delivery of *Destination Délı̨ne*.

In the fifth and final chapter of the thesis I provide something of a progress report on how the tourism industry has evolved over the intervening years since field research was conducted in 2014. I check in on the three Indigenous-owned tour operators in Yellowknife who first introduced me to Aboriginal tourism in the territory, review policy developments at the GNWT's ITI to gauge the health and progress of various Indigenous tourism products, and finally, reflect on the current state of *Destination Délı̨ne* as a signature cultural tourism product in the Sahtú region.

Summary of Results

While there exist several practical and economic challenges to developing a vibrant, culturally-sustainable tourism industry in the Sahtú region of the Northwest Territories, the GNWT and non-Indigenous tourism operators have both a moral and a legal obligation to consult with Indigenous communities in ways which guide the

development and delivery of their tourism products. Considering that these activities take place on lands described in the Sahtu Dene and Metis Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement (where Indigenous people have title to the land as detailed in the agreement, and which requires a duty to consult for all commercial activity conducted by non-participants to the Agreement), and that the Agreement is protected under Section 35 of the Constitution Act of 1982, the duty to consult is required under federal law. And yet there seems little willingness on the part of GNWT tourism officials to help enforce it.

If being in compliance with federal law is not incentive enough, I believe that by actively engaging Dene communities in the development process through partnerships, these companies will gain from the knowledge and cultural grounding of Indigenous community members, while providing increased economic and socio-cultural benefit to Sahtú Dene people. The *Destination Délı̄ne* pilot project provides an effective model for how best to collaborate around cultural tourism initiatives and, with a shift in narrative towards 'the possible', cultural sustainability within the tourism industry is a valuable and achievable goal for the Sahtú region, and for the Northwest Territories broadly.

Chapter Two

Yellowknife: Tourism at the Centre of the Wheel

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the Aboriginal¹² tourism sector in the Yellowknife (YK) area from public and private sector perspectives, to provide context for the development of community-based¹³ Indigenous tourism in remote communities further afield, such as in Délı̄nę. As the legislative, administrative, and economic centre of the territory¹⁴, Yellowknife plays a critical role in the tourism sector throughout the Northwest Territories (NWT). Not only does it set the policies which govern the development and delivery of tourism products throughout the territory, it also partners in funding them, and sets an example for communities and entrepreneurs further afield, by showcasing YK-based tourism businesses that have enjoyed success. For the purposes of this project, it is useful to imagine Yellowknife as the hub of a great wheel—supporting, coordinating, and animating smaller communities at the outer extremities of the territory¹⁵. And, while economic development of any kind relies upon the unique

¹² While contemporary scholarship typically prefers the term Indigenous to Aboriginal in reference to Dene, Metis and Inuit peoples referenced in this thesis, the literature of the GNWT commonly uses Aboriginal. As such, the terms may be seen as interchangeable within this text.

¹³ By community-based, I mean tourism which is situated in the communities themselves, such as through cultural, craft, game, and spiritual activities, in contrast to eco/adventure tourism activities, such as canoe tripping, fishing, etc.

¹⁴ Yellowknife also hosts the vast majority of tourism activity in NWT.

¹⁵ Arguably, Inuvik has its own gravitational pull in terms of tourism, and cultural significance. But its influence is felt more directly in the Mackenzie Delta and proximal coastal communities than in the Sahtu or ‘down South’.

character of individual communities, and the hard work and passion of community members, narratives of what Indigenous tourism professionals can do emanate from hubs such as Yellowknife and are key to setting the wheel in motion.

Welcome to Yellowknife!

The city of Yellowknife is tucked into a large bay on the northwest shore of Great Slave Lake and has a population of roughly 20,000. It is home to the head offices of various GNWT departments, including the Tourism and Parks Department, which itself is a branch of the larger Industry, Tourism, and Investment (ITI) Department. The role of the territorial government is comparable to provincial governments in southern Canada, although owing to the large Indigenous population in the territory (for whom education, healthcare, and social services are funded and administered by the Federal government) they have somewhat reduced jurisdiction when compared to provincial governments.

The GNWT Tourism and Parks Department provides communities and entrepreneurs with partnership-based funding packages and the development expertise necessary to initiate new projects—fundamentally defining what sorts of tourism products are best-suited for burgeoning tourism professionals. The relationship between narrative possibility and tourism development is a key theme throughout this thesis. One cannot strive towards a goal if one cannot imagine it, and so the public and private tourism initiatives present in Yellowknife serve not only to facilitate development, but to bring

into existence the narrative seeds from which development may sprout. Tourism stakeholders in Yellowknife, including policy makers and private operators, provide direction from which other communities, and the fledgling tourism industries they host, may generate their own local goals. Further, considering that the city remains the primary site for tourism activity in the territory, it stands to reason that tourism operators in the Yellowknife region are well situated to advise or mentor smaller communities on how best to imagine, plan, and deliver their own tourism products.

Setting out, my research objectives in Yellowknife were twofold: first, to gain insight into the GNWT's policy directions, funding models, and aspirations for Aboriginal tourism, beyond the summary details published in *Tourism 2015*; second, to investigate Indigenous owned and/or operated tourism companies in the Yellowknife area as relevant case studies for Sahtú's own tourism industry. The results illuminate challenges Sahtú operators must overcome to succeed in tourism and provide suggestions for how this might be done. Specifically, I set out to answer these questions (or, sets of questions):

1. What role does the Territorial government currently play in defining, initiating, and supporting the territory's tourism industry? What is the government's primary interest or emphasis with regards to tourism, and does this focus reflect the priorities of smaller communities in the territory, distant from Yellowknife?
2. What efforts have been made to enhance, identify issues with/emphasize support for Aboriginal/Indigenous tourism, and to what extent have they been successful?

3. Does the territorial government encourage Indigenous participation in local tourism delivery, or ensure that non-Indigenous tourism operators and companies take steps to develop relationships within local communities that lead to employment opportunities for community members?
4. What sorts of Indigenous owned/operated tourism initiatives are working well in the Yellowknife area, and what lessons do they afford other communities? Are the challenges faced by Yellowknife-based operators like those faced in Sahtú? Can the experiences of YK tourism operators inform expectations for operators in Sahtú?

Through an interview with Richard Zieba, the Director of Tourism and Parks for the GNWT, this chapter articulates the role government plays in developing, facilitating, and promoting tourism throughout the territory, with special emphasis on its approach to cultural tourism and Indigenous participation in the industry. Through four interviews with private tourism operators¹⁶, based in Yellowknife, this chapter also provides personal perspectives relating to the impact government policy has on tour operators in the region.

By conducting interviews in Yellowknife, I hoped to provide context for later phases of research, from which inferences could be drawn regarding current and future tourism results in Sahtú. However, as the research unfolded it became clear that the link between Yellowknife and Sahtú was more intimate than I had expected. Each of the five

¹⁶ Two of the owners are Tlitcho Dene, one is Metis from Fort Resolution, and one is a non-Indigenous Yellowknife local with strong ties to Tlitcho Dene communities who has made attempts to employ Indigenous cultural interpreters at his lodge.

Yellowknife interview participants (Richard, plus the operators) were aware of tourism developments in Sahtú, including the pilot project *Destination Délı̄ne*, and had already pondered the possibilities and challenges present in developing the region's tourism sector.¹⁷ Considering my pre-existing relationships in Délı̄ne and the important role the community would play in my thesis I adjusted my objectives to include a preliminary investigation of the *Destination Délı̄ne* project from the vantage of tourism stakeholders in Yellowknife, which concludes this chapter.

Recruiting the Voices of Tourism in Yellowknife

To recruit appropriate research participants, I contacted several employees at GNWT's Department of Industry, Tourism, and Investment (ITI) involved in the development of tourism policy, as well as a variety of Indigenous tour operators, and non-Indigenous tour operators actively engaged with Indigenous communities through employment, partnership/collaboration, and/or consultation. While I remained open to recruiting people outside of the tourism industry, I determined that I would give priority to government and private tourism stakeholders in the recruitment process, as they would be critical to generating a contextual narrative around tourism in the territory.

¹⁷ Délı̄ne is widely regarded as a cultural centre in the Sahtú region, owing in large part to its role as regular host to important cultural and spiritual gatherings, such as the 2013 Hand-game tournament, and the 2014 Spiritual Gathering.

The preliminary identification and recruitment of interview participants in Yellowknife began on June 22nd, 2014, though the first interview did not take place until two weeks later. While Trent's Research Ethics Board had granted its approval of the project, I did not receive the required hardcopy of my Northwest Territories research license¹⁸ until July 7th. While I could not begin interviewing prior to receiving the *physical* license, a June 26th email from the Northern Science Training Program (NSTP) informed me that the project had been approved, and I began the preliminary work of identifying and contacting potential research participants within the Government of Northwest Territories' (GNWT) Department of Industry, Tourism, and Investment, and local tourism operators.

Possessing only a few contacts within the Yellowknife tourism industry, I began by casting a wide net, emailing a variety of GNWT representatives listed on the Tourism and Parks Department website. Eventually I was directed to Richard Zieba, the Director of Tourism and Parks for GNWT's Department of Industry, Tourism, and Investment (ITI). As a 17-year veteran of the territory's tourism department of government, Zieba was well-situated to provide a comprehensive and authoritative perspective on

¹⁸ After receiving a research proposal and applicable Research Ethics Board (R.E.B.) confirmation of approval, the Northern Science Training Program (based in Aurora College) assesses the proposal, initiates community consultation, and determines whether or not to grant the researcher(s) a license to conduct research in NT. This organization sanctions all academic (as well as governmental) research conducted in the territory.

government tourism policy, and its related outcomes within the industry. My interview with Richard Zieba was conducted in his office, in downtown Yellowknife.

While recruiting private tourism operators, I was fortunate to be introduced to Tessa Macintosh and Mike Freeland by one of my thesis committee members, Aalice Legat, who has extensive experience living and researching in the Yellowknife area; Aalice was an invaluable support to me throughout my field research. Tessa and Mike operate a Bed and Breakfast¹⁹ out of their home in Yellowknife, as well as 'Blatchford Lake Lodge', a remote fly-in property that serves tourists from around the world. With decades of experience in the tourism industry Mike Freeland provided valuable testimony as a research participant, and both Tessa and Mike provided me with personal introductions to three Indigenous tour company owner/operators: Don Morin, Joe Bailey, and Bobby Drygeese. The most obvious commonality between the three Indigenous-owned businesses was an emphasis on Aurora-viewing as a central feature of their tour products. While there was some inclusion of Indigenous cultural presentations and adventure-based activities to complement the Aurora-viewing experience, these were largely considered secondary, or 'value-added', components of their packages.

The five interviews I conducted in Yellowknife illustrated the successes and challenges to developing culturally sustainable tourism products in Northwest Territories' capital region. From these interviews I gleaned many of the social, economic,

¹⁹ *Blue Raven B&B*, where I stayed for a number of nights.

and market factors that influence the core tourism industry in NWT, highlighting how government policy serves to either overcome or exacerbate issues facing cultural sustainability in tourism.

GNWT's Tourism and Parks Department

As the primary administrative authority over tourism activities in the Northwest Territories, the GNWT's Tourism and Parks Department performs several important functions. Tourism and Parks Department Director, Richard Zieba explained that "we're responsible for designing programs and services for the tourism ministry, so our mandate includes infrastructure development, training ... product development primarily" (Zieba, 2014). The department also partners with established tourism companies through Northwest Territories Tourism²⁰ to promote and market the territory's tourism industry nationally and abroad, and as such participates in establishing a tourism narrative that determines what products receive the support necessary to achieve success.

In February of 2011, the GNWT's Tourism and Parks Department in bilateral partnership with NWT Tourism launched a robust tourism plan entitled *Tourism 2015: New Directions for a Spectacular Future*²¹. Emerging out of the success of its predecessor,

²⁰ The government funded, industry led marketing organization responsible for the *Spectacular NWT* advertising campaign, and primary interface between government, private enterprise, and the public.

²¹ In October of 2016 the GNWT launched its third in a series of five-year tourism plans, entitled "*Tourism 2020: Opening Our Spectacular Home to the World*". At the time that research was conducted for this thesis

Tourism 2010, the new plan outlined the objectives and concerns of the tourism industry moving into the future. It defined new challenges, and presented an action plan for the promotion, development, and delivery of the territory's existing and anticipated tourism products. It is important to acknowledge at the outset that leading up to the launch of *Tourism 2015* the GNWT recognized a lack of Aboriginal cultural tourism products in the sector, and included in its plan a series of objectives to address this.²² Of six key areas identified for increased investment,²³ Aboriginal Tourism ranked third with an investment target of \$150,000 over 2011/12 (GNWT, 2011, 11). By comparison, the highest investment target for the same period was for general marketing, pegged at \$400,000. While an annual investment goal of \$150,000 seems like a step in the right direction, as of 2014 the success of this investment approach had not yet yielded the sorts of results the *Tourism 2015* plan had anticipated. "Well, there hasn't been much from what I understand of GNWT helping small operators in communities develop tourism," said Mike Freeland in our interview. "There's been money for marketing which ... guys like me appreciate, cause we get to market our product. But there hasn't been a lot on the development side."

"Tourism 2015: New Directions for a Spectacular Future" was the guiding policy document, and so I've chosen to focus my analysis on that plan. In order to show trends in tourism delivery, market and policy changes, and shifts in government philosophy regarding Indigenous (or, *Aboriginal cultural*) tourism I will highlight relevant aspects of *Tourism 2020* in the concluding chapter of this thesis.

²² Objectives included: Identifying and supporting Aboriginal Tourism Champions and establishing an Aboriginal Tourism Champions Advisory Council; hosting an Aboriginal Tourism Forum to: establish a definition of Aboriginal Tourism, develop a multi-year strategic plan, and develop product standards; find additional funding for an Aboriginal Tourism Product Development Officer; provide enhanced skills development programs for Indigenous people.

²³ Including Marketing, Community Engagement, Infrastructure, Skill Development, Research and Planning.

While marketing is an important tool for growing a tourism industry, placing too much emphasis on marketing, as opposed to new product development, favours established tourism companies with a track-record of industry success. If there exists a lack of Indigenous representation in the sector, then beefing up advertising for established branding will not improve the status quo, in fact it may divert much-needed seed-funding away from Indigenous start-ups and effectively widen the gap between established non-Indigenous companies and aspiring Indigenous start-ups.

At the time of my interview with Zieba, the focus of the government's tourism policy was predominantly economic in its criteria for development, the inference being that so long as increased revenue was generated it would inevitably benefit the territory broadly. Clearly there are political reasons for attending closely to the fiscal opportunities generated by a specific policy. For one thing, economic measures of success are tangible. In the development of tourism policy, governments consistently cite economic factors as primary motivators for change. Erve Chambers, examines this phenomenon and provides an explanation for it, writing:

It is far less risky and more tactful for tourism advocates to argue that a particular tourism development scheme will benefit a region economically than it is to suggest that there are also important and contestable ideological and cultural reasons to proceed with the project. Unfortunately, there has been a tendency for the economic analysis of the costs and benefits of tourism to disregard social and cultural variables, in part because they are difficult to measure in conventional economic terms. (2010, 35.)

While the economic repercussions of tourism are critical to an assessment of the industry, there are other, unquantifiable variables that must be taken into consideration in creating good tourism policy. This is vital for tourism products that utilize the traditional territory of Indigenous groups as a primary resource for their activities.

In my interview with Zieba, he recognized the lack of uptake on the part of potential Aboriginal tourism partners. “That’s the ultimate question, why aren’t they doing it, you know... What are the barriers and what can we do to address those?” One of the reasons for a lack of progress in developing Aboriginal tourism products may have to do with the way investment dollars are made available for new programs. In the executive summary that opens the *Tourism 2015* policy document, the GNWT states that through partnerships²⁴ mobilization of these funds is contingent upon a ‘one-to-one’ partnership funding ratio; in short, GNWT will only make funds available once partners put 50% of their own capital forward. Zieba confirmed that this was indeed their approach, in his discussion of community-based tourism development in Sahtú:

That’s one of the areas we’ve identified is full partnerships. We’re looking for contributions from those communities, we have money, we’re looking for them to contribute, but we have an infrastructure program where we contribute towards community tourism infrastructure. The community kicks in some money, we kick in some money, to develop infrastructure, but we have yet to develop full partnerships on the sort of on human resource development and capacity development (Zieba, 2014).

²⁴ Partners may include organizations, communities, Aboriginal governments or individuals.

In the case of marketing investment, which most immediately benefits well-established tourism operators, it's likely that one-to-one investment partnerships will be generated through this policy, and beneficiaries of it will make full use of the government's \$400,000 target. However, in the case of Aboriginal tourism, where fewer products exist, entrepreneurs or communities interested in launching new Aboriginal tourism products may not have the 50% funding necessary to debut and launch a new product and may lack confidence in the viability of such a venture. In my interview with the owner of Aurora Village, Don Morin, he raised concerns that taking on too much debt in pursuit of a new tourism venture could prove to be a mistake if you aren't sure of success:

You've got to really watch that. Because government is famous for going in and giving people money and saying, 'No problem, we're giving you this money to do your tourism business or your business,' but you've still got to go to the bank and borrow it because you've got to match it or something, right? And then that puts those people in hardship. And then they're doomed for failure. Because when people say, oh, go into business and then five years' time it will be really great or three years' time, they're all frigging bullshitting. You've got to invest a lot longer than that to become successful at it and to ... you know, and you have to be able to make enough money to feed your family and carry on when those tourists don't come (Morin, 2014).

Morin's statement emphasizes the persistence required to develop a lasting and successful brand within tourism in Northwest Territories. Mike Freeland, owner of Blatchford Lake Lodge, echoed this claim: "Yeah I know with Blachford it's taken a long, long time to get ... the product in place and kind of recognized and it's been huge work

over ... 30 years” (Freeland, 2014). This suggests that for a product to be successful in the long-term, potential owner/operators must be willing to plan and develop with an aim to achieving success over time, and as such they will be best supported in their efforts by government policy that reflects this. While *Tourism 2015* sets out a series of theoretical targets relating to Aboriginal tourism, it fails to outline specific strategies for achieving these goals. Though funds are earmarked for Aboriginal tourism development, there is little acknowledgement of existing barriers to Indigenous participation within the industry, with regards to either employment or ownership/partnership. Without specific goals to increase Indigenous engagement within the industry, it is unlikely that market forces can shift this narrative organically.

One of the key sites for Indigenous participation in tourism, as set out in *Tourism 2015*, is the arts and crafts sector,²⁵ and while the government clearly identifies its important contribution to the cultural diversity of the sector, it does little to regulate who is permitted to deliver it. This is extremely important for a discussion of cultural-sustainability, as the commercial use of cultural products can serve either to showcase and celebrate Indigenous people’s cultural inheritance (thereby empowering its members, and validating their contributions to society), or co-opt it without generating

²⁵ Over the last ten years the arts and crafts sector has exploded in popularity and sophistication. Large-scale arts and culture events such as Yukon’s Adaka Cultural Festival provide incredible opportunities for Indigenous entrepreneurship and cross-cultural collaboration. Suzanne de la Barre and others have explored these topics extensively. See: (Rasmussen, et al., “Indigenous Entrepreneurship”, 2024.

benefit for the rightful beneficiaries of this cultural legacy. While culturally based tourism products *are* important elements of the tourism milieu, they do not sufficiently empower Indigenous community members, for several reasons. First, Indigenous traditional presentations are displayed for the sake of tourists who may have little to no understanding of or context for the presentations. In his book *Native Tours*, Erve Chambers suggests that,

Through such experiences tourists might hope to gain a greater appreciation of cultural diversity. But brief and superficial presentations of a people's heritage through the kinds of staged events that are typical of many tourist visits can as easily contribute to misunderstanding and stereotyping (2010, 81).

As such, the greatest care is necessary in the presentation of these art and craft materials, and their creative and facilitatory control should be entirely in the hands of Indigenous providers. Second, this approach reduces Indigenous culture to a commodity, and does not actually shift the balance of power from Southern-based tour operators and their clients to the people whose cultural inheritance is so valuable to the industry. For the most part, cultural products are experienced as 'value-added' elements of larger tour packages, and while proceeds of the sale of goods will go to artisans in the community, the larger profit margin gained by providing access to these artisans still flows to established companies for whom culture is secondary to their commercial objectives.

The promotion of Indigenous participation through cultural demonstrations and the sale of art and crafts may not represent a sufficient response to the need for increased Indigenous participation in tourism, especially considering that neither area generates enough economic activity to warrant their own categories when forecasting tourism trends in the territory (GNWT, 2011, 11). And yet, this form of participation is strongly emphasized within the government's action plan. The plan states that:

There is strong demand in Europe, Japan and among certain market segments in North America for travel experiences that include encounters with authentic Aboriginal culture. Authenticity is the key word here. Travelers interested in Aboriginal experiences are looking for the real thing (GNWT, 2011, 13).

While the plan forecasts increased interest in *authentic* (GNWT, 2011, 13) Aboriginal cultural experiences and sets out a series of goals intending to encourage Aboriginal tourism, the category itself does not appear in economic forecasting tables at any point in the document. Within the plan, Aboriginal cultural tourism (including immersive, community-based products such as *Destination Déline*) is categorized under 'soft' adventure tourism (GNWT, 2011, 13). Indigenous contributions to the industry are otherwise contained in the 'arts and crafts' sector, although there is no distinction made between Indigenous and non-Indigenous products. This is in keeping with the GNWT's non-interventionist approach to market activities.

The most obvious and practical effort to promote Aboriginal tourism development, guard against cultural appropriation, and ensure Indigenous interests are

protected within tourism delivery, is the GNWT's funding of an Aboriginal Tourism Champions Advisory Council. As Chambers points out: "The question of who has the right to "make" tourism is hotly contested and seldom settled ... tourism is much more culturally intimate than nearly any other industry. Its business involves bringing into close contact people of widely different means, class, ethnicity, and religious and cultural backgrounds" (Chambers, 2010, 34). While forming the Council was, in itself, an achievement, my interview with Joe Bailey of North Star revealed the difficulties of regulating exactly what Aboriginal tourism may consist of, and the impossibility of achieving consensus among potentially disparate viewpoints:

That's their way of legitimizing this Aboriginal component. So, they're the government, but they want these people to say it's okay and not okay. So, I had a problem with that. So, you're telling me ... 'if you don't certify and don't approve of this one activity, I can't do it.' 'That's the way it works,' they told me. I said 'you're not gonna tell me what to do with my culture and my tours, you know so if I wanna do ... I wanna do fishnet setting over here and you're saying well Joe it's not official tour product, so ... Then I say well the heck with you, I'm gonna do it anyways (Bailey, 2014).

Beyond the development of the Aboriginal Tourism Champions Advisory Council, the GNWT relies upon the market to regulate and guide its own development. *Tourism 2015* avoids mandating the need for Indigenous participation in tourism products delivered in the Yellowknife region, instead relying on a hands-off approach to the cultural health of Indigenous communities. This is of primary concern for those tourism products taking

place on traditionally held lands, such as those conducted by non-Indigenous operators in the Sahtú region, often without partnership agreements with the First Nations, Metis, or Inuit communities who rely heavily upon the land for their physical, cultural, and social well-being. By not addressing the specific needs of Indigenous communities and the Indigenous labour force, government policy can serve to reinforce the unequal relations of power that have so far excluded Indigenous people and communities from the tourism industry.

Practical Impediments to Increased Indigenous Participation in Tourism

While the influence of institutional barriers to Indigenous participation in tourism are critical to this analysis, it's also important to identify and explore the practical barriers to increased Indigenous employment, community partnerships, and cultural sustainability within the industry. Throughout the interviews in Yellowknife the most common issue raised by participants was a lack of capacity among the Indigenous workforce and within Indigenous communities. Interview participants related that, in general, Indigenous workers lacked the necessary certifications, skills, and experience to qualify for employment in some key roles within the tourism industry, and that small communities (such as Délı̄ne) lacked the infrastructure and professional expertise to host tour products with the consistency and excellence tourists would expect. In large part, this sentiment may stem from the fact that standards by which tourism products in the NWT are

assessed, and the methods employed in their delivery have been imported from outside the region, and do not necessarily reflect the specific priorities, capacities or strengths of local people. Despite the intimate connection many Indigenous people have to the traditional economic practices now commodified within tourism (such as hunting, fishing, and the production of craftwork), many of the dominant tourism products have been re-defined, re-packaged, and commercialized in ways that exclude Indigenous participation. Potential guides (or other employees) must conform to inconsistently applied best-practices imported from southern Canada, then somehow gain the experience and certifications necessary to be hired—despite a lack of access to such training opportunities throughout the territory. Thus, they are undermined by a credentialism which is ill-fit to the realities of economic and social life in the North.

As an additional constraint, nascent operators who are attempting to provide an authentic cultural or community immersion product, are expected to conform to an imported standard of consistency in their delivery of said product. As Alexis C. Buntun relates in her 2010 article, “Indigenous Tourism: the paradox of gaze and resistance”:

When it comes to cultural tourism, guests want to know what is going to take place during the encounter with their hosts and they expect these interactions to happen within a framework that follows dominant frameworks and paradigms for interaction. This renders Indigenous tourism professionals in a paradoxical position. Many wish to present their cultures according to local values and rules of interaction, but they know that in order to make a profit from the tourism industry, they must adapt to industry universals (“Paradox of Gaze” 52).

The pressure to adapt to these standards is introduced by any number of vectors, from package tour companies, government policies and representatives, or, most often, by the tourists themselves. As Mike Freeland in Yellowknife put it: “If the package starts at 9 o'clock, then it should start at 9 o'clock ... and do everything you say it's gonna do and it's gotta be a quality product, and as long as that can happen, then it will work, but it's frequently a challenge to make the on the land stuff or in the community stuff happen the way the market wants it to” (Freeland, 2014). Tourists may be accustomed to a level of reliability and predictability that are difficult to achieve in remote communities with limited resources, inexperienced service staff, and traditional community priorities that do not neatly dovetail to package tour itineraries. The tension between authenticity and predictability arises not merely from a lack of experience on the part of the tour provider. It also has to do with the marginal role that organized, official tourism²⁶ may play in the broader mixed economic picture of an Indigenous community. Part of the challenge for Indigenous tour providers in remote communities is that there is not enough consistent tourism work to reliably prioritize its development and execution. Understandably then, they may regard tourism work as merely supplemental to other economic activity, including both paid work, and traditional fishing and hunting activities. In her book, *The Stranger, the Native and the Land*, Claudia Notzke points out that:

²⁶ As opposed to simple hospitality, which is tied into Indigenous traditional cultural practices, as firmly as anything else.

Depending on whether Indigenous communities have suffered a total loss of their traditional economic base along with the cultural and social consequences accompanying such loss, or whether they engage in some form of mixed economy—which may be thriving or destitute—the implications for tourism can vary considerably. The seasonal nature of tourism...can be an asset or a liability, depending on its intended role in a community's economy or a family's livelihood ("The Stranger", 2006, 38).

As such, their interest in and capacity to deliver a reliable product for tourists may be interrupted by other priorities.

The insecurity of the industry further exacerbates its viability in its impact on local employees who might serve as staff for these nascent operators. The relative precarity of this employment makes it distinctly unappealing, and untenable, especially when compared to other industries that provide lucrative, full-time, and permanent employment (such as diamond mining). In my interview with Mike Freeland, he provides the example of his stepson, Alex, who represents a common employment trend in the Northwest Territories. Freeland explains:

Tess's son, Alex, he's 28 and he's worked for years with Diavik underground. He works two weeks in and two weeks out and he probably makes a 100 grand a year. So why might he be interested in working as a river guide for whatever money is to be made you know for a short seasonal thing. But people like Alex, you know they can do that, or they can go the mine and make a big buck and you know it's a different world. For 20 or 30 years they've both tried to get guides from the communities ... Like canoe guides from the communities and over the years there's been some rising stars from Nahanni Butte or Simpson, but it's generally pretty short-lived and they would go on to do something else (Freeland, 2014).

The current tourism models in NWT don't provide the sort of employment stability and consistency that individuals need to support themselves or their families throughout the year. This is especially true of tourism initiatives taking place in the outlying communities, such as those in the Sahtú region, where guides in the adventure tourism sector return to southern communities after the summer guiding season concludes, and tourism owner/operators return to their southern headquarters to focus on marketing and sales for the next season.

As such, it is understandable that government efforts are geared towards aiding established veterans in the industry, and supporting a model of tourism that roots its best practices in Southern modes of operation. It's just much easier than trying something new. In order to capitalize on the capacity of Southern-based tourism operators, who arrive with the capital necessary to launch new products, the government has focused its efforts on supporting these imports over developing local capacity through jobs training, certification programs, full grants for Indigenous-owned tourism start-ups, or by enacting regulations or financing policies that incentivize established companies to mentor, train and hire Indigenous employees. Director of the Tourism and Parks Department, Richard Zieba, states that:

We recognize that a lot of the expertise, especially for outdoor adventure, lies outside the territories. So, we talk with them about you know what requirements around guides, what are they looking for in guides, what skill sets are required and so that primarily ... Well, there's two issues I guess, was technical skills required, which people don't have here and how you actually

go about obtaining them. And then the maturity level, so you know technical skills are not the ... Maybe it's not even the most important ... A lot of outfitters we've talked with, it's the maturity level and customer service and be able to handle conflict on trips, that's really important. So, we are actually working on a youth mentorship program at this point that we wanna launch next year that will be ... That's intended to encourage operators, northern and southern based to ... It's more than to just hire local youth, but to actually mentor them through a series of processes required to get those skills and ultimately get employment in the north and possibly own and run their own businesses ... And there's issues with literacy levels as well. And you know the ability to make a living in the industry. Like if you were a home-grown outfitter here ... Like the successful operators in the territories, most of them have operations throughout Canada and internationally. You know in order to survive, you know they're not just offering trips on the Mountain and the Keele [rivers], they're doing other things to generate income. So, there's an issue of the business model as well in terms of being an adventure outfitter that would be a barrier to say if somebody from Délı̄ne who wanted to establish themselves as a fulltime outfitter in the adventure sector ... and for somebody who's paying that much money, coming here ... Quite often it's you know people save up for years and do this trip ... They expect a high level of service on those trips, so the guide is critical ... It's really important (Zieba, 2014).

Despite Zieba's recognition of the supremacy of the established Southern operators, and the insufficiencies present in the capacity of small communities who might host cultural tourism products, there is little evidence that the GNWT is taking steps to develop training opportunities for prospective entrepreneurs or workers who are interested in getting into tourism, or have any idea of how to aid and support communities like Délı̄ne as they embark on new and exciting tourism projects. There is a reliance on the market to deliver necessary training opportunities should they be deemed necessary by market suppliers themselves, and since the status quo is working well enough for the most established companies, there is little evidence to suggest anything will change. Without

a clearly established path for gaining the necessary training or certifications to become qualified, it's hard to imagine how interested parties may enter the tourism industry on their own steam. "That's probably one of the barriers is that the career path is unknown, so people don't know what they need to do and then what are the supports available to follow that path. That's one of the focuses that we wanna concentrate on is identifying what's the career path for following through." Zieba's testimony supports my argument that a locality's tourism narrative, its *market imaginary*, is extremely powerful for engendering new tourism products, and changing the face of the existing tourism milieu. If you are told something is possible, and shown the route to get there, then the world (and paths into the tourism industry) begin to open up.

Modelling Success: Culturally Sustainable Tourism In YK

For all the precarity and uncertainty within the industry at the farthest flung corners of the territory, Yellowknife, by contrast, is a tourism arena with a far higher degree of certainty and consistency for tourism professionals and their employees. Indigenous operators in Yellowknife have the expertise, capital, and broad market support to develop and deliver robust tourism products, and hence may demonstrate to fledgling operators in remote communities what successful tourism development looks like. In my

interviews with three Indigenous, and one non-Indigenous²⁷, tour operator(s), I investigate what brought them success, and to what extent they are responsive to the increased demand for Aboriginal cultural tourism, and cultural sustainability in the delivery of community-based tourism products. The three Indigenous respondents have distinctly different business models, with varying emphases on culture, aurora viewing, fishing and hunting, general touring, cultural displays and the transmission of Traditional Knowledge, but all are proud Indigenous entrepreneurs who base their success in tourism on a deeply held, culturally reinforced emphasis on hospitality. As hosts they strive to represent their communities and traditions with pride, respect, and enthusiasm.

Born to a Metis family in Hay River in 1954, Don Morin, former premier of the Northwest Territories, operates the largest and most popular aurora-viewing tourism business in the territory, 'Aurora Village'. Over the 26 years since its inception, Aurora Village has grown to be the 'go-to' experience for tourists coming to Yellowknife. In our interview, Don Morin states that the guiding principle that has made his business a success is that it has been built on the value his family and culture place on hospitality, which he learned from a young age. He says:

In those days, there wasn't a lot of money or a lot of hotels. You know, you travelled, you stayed with people. When people came, first thing my mom

²⁷ Mike Freeland none-the-less has hired Indigenous workers and maintains close relationships within local Indigenous communities.

used to do is offer them tea, or bannock or something to eat, right, and a place to stay. So, you grow up with that mentality. And tourism is not much different, except for you're getting paid (Morin, 2014).

Morin and his 55 staff offer snowmobile and dog-sledding tours, Indigenous cultural activities, and fine-dining, designed around the primary focus of viewing the Aurora Borealis from the site. Throughout the winter and shoulder seasons²⁸ Aurora Village serves approximately 15,000 tourists per year (Morin, 2014).

The relationship between an historic cultural emphasis on hospitality within Indigenous communities, and the expansion of Indigenous participation within tourism (which can be taken as a professional extension of these practices) is well represented within the interviews I conducted on the ground in Yellowknife, and within academic literature exploring Indigenous tourism.

Bunten states that: "For most Indigenous peoples ... hospitality is and has always been serious business, meant to establish key relationships between peoples within and across cultural boundaries. Adapting the protocols of hosting – with its associated social functions and embedded aesthetics – to a commercial context comes naturally, as does trade, commerce and building wealth from natural resources" ("Paradox of Gaze", 2010, 52).

²⁸ Fall and Spring, 'shouldering' the prime winter season. The seasonality of GNWT's tourism industry is not unique to the region. Most Nordic nations contend with the seasonality of the aurora borealis, which is usually the most significant tourist draw for each respective jurisdiction. Figuring out ways to draw tourists in during the shoulder and summer seasons can be a real challenge. See: (Muller et al., "Seasonality", 2019).

During our interview, Morin expressed how important it was to him that guests to Yellowknife come away with a positive experience of the community, having been well hosted, and made comfortable and happy in the process of exploring what the area and its people have to offer. "...What I realized, really quickly, is that people were coming into Yellowknife to see Aurora ... and they didn't even know that Aboriginal people even existed. And when I seen the service these people were getting, I thought you couldn't ask for worse service. And that didn't really reflect who we are as Aboriginal people, to treat people like that" (Morin, 2014).

The desire to provide positive experiences for tourists, in a fledgling sector that did not include strong Indigenous representation among ownership, was a key factor encouraging Morin to begin his own Aurora viewing enterprise in the first place. While he was initially interested in providing guided fishing tours on Great Slave Lake, he realized that the limited season would make it impossible to support a family on fishing tourism alone.

When people come to visit, you're to share things with them. And that was my intention. And I looked at the fishing industry and then I realized, quite quickly, while I was doing my research, I've got two months a year for fishing. Out of that, I'm lucky to do six weeks. Pretty hard to survive on six weeks a year, right, you know, unless you're doing it just as a supplement of something else, you know. So, then I looked at the winter because the winter is the longest. And then I looked at the Aurora and what people were doing in the Aurora. So, people were coming from all over the world to come to the north to see Aurora. And then the Aurora is predominantly above the skies of Aboriginal people around the world (Morin, 2014).

In this way, Don Morin took what he was familiar with and adapted it to fulfil the needs of his family and respond to what the market was asking for. One of the strengths of the Aurora Village business model, as it pertains to the advancement of Indigenous participation within the industry, is that it is entirely Indigenous owned, and the majority of its staff are local, Indigenous workers, whose own experiences and perspectives come to bear on the delivery of the Aboriginal cultural components of the tour package, which include dog team rides on 'traditional' huskies, the use of traditional sleighs and carryalls, guided snowshoe hikes, lessons on fire building and identifying animal tracks in snow, and information/story sessions on the traditional social, cultural, and economic practices of Elders, and ancestors (Morin, 2014). As you'll come to see, however, Morin's tourism offering is perhaps the most commercial of the three operations I explore. The displays of local custom and Indigenous culture, at times, risk being subsumed by the carefully orchestrated general tour package based around the Aurora, which aims to channel hundreds of participants through an efficient and consistent program, without regard for the nuance and complexity of a living culture. Although I don't doubt his personal commitment to celebrating Indigenous traditions, Morin was, at times, somewhat cavalier about the cultural elements at Aurora Village. For instance, he explained that:

When they come out for afternoon activities they can do dog team rides, they can do skidoo and they can do snowshoeing, they do all that stuff. They learn to make fire. They shoot bow and arrow at targets and ... like, deer and animals, and they get taught that. They're taught how to split wood. You know, they get taught all these things that are natural things you would teach a young Aboriginal person growing up, right, except for the bow and arrow stuff. That's a little bit John Wayne, right?" (Morin, 2014).

One might ask then, why include the 'bow and arrow stuff', if it doesn't accurately represent something an Aboriginal person might be taught growing up? This introduces a major pitfall in the dissemination of traditional knowledge to a non-Indigenous, outsider marketplace: in attempting to be commercially attractive, tour operators may entrench or (re)iterate false stereotypes of Indigenous life, that are both Othering, and inauthentic, simply to cater to what they believe tourists want to see and experience.

Bunten's writes:

With the choice to commodify one's culture comes great responsibility over cultural, material and spiritual resources. Commoditizing a living culture gives birth to an acute paradox of representation in which Indigenous tourism professionals feel enormous pressure to deliver a competitive product that appeals to perceived consumer desires for 'the Other,' while confronting stereotypes that persist in popular culture ("Paradox of Gaze", 2010, 52).

Arguably, some tour operators take this paradox more seriously than others. I got the sense that Morin is a pragmatist, and perhaps this has contributed to his monumental success in tourism. Morin is not precious about the fact that cultural elements really are a 'value-added' feature of the Aurora Village really experience and makes no bones about

the fact that Aurora viewing is the main draw for his clients; if the Aurora provides the opportunity to present educational cultural elements to a global clientele, then all the better.

In a general sense, Indigenous tourism professionals are able to deploy cultural education in order to take control of the narratives which define their culture and communities and challenge the sometimes biased and damaging misrepresentation of Indigenous peoples, which exist within dominant colonial narratives. This puts tourism providers at the vanguard of shaping a new narrative around Indigenous life, and the transmission of traditional knowledge. Notzke explains this capacity, arguing that:

On the positive side tourism has a tremendous potential to serve as an educational vehicle for cultural exchange and understanding. There is a great potential in tourism for alleviating, as well as entrenching, stereotypes. Mythology, imagery, and stereotypes have dominated the relationship between the North and the South of Canada, and between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, for a long time, with disastrous consequences for northerners and Aboriginal people. As tourism makes its inevitable way to new geographical and conceptual frontiers, it is only fair that it should contribute to a reversal of this historical process (“The Stranger”, 2006, 27).

Not only can this cultural transmission be important for the edification of the tourists, but it can also, at its best, serve to enhance and reinforce the importance of culture within the subject community itself; this is of utmost importance to the younger generation, whose attention is being tugged in myriad directions by a broader, global society dominated by priorities often at odds with traditional practices and lifeways. In their 2011 plan *Tourism*

2015: *New Directions for a Spectacular Future*, the GNWT explicitly points out this feature of Aboriginal tourism, stating that: “The benefits of Aboriginal cultural tourism flow both ways. At its best, this kind of tourism can strengthen language and culture by stimulating pride and interest in Aboriginal youth in their own heritage” (GNWT, 2011, 13). The extent to which this capacity is a deliberate focus of the various tour operators I interviewed, and the ways in which it may come about, varies between respondents. In some cases, that benefit may be accrued through employment, such as was indicated by Mike Freeland, a non-Indigenous tour operator who, none-the-less, has routinely employed Indigenous workers in a variety of service, and interpretive roles. Freeland recalled a young Dene man, named Albert, who worked at Blatchford Lodge, off and on, for about fifteen years, and came to feel a sense of pride for the wealth of traditional knowledge he had been handed down by his forebears, as well as for the accomplishments of his father, who was a renowned drum maker. Tess, Freeland’s wife and business partner, knew how much the young man loved visiting Blachford and being on the land, and offered him a job as an interpretive guide at the lodge. That was how it began. Freeland explained that:

...[A]t first he was pretty you know kinda shy about it, but within about a year he was doing ... You know we were hosting a lotta Japanese, so we'd bring 20 Japanese people to Blachford at 30 below, he'd have the campfire going and he would do a two-hour presentation with some cheat notes that Tess had put together ... It was pretty amazing, he got this pride built up, you know, over this process and that he was recognizing that his father was a premier kinda traditional drum maker, and he was feeling good about portraying the Dene

culture to visitors from Japan ... So, it was quite enlightening just to see him kinda get empowered by this whole process and feel really good about it and the visitors loved it, cause it was a real ... You know it was a real program, it wasn't a Disneyland kinda program (Freeland, 2014).

This mode of stimulating pride in one's heritage is not achieved through 'direct transmission, such as through a lesson or talk given by an elder to a pupil; rather, the process unfolds organically, from within an individual's own process of uncovering, such that pride and understanding bloom within the soil of this inward-looking exploration. And, as such, the act of giving (from interpreter to tourist), in turn bestows a gift upon the giver. This rare but important benefit of tourism is of profound significance to those tourism workers who experience it, and I will explore it further in my section on the *Destination Délı̄ne* pilot project.

Another way to nurture cultural connection in young Indigenous people is by actually including them as guests or clients of your tourism venture. In my interview with Bobby Drygeese, owner and operator of the N'dilo-based company *B Dene Adventures* since its founding in 2009, I found a tourism pro who uses his company as a vehicle for nurturing cultural revitalization within his community, with a specific focus on youth. *B Dene Adventures* offers traditional Dene cultural programs for all ages and group sizes (B Dene), and while Drygeese relies upon Aurora viewing as an important resource for the financial viability of his business, his emphasis on cultural teaching sets his business apart from most others in the Yellowknife area. Drygeese's approach reflects a broader

movement within the Indigenous tourism sector, globally, to move away from staging performative 'model culture' demonstrations (expressly for the sake of tourists), and instead to draw tourists into the reality of modern Indigenous life. In her article 'Indigenous Tourism: The Paradox of Gaze and Resistance', Bunten articulates this broad shift:

The most recent generation of Indigenous owned tourism businesses are moving away from this 'model culture' format, eager to develop products that reflect Indigenous life as it is actually lived and experienced today. New kinds of experience-based tours such as small, family oriented, food tasting, and eco-adventure tours capitalize upon Indigenous knowledge, hospitality and authenticity at the same time leading the market trend away from mass-tourism and towards a more sophisticated clientele –including special interest groups, students and the very wealthy ("Paradox of Gaze", 2010, 54).

By situating an 'authentic' cultural experience at the centre of his tours, instead of including it as a 'value-added' component of a more typically commercial product, Drygeese not only challenges the standard priorities of the industry historically, but even bucks the trend encouraged by *Tourism 2015*, which states that: "The greatest potential lies in developing cultural products that can be offered in a package of other activities and services (GNWT, 2011, 13). While he does offer Aurora viewing, *that* seems to be the value-added component of the overall product offering. For Drygeese, culture is key. In the interview, Drygeese raises an interesting point about why he feels it is so important to emphasize, share, and ennoble his culture through his business. He states that:

I think it's important to share cultures. I try to make sure to try to keep your own culture alive as much as possible, because, like, especially with Dene people, we're from here. We can't go back to our home country and relearn everything, like Italians, they go back to Italy and French people go back to France or Russian people go back to Russia to relearn their culture and everything like that. We can't go anywhere. We're here. So that's why it's important to keep as much of our culture alive as possible, and especially when we're travelling out on the land, there's certain places where you do rituals and ceremonies and - like, the areas that you know where caribou are or where the plants are or anything like that for medicine, good hunting spots is too. So that's why we try to bring our kids there as much as possible and teach them (Drygeese, 2014).

Further to his goals of imparting traditional cultural knowledge upon clients, he actively seeks to spread this knowledge to younger generations in his own community, hosting school groups at community centres, at his bush camp, and on the land. This aligns well with the GNWT's own goals for initiating new cultural tourism products that provide benefit to both tourists and communities alike. For work showcasing traditional and cultural activities, Drygeese hires Indigenous guides and interpreters, indicating they are best suited to provide a culturally representative experience to his clients, and have the appropriate and relevant knowledge necessary to teach youth (Drygeese):

I hire other hunters and trappers, like, people who are experts out on the land. So that's who I hire all the time. And people I'll go hunting with and people help each other, depend on each other for survival and all that would go out on the land, so they're all experts, so that's who we hire. A lot of the ladies too, they cook and stuff at camps, so I hire them too for chefs. Plus, with the schools too, like, the schools come in the fall time and have about two or three weeks of camps for schools. All the kids from different schools come in and have camp for a week (Drygeese, 2014).

In this way, Drygeese has created a business that houses an educational program in the heart of a tourism product. *B Dene Adventures* not only successfully represents Drygeese's culture and community to outsiders, it also fosters relationship building across multiple generations within local communities. In his book *Yamoria: The Lawmaker*, Dene elder, and former Vice President of the Dene Nation, George Blondin stresses that education, and the passing of knowledge from one generation to the next was critical for survival. He goes on to explain that "Elders played a special role teaching children and youth about Dene laws and telling stories that held important lessons of how to live. Children watched their parents work and helped them; they learned how to make a living and then married and started their own families" (Blondin "Yamoria", 1997, 26). While at one time the meaning of survival was a very literal, existential concern, I believe it's reasonable here to stretch the definition somewhat further, framing survival as a cultural imperative within the context of Indigenous resurgence and decolonization. What Bobby Drygeese is attempting to do is continue that legacy of traditional education, in order to preserve the survival of his culture, and bestow the traditions of the Dene upon the next generation.

Over the course of the interview, we moved between multiple locations, eventually taking an aluminum boat and kicker²⁹ across to his camp, where there is a

²⁹ A small, outboard engine.

modest cabin, decorated with maps and photographs of past trips, school groups, community gatherings, and the faces of family and friends. There is also a huge teepee, with bright white canvas and a fire-pit at its centre. This feels like the spiritual centre of the site. In the teepee Drygeese went on to describe taking the kids out on the land in much fuller detail:

Usually come here in the winter, usually if we have a tour during the day, they would come here, or in the evening, they'll come here about five or six, make fire, try to warm up the cabin before they come. Go back home. Cook supper. Pick up people at nine, bring them out here Dettah and skidooing, by 9:30 we're here, fire's almost out, but it's still a bit of warm in here, so it's nice. Nice and cozy. One year we went out to - that's a whole camp. Went there, we landed, got a lot of our gear out, and we fixed up all the boats, and put that motor on the boat and fix the gas and everything, and then - it was about eight in the morning we got there. Fixed up everything and about 9 o'clock there's that one hill there? The first group of caribou that came over the hill, the whole hill, we went across there, we went hunting, we shot caribou, brought them back. The whole land there, it's right across the bay, like here to across over there. And it was just full of caribou for three days. The caribou come this way, too, also, but not too close. When I was younger the caribou used to go to Mason Lake, Jennejohn Lake. It's only about half an hour ride from here, 45 minutes with a skidoo. But out there, wintertime, we just hunt here and there. But there, that was thousands and thousands, all day, all night, three days. Just go there, pick and choose. Holy man, it was good. Thousands and thousands. Yeah. Lots of Elders came with us, too. All crazy, too, all tell stories. They're all funny, too. Just regular jokes and tease each other. The Elders are lots of fun. Always make sure that we bring our kids with us, too. Our young ones. Even Codi there, our oldest son, that's - he was 12 we brought him there, McKay Lake. Showed him where my grandmother was born and where our great-grandmother was buried. So, we clean up her grave site and all that. Showed him the boat trails and kept missing caribou and - I was the only one that shot caribou that first year, then the second year he went, he shot his own caribou, fixed it up there. Went hunting with him for four years. The fifth year I started a business here. There was Elders who came to me, said like, oh, he helped out with all the meat, he helped out with the boats, and he was driving

a boat for a couple of days, and he did really good they said. Hunting game, helping everybody. It was good. So, you don't have to worry about it. Don't worry about anyone. Don't worry about him no more. He can go hunting. So, I was proud of him. It was good. He's 20 now. Yeah. Kids grow up (Drygeese, 2014).

When I first met Drygeese he had me help him haul a large bin from the community centre in N'dilo, where he occasionally hosts his programs, out to his car. Something extremely heavy sloshed around in a strong-smelling liquid. I asked him what it was. He opened the lid to reveal a days-old moose-hide soaking in a briny, acrid solution that serves as a tanning agent. My very first question to him was: "Is this one of the traditional activities you're doing with the kids?", partially joking. My thought was that the process was perhaps too intense or off-putting for young participants, and by transporting it he was likely just helping out an elder in the community who had the skill and experience to handle such a task. I was wrong. "Yeah." He replied. "First [the kids] had to cut off the hide and all that too. Cut off the fur I mean. Then they're going to scrape it up and just stretch it along the hide stretcher there and make sure they're using good wood and all that too. Because I'll keep it here too, and just take it down with the kids and move it around with them and they have to learn how to work together. Teamwork stuff and all that" (Drygeese, 2014). It struck me then that just as the Indigenous cultural emphasis on hospitality is a great complement to developing a strong Indigenous tourism market, so too do the importance of generational teaching, and the practice of traditional activities lend themselves well to tourism.

The final Yellowknife-based tourism operator uniquely situated to provide insights into what makes for a successful Indigenous tourism start-up is Joe Bailey, who owns 'North Star Adventures', and is an Indigenous local of N'dilo. North Star bills its winter activities as 'Aurora *hunting*', due to the company's lack of a physical site of operations, and its reliance upon Bailey's vehicles to locate the best site for Aurora viewing on a given night. This provides the added benefit of flexibility, so that if cloud-cover obscures aurora viewing in one location, he can shift his operation to another. In summer he provides 'Monster Fishing Tours', which are stripped down fishing tour packages that guarantee participants one of the celebrated 'monster' Pike or Lake Trout that inhabit Great Slave Lake. Much like Don Morin, Joe Bailey's interest in the tourism industry stems from his upbringing within a cultural tradition that placed great value in hosting and welcoming visitors. It is immediately clear that Bailey takes a lot of pride in his heritage and in the territory where he was raised: "I dedicate all my energy and I focus on that, and I want to be the best that I can possibly be. It's about showcasing our Northwest Territories, our culture, to the people. That's what it's about. It's not about the money..." (Bailey, 2014). Bailey presents an interesting balance to the other two interviewees, in that he weds Don Morin's commodification of the Aurora, with Bobby Drygeese's privileging of cultural expression and the dissemination of TK. His tour packages include an Aboriginal culture component, with visits to museums, conversations with residents of an Indigenous boarding home, and guided cultural

interpretations at the neighbouring Tłitcho community of N'dilo. "I want to convey this message to the guests so that when they do a tour at North Star, it's going to be a genuine Aboriginal culture experience with the Elders there. As a matter of fact, we also want to do a traditional harvest next year" (Bailey, 2014). Bailey told me that when he was growing up his grandparents taught him three things: have respect for the land, have respect for each other, have respect for yourself, and you'll be sure to have a good life.

Before starting North Star Adventures, Bailey worked in the territorial government and observed that the emphasis placed on mining and resource development over other forms of economic development ignored the role that culture plays in the region. "I just want to be a good ambassador for the north," he says, "and because of my upbringing, to really push the native culture in a way that respects our grandparents, our culture and our ancestors" (Bailey, 2014). Bailey's frustration with the government's emphasis on resource extraction over other forms of economic development that include cultural elements, may be due to a clash of interests—Western governments, even the GNWT, are inherently colonial in design and function, and may not be naturally suited to privileging Indigenous values of cultural and environmental sustainability. Bunten writes:

Aboriginal interests often consider development options in a context that includes social and cultural as well as economic components. Within this perspective, development is not limited to issues like material expansion, increased cash income, and high formal employment, but also involves social

and cultural issues, the potential for increased political power, and the possibility of widened future options (“Case Study”, 2018, 47-8)

Bailey’s interview testimony illuminates a key function of tourism development: to provide economic opportunities more closely aligned with the values of Indigenous communities. Sitting on the balcony of his apartment, overlooking a block of new housing developments, he discussed the dissonance between the sorts of jobs available in an urban economy, and the skill sets of community members endowed with important traditional skills:

[T]he traditional natives I think, are not going to be happy working in a cubical nine to five working for somebody else who is probably from Toronto, you know? I was one of those people. You know, not happy at all. Every time I’d come back from a bad meeting and look outside my office cubical window and say Joe, you are a caged grizzly bear working here. The next bad meeting, Joe you are a private sector guy working in the public sector. Just to get out and then to be out in the land, there’s a different feeling. I can’t describe it. When I’m on the land, it’s at home. It’s a much better feeling. Even using the street people, a lot of them are amazing people in the bush, as you may know. They’re just, when they’re in Yellowknife or Edmonton or wherever, they just succumb to the alkaloids and that stuff. But in the bush, these people know. These people work hard. My uncle’s out there actually. He’s one of those guys. We use him once in a while and they’ve got traditional skill that are incredible (Bailey, 2014).

Here, Bailey goes beyond a vivid illustration of his own struggle to conform to Western governance models—he challenges the assumptions made by society, writ large, about Indigenous people experiencing homelessness or struggling with substance abuse

disorders, inferring that they often ignore or overlook the intrinsic value these people hold for their families and communities. Now serving his community in the private sector, Bailey is interested and willing to employ people in tourism, regardless of their background—so long as they have the skills and traditional knowledge needed to achieve the cultural objectives of his business.

However, as introduced in the discussion about Don Morin, and the ‘bow and arrow example’, the commodification of culture comes with its perils, especially when people of widely disparate backgrounds interact as host and guest. One concern, raised in the literature, relates to reinforcing a sense of ‘difference or Otherness’ between host and tourist. In reference to self-commodification, Bunten writes:

The theory of ‘self-commodification’ in the cultural tourism setting takes into account the pressures that Indigenous cultural tourism workers experience in representing themselves and their identities according to cross-cultural models. In addition to market pressures from the outside driving cultural commodification, forces operating from within the culture on display affect processes of self-commodification. I define self-commodification as “a set of beliefs and practices in which an individual chooses to construct a marketable identity product while striving to avoid alienating oneself throughout the duration of interaction with an outside, purchasing party.” Self-commodification is a dual process; it is both an economic response to the global expansion of the service sector, as well as a politically motivated expression of identity (“Paradox of Gaze”, 2010, 53).

Another concern, raised by Bailey himself, refers to the pressure tourism and economic interests may put on social and spiritual custom and taboo:

There was [a] medicine man here a couple years ago charging 100 bucks a person to go pick medicine. Well, you can't do that. You're not supposed to do that. My grandfather raised me that that's all spiritual, that's all gifts and you can't sell fish and meat, but a lot of natives do that. You don't sell meat and you don't sell a fish, so this is the way I believe things are. It's tough when I see the natives now days doing these kinds of things and whatever it is. It's just not the way I would do it. I don't know if it's right or wrong, but for me it's wrong and I wouldn't do it by the way I was raised by my grandparents so I wouldn't do that (Bailey, 2014).

The disjunct between what was traditionally permitted, and what a modern, Western society demands and requires, is a common tension that arose throughout most of the interviews I conducted in the Northwest Territories. Drygeese, for instance, had a similar reflection on the dramatic way things have changed. He explained that:

Our Dene people here, Yellowknife here is like, this is where people really survived for centuries. Thousands of thousands of years. I grow up with lots of people. I live all across the bay on this side here. Nobody's supposed to live on that side where the city is because there's lots of life, lots of animals, lots of plants, lots of medicine, berries, everything I got. But then people went there, and nobody said nothing about it (Drygeese, 2014).

Despite the risk that the marketing and commodification of unique cultural experiences can reinforce and (re)produce difference, it can also “enable economic, social, and political empowerment” (Giraud, 2018, 117). And despite the risk that cultural expression may bump against taboo and traditional custom, so long as Indigenous people guide their own cultural expression, there is far less chance of it being bastardized or exploited in such a way as to reinforce damaging stereotypes or trounce on sacred customs. It is with an eye to tourism's capacity for empowerment that Bailey has

developed his business. Not unlike Drygeese, he feels a sense of responsibility to the next generation and hopes that independent businesses such as his may help to fill in where government training programs fall short.

As far as mentorship programs, yeah, they don't see the value of tourism. They want to go to the diamond mine, the young people. They want to go; they want real money. They don't really see the big picture and the value in tourism just yet and that's unfortunate because I believe there's three main occupations that will get people back and get the native people back into a vibrant economical position; forest fire fighting, because you're on the land; environmental monitoring and tourism (Bailey, 2014).

By offering something unique, namely the chance to develop skills within a tourism model based in culture and intimately connected to the land itself, Bailey hopes to draw young Indigenous people towards careers which reconnect them to traditional values, while putting them in a better financial position. Like wildfire fighting, and environmental monitoring³⁰, tourism presents the opportunity for economic development while keeping Indigenous tour providers in close communion with the land and water. This will undoubtedly prove to be an attractive feature of tourism in remote communities, such as Deline, where many traditional land-based economic activities remain a vital staple of daily life and economy.

³⁰ Working at a mine site, in furtherance of wildlife and habitat conservation as per mining permits, and development agreements with territorial and community governments and Indigenous community Land Organizations

Introducing Destination Délı̄ne: Expectations for a Pilot Project

The final section of this chapter draws the various perspectives of interview participants together around the *Destination Délı̄ne* pilot project which, at the time of the Yellowknife interviews, had not yet taken place but was known to most of the interview participants.

Given my relationship to Délı̄ne and my experience in the adventure tourism sector in Sahtú it had always been my intention to focus my research in and around the community of Délı̄ne. However, until my interviews in Yellowknife, I had been entirely unaware that the *Destination Délı̄ne* project was in development, much less that it would launch while I planned to be in town conducting the Délı̄ne interviews. It was, therefore, with considerable excitement and surprise that I first learned of the project that became the primary focus of this thesis.

I had initially intended to simply explore and critique the lack of Indigenous participation in Sahtú's adventure tourism industry and provide speculative recommendations on how best to improve relationships between tour operators and communities. The remarkable coincidence that my research trip should overlap with such a cogent case study of community-based tourism in the community with whom I was most connected, however, changed the trajectory of my research. [I believe this was the first opportunity for me to *Indigenize* the research agenda, by allowing a community-based change in priority to begin to guide my research process.] I first learned of this development during my interview with Richard Zieba in the head offices of the Tourism

and Parks Department of ITI³¹; it was almost the first thing he recounted to me, when I explained who I was and how I had come to develop this research project.

In the interview, Zieba explained that whenever the topic of Aboriginal tourism comes up with Leonard Kenny, Ekwatide (Chief) of Délı̄nę First Nation, Kenny will recount our group's arrival in town—all the good it did for the community's self-image, and the expectations it fostered for economic development in the future. "[I]t really opened their eyes to the fact that people are interested in their culture, and it was done spontaneously, and just the reaction of those kids to that experience you offered was ... The community itself was astounded, it was like wow, like people are interested in this or people are interested in us. That was one of the elements that made Délı̄nę say hey, I mean we have an opportunity here. It made the community open to cultural tourism" (Zieba, 2014). One of the key questions Délı̄nę's 2012 experience of hosting our group seemed to answer (for both the community and the Department of Tourism) was whether an experience of this sort, which showcased Délı̄nę's culture and town in an immersive way, could be beneficial to both tourists *and* hosts. Zieba points out that this element of shared gain, beyond an economic calculus, is a must-have element of any community-based tourism product moving forward (Zieba, 2014). Zieba then went on to provide a brief overview of the *Destination Délı̄nę* product itself, explaining that it's "a community tourism project where the product is the community itself" (Zieba, 2014). The GNWT

³¹ Ministry of Industry, Tourism, and Investment, for the GNWT.

would collaborate on training initiatives around boat handling and hospitality, and contribute to various improvements to the lodge, to ensure that facilities were up to industry standards for this tier of tourism experience. Zieba also provided a basic map of the corporate and community partnerships collaborating on the project, explaining that training and renovation efforts are in preparation for “group trips operated by Routes to Learning [formerly Elder Hostel]”.

It's a pilot project to working with Elder Hostel, Routes to Learning and the community. So, it's sort of the first of its kind in the territories where it's essentially the entire community is involved, and we sought the involvements and consent of local leaders ... You know got their buy in and their support for the initiative. Routes to Learning will have their own sort of onboard guides to sort of facilitate, we'll have somebody in the community ... A point person from Deline, when they arrive ... Essentially be the chaperone or the person ... The go to person in the community. And the central organization is the Délı̄nę Land Corporation, they own Grey Goose Lodge, and they will be coordinating the activities and the people who deliver the services (Zieba, 2014).

Initial specifics were scant, presumably because the itinerary and program were meant to be established by the community coordinators and providers on the ground, and had not, as yet, been relayed further up the chain. I found the collaboration with Routes to Learning an interesting and surprising one, as I had never imagined that the travel trade would be interested in so remote a location. Upon first hearing about *Destination Délı̄nę*, I assumed the clientele would closely resemble our own group, or perhaps fishing

tourists, or big game hunters, who make up the majority of the tourism trade in the Sahtú region—people who happen to be travelling in the area, and want to enhance their experience with a multi-day immersion in the culture of a community adjacent to other recreation they are partaking in. The travel trade, however, promised to bring tourists specifically motivated by the cultural immersion element of the experience—arriving in the Sahtú specifically to experience Délı̨ne. In retrospect, considering the novelty of this immersive, community-based product, and the relative nascency of Aboriginal tourism writ large, it makes sense that the GNWT and the Délı̨ne Land Corporation would want to partner with an established tourism stakeholder in order to achieve success. In her book, *The Stranger, the Native and the Land*, Claudia Notzke points out that despite the fact that Aboriginal tourism is a niche product and large travel trade companies are thus far lacking in expertise in this kind of product “the importance of partnerships between local product suppliers and travel trade intermediaries cannot be overstated” (2006, 27). Notzke goes on to point out that the challenges that Indigenous people engaging in tourism may experience in northern communities, versus southern reserves, where a land-based way of life may no longer prevail, may be quite different (2006, 206-7). Naturally, there will be important trade-offs. On the one hand, proximity to large southern centres could make it much easier to attract tourists to southern reserves than to remote, fly-in communities in the northern sub-arctic. However, that remoteness has often fostered the preservation of culture and language, and an ostensible ‘authenticity’

that is of great appeal to the tourists who may engage in an expensive, exclusive cultural tour package through companies like Routes to Learning. Obviously, Zieba was thinking the same thing, stating:

Especially in the north, where cultures are still relatively intact and people are still speaking their language, there's a real opportunity to deepen that experience through going to these communities and Délı̄nę is open to it, they would love to host more trips going through. And they would like eventually to start doing that themselves (Zieba, 2014).

Naturally, being the Director of Tourism and Parks, he has a vested interest in seeing the project succeed. Yet, without question, his raw enthusiasm for *Destination Deline*, and his certainty that Délı̄nę might lead the way for other communities, seemed genuine and heartfelt.

We've seen communities wanting to get more involved in tourism, definitely there's been a shift, especially as more Aboriginal people become involved in the tourism industry themselves. When we've been going into other communities and talking about Aboriginal and cultural tourism and we use Délı̄nę as an example, it's a great example, cause other communities look at Délı̄nę and say wow you now if they're doing it, we can do it too (Zieba, 2014).

As I went on to conduct my other Yellowknife interviews I was interested to discover whether Morin, Drygeese, and Bailey would share Zieba's enthusiasm for the project, representing, as they are, the vanguard of cultural tourism in the largest market in the territory.

Initially, Morin was broadly supportive. In the interview he highlights the need for D elinq to play to its strengths, as a hosting community The tourists are coming to see D elinq being itself, and so that is what it needs to do:

[Y]ou know, tourism is great business, great for people because it's a natural thing to do. All you're doing is sharing what you have. You don't have to change who you are, or what you do and how you do it. If you take people out and you offer a white wall tent, a [spruce bough] floor, melt ice to have a wash, melt ice to have tea, go pee in the snowbank, go to the bathroom outside. And if that's what you're selling, that's what you're selling. You make sure that they know that's what they're getting. Keep it authentic and it's what you have. If you just think of, okay, I'm going to take my grandson out, I'm taking my kids out on the land, what do you need for that, that's the same thing you need for tourists. John runs nets all the time, right? And he takes people, then he's got somebody to run nets. And he's teaching them, he'll love that. Then how to clean a fish, teaches them that. Then he'll love that because then he's going to have someone helping him clean fish, you know, like, somebody ... and it's kind of, like, oh, I got to do this anyhow, all of a sudden somebody's paying me a little extra to do it. And, if you keep it authentic, you'll better off in the long run (Morin, 2014).

As I'll discuss in the fourth chapter, the question of authenticity can be rife with complications and contradictions. Who has the right to judge authenticity, and at what point do the hosts' desires to provide the 'authentic' experience that tourists are looking for (certainly that tour companies will be advertising), compel them to do things that do not come naturally to them, or that they would not otherwise be doing? My sense is that what Morin was speaking about was the need to keep the experience *honest*, as opposed

to a colloquial understanding of *authenticity*, which may be awkwardly or inappropriately defined by outside forces—unqualified to deem what is authentic or inauthentic for a remote, Dene community.

While Morin began on a positive note, he soon turned to logistical reasons why a sustainable tourism industry in Délı̄nę was going to be a major challenge: “People have to realize, like, in a small community, that’s such a great distance away, the biggest killer is going to be that airplane flight. Because do you want to work just to support an airplane, because that’s what you’re going to end up doing” (Morin, 2014). Because of the challenge of getting tourists to the town in anything like a sustainable flow, Morin speculates that individual operators will continue to rely on supplemental income from whatever work they’re already doing. From my reading, this is not necessarily a problem, as many traditional economic activities dovetail nicely with a community-based tourism model. Morin comes to this conclusion himself, stating that “If you’re trapping, take them with you on the trap line. It’s not costing you anything. You got to make sure to set it up so that it doesn’t cost you a lot of money,” and warns against investing too heavily in the tourism element, saying: “You might be able to live today in Délı̄nę with so much money, right? So, if you add a loan payment to that to develop a tourism business, can you still live when the tourists don’t come?” (Morin, 2014).

Joe Bailey had similar concerns about the challenge of getting tourists all the way out to Deline, stemming from his own costing of remote tourism adventures in the Sahtú

region, a pursuit which he ultimately abandoned due to the significant expense of remote air travel in the far north. He was, however, somewhat more strident on the point:

I don't think [Délı̄ne] can do anything. The fact that they're an isolated community in the Great Bear Lake, it's going to cost an arm and leg just to get there. Then the tour rep is going to want their fee. Grey Goose Lodge is going to want their fee. Personally, it's not feasible ... I looked at the logistics. I looked, like I said, we're doing tours all over Northwest Territories, so we look at the cost and we tried it for one summer and it was just too costly. Even with North-Wright³² on board giving us some discount fares, you can't sustain a tour company in Délı̄ne. You cannot sustain it. I mean unless you can market it to a very high-end profile client. Even then, you're not going to sustain it (Bailey, 2014).

Bailey complicates the picture further, by pointing out the negative impact that Yellowknife itself has on smaller communities, especially when it comes to the tourism sector:

Why go there when you can go here. You can have 20,000 people here. You have the amenities of a small city here in Yellow Knife. You have the communications, the medical facilities, you have the support services, you have the lake. I can tell you how it's going to go. I'm serious. I can tell you they're going to come up with some great ideas and everything and it's going to come down to the realization that we just talked about. It's not feasible to sustain it. We're going to be able to have a good season. They're going to coordinate with all their negotiation contracts. They're going to negotiate with, and have people in the affairs, industry contacts come up and try it for the first season, you know? Second, third, fourth year; that's one aspect of it and now

³² North-Wright Air is a regional carrier, serving the Sahtú and Delta regions of NWT. I present them in more detail in the following chapter.

you need the workers. Unfortunately, a lot of the workers are not that reliable. They're just not that reliable yet (Bailey, 2014).

As Morin put it during his interview, Yellowknife effectively functions as a giant sponge, sucking in all the tourism revenue, to the detriment of the communities.

Another concern that recurred throughout various interviews, was whether the community would have the capacity to deliver the tourism product as advertised. Again, I'll get into this in more detail in the fourth chapter relating specifically to the development and delivery of *Destination Déliņę*, but it's worth noting that questions were raised early on, and by people with industry expertise, about whether members of the community had the practical and organizational skills necessary to pull off the pilot project. Mike Freeland pointed out that while there were industry professionals shepherding the project along, the ultimate success of the pilot would depend largely on the willingness of the community to make it happen. In reference to Jackie Frederick, one of the industry professionals working with NWT Tourism to get the *Destination Déliņę* off the ground, Freeland said: "And I hope it ... I really hope it works, but it's not ... I don't envy you know what she's up against, cause she's a tourism professional knows the market side, but she'll be relying on people in the community to put the actual on the ground package together" (Freeland, 2014). Coming at it from a marketing perspective, Don Morin's concern was that if they didn't deliver on client expectations from the very start, that first impression would undermine efforts going forward. "I think it would be

just great, as long as they deliver. That's the key, they have to deliver. Because the minute they don't, everybody's going to know, you know, in the industry, including the future customers because of ... you know, computers nowadays" (Morin, 2014). And, finally, Zieba also expressed concern about capacity, but was somewhat more charitable, offering that it's not that the skill is not there, but that there is a general human resource shortage, such that those available with the skills to execute on large projects are stretched impossibly thin with various tasks:

So, you know, the folks who are working for the Land Corporation are responsible for a whole variety of different things and they're really enthusiastic about the tourism portfolio, but they've got ... Délı̄ne... The self government agreement signed, they've got a bunch of stuff on their plate. So that's where the difficulty comes in, it's sort of keeping that commitment going throughout the year, because anybody with any talent and capacity, everybody gloms onto them (Zieba, 2014).

Ultimately, these insights and concerns provided helpful context for what to keep an eye on when I arrived in Délı̄ne and hinted at which questions to ask. Otherwise, they could only go so far in prognosticating the success or failure of the pilot project. We would all just have to wait and see how things fleshed out, on the ground. There was no question that Délı̄ne had many of the key elements in place to create an amazing product. In *The Stranger, the Native and the Land*, Notzke lays out several factors which influence the viability of Aboriginal tourism development in Canada: "a pristine and attractive natural environment; access to and management power over renewable resources;

‘connectedness’ with the land (and/or water) in physical as well as spiritual terms; sophistication of industry knowledge and/or access to industry partnerships; capital; skilled manpower” (“The Stranger”, 2006, 206-7). With perhaps the exception of industry sophistication, Délı̄nę possesses all these features in sufficient measure, and some in great abundance—the offering was unique, and while it might only appeal to a niche market, it had the support of a range of corporate partners with industry expertise, and the financial and moral support of the territorial government. What more could you ask for?

In the next chapter, I will move out from Yellowknife, the hub of the wheel, to Norman Wells, which serves as the regional administrative centre of the Sahtú—home of the Sahtú Secretariat, the Sahtú branch of ITI, the headquarters of North- Wright Air, and the staging ground for various eco-adventure companies owned and operated by non-Indigenous tour operators based in Southern Canada, most of which can be understood as **Tried, Tested, and Exclusive**. As I approach Délı̄nę itself, I will draw closer to the raw nerve of Indigenous-Settler relations, as expressed (or not) in the tourism industry, as well as other sectors. I will explore that initial imperative which compelled me to apply to Trent in the first place: do non-Indigenous tour operators have an ethical obligation to include Indigenous communities and their members in their business models? Is there a duty to consult? A duty to employ? A duty to share industry expertise, and training? And what, if anything, do the findings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission say about the way tourism is conducted on Indigenous land?

Chapter Three

Norman Wells: Tourism in the Sahtú Tried, Tested, and Exclusive

When the world was new, my people understood that the Creator had given them Denendeh and everything they needed to live. They did not need to travel to all parts of the world to build empires. They invented and built things to survive, and their stories told them to respect all of life (Blondin “Yamoria”, 1997, vii).

In this chapter I explore the established tourism milieu of the Sahtú region, which at the time of interviews was predominated by non-Indigenous owned and operated hunting and fishing outfits, and adventure tourism companies based in Southern Ontario that specialize in remote wilderness canoe tours throughout the Sahtú and Delta regions of the territory. Unlike Yellowknife and its surrounds, which can support several locally run tour companies catering to tourists interested in day trips involving snow-mobile tours, dog-sledding tours, and Aurora Borealis sight-seeing tours, the Sahtú is too remote to draw in these sorts of day-tripping tourists. As a result, nearly all the tourism revenue entering the Sahtú comes from adventure tourism, which, as mentioned above, was almost exclusively offered by non-Indigenous, southern-based operators when field research was conducted. The most common interface between these tour groups and the local communities they travel through takes place in the form of basic provisioning,

staged cultural presentations, and the sale of art and souvenirs³³—activities which may be spontaneous, or may be planned by the tour company as a ‘value-added’ component of the experience. ITI’s *Tourism 2015* encourages this arrangement, stating that “The greatest potential lies in developing cultural products that can be offered in a package of other activities and services. Packaging will offer providers of cultural products a support network of partners and broader access to markets” (GNWT, 2011, 13). The plan also prioritizes the inclusion of people and businesses involved in the arts and crafts sector, identifying that “better integration of this sector into tourism planning will result in increased spending by visitors in our territory. As well, tourism products that include an arts and crafts component will help diversify the industry” (GNWT, 2011, 13). On first blush this emphasis seems to be a step in the right direction, if the aim is to increase Aboriginal cultural tourism, and local industry. However, though some artisans and presentation organizers will benefit from the products they provide, this compensation pales in comparison to the often-staggering tour package fees that visitors are paying the tour companies which have arranged the visit. From an economic development perspective, this strategy seems unlikely to substantially benefit smaller, remote communities, but instead will perpetuate the status quo in serving the interests of well-established operators—most of whom have historically displayed little enthusiasm for

³³ Provisioning would involve purchasing food, equipment, fuel, bait, etc.; cultural presentations and the sale of art and souvenirs may be scheduled in advance by the tour operator, but just as likely will occur spontaneously when the group arrives in town (as occurred in our case in Deline).

engaging with Aboriginal cultural tourism. Further, considering that most of these companies are based outside of the territory, the effect is a profound leak whereby most profits generated from guiding people through the stunning natural splendor of the Sahtú drains out of the region, out of the territory, and back to Ontario. In *Native Tours*, Chambers suggests that “[t]he amount of profits that leak from a country or region depends greatly on the degree to which tourism investment is or is not dominated by foreign capital” (35). While this form of capitalism may not be as harmful to the landscape or the people as more extractive industries, such as mining, oil and gas development, or forestry, it is still an arrangement premised on colonial capitalism, whereby the resources of a region and people are exploited for the benefit of a dominant other.

While this thesis is primarily focused on tourism, this chapter will draw upon discussions of Indigenous-Settler relations, Indigenous-corporate consultation and co-management, and whether businesses have a moral imperative to consult with and empower Indigenous communities in the geopolitical context of land claims and the TRC’s Calls to Action.

Our Colonial Legacy

Before reflecting on the nature and extent of Indigenous-Settler relations in the tourism sector in Sahtú, it is important to establish some context for this relationship building

exercise—where it has worked in the past, where it has been compromised by systemic racism and unequal relations of power, and how the historical relationship between Settler and Indigenous societies in Canada has evolved over time. Doing so contributes to our understanding of the systemic inequality experienced by Indigenous people, and how this may affect the development of NWT's tourism industry. By situating my research results within a larger discussion of Indigenous empowerment and decolonization I am better equipped to explore whether governments and commercial interests have an obligation to work towards enhanced Indigenous cultural sustainability in tourism, and to articulate the merits of doing so.

In my interview with non-Indigenous lodge owner, Mike Freeman (the first interview I conducted for this project), I asked whether he felt that tour operators in the territory had an obligation to hire local Indigenous people. He answered: "I think it's good business because local people need employment to benefit from whatever business angle there is here, so I think it makes good common sense for sure. You know the years are ... I think it's old school to think of you know anybody coming up from the south and doing their own business and not involving people here" (Freeland, 2014). His response introduced to this thesis a theme that is core to an argument advocating for increased Indigenous participation in tourism. There is a sense that Indigenous inclusion in tourism, or enhanced cultural sustainability in the sector, is the *right* objective to strive for, and yet its 'rightness' is difficult to quantify. As such, governments tend to emphasize

economic measures of success in their development policy. To increase Indigenous participation and cultural sustainability in tourism we must look to a wider discussion of our colonial legacy and frame a discussion of Indigenous-Settler relations within a decolonizing lens. Considering the prevalence of non-Indigenous private stakeholders in the NT tourism industry, and that the GNWT is itself a manifestation of non-Indigenous administrative and legislative authority, it's important to identify the impact of systemic inequality on Indigenous people, and how this plays out in terms of their capacity to participate effectively in a free-market system.

In her edited collection of essays, *Alliances: Re-Envisioning Indigenous-Settler Relations*, Lynne Davis, along with co-contributor Heather Yanique Shpuniarsky, points out that “such relationships form within a larger context of ongoing colonization of Indigenous peoples in their homelands and in urban spaces” (“Spirit of Relationships”, 2010, 335). The effects of colonialism, complicated as they are, pervade all arenas of discourse between Indigenous and non-Native peoples, and by exploring the historical context of Indigenous-Settler relations, we enhance our ability to understand the socioeconomic dynamics of partnership building in the modern context.

In her seminal text, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, Indigenous scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith explains that Imperialism was a system of control intended to secure resources, markets and capital investments, and that colonialism, as a tool of this system, ensured that European control was maintained through the subjugation and oppression of

Indigenous groups (1999, 22). For a colonial nation such as Canada, the seizure and control of territory for resource development and economic activity was critical to the success of the colony, and eventually the nation. The land represented a seemingly limitless resource pool from which Imperial powers could draw. As part of the process of dispossessing Indigenous peoples of their territories and political sovereignty, colonial governments sought to extinguish Indigenous Knowledge systems, languages, and culture through a complex matrix of social, political, and economic policies.

In Leanne Simpson's edited collection, *Lighting the Eighth Fire: The Liberation, Resurgence and Protection of Indigenous Nations*, Paula Sherman explains that:

These policies have had an impact on our psyches and our ability to resist colonialism, for while we recognize in our minds that we have relationships with the land, we do not always feel that connection in our hearts, and, as a result, we often lack confidence in ourselves to collectively assert our inherent rights to relate to the land and waterscapes in ways that are culturally appropriate (2008, 113).

Indigenous-rights activists, and scholars, such as Leanne Simpson, Taiaiake Alfred, and Paula Sherman recognize that to revitalize Indigenous culture and community, and nurture political self-determination, it is essential that Indigenous peoples regain control over traditional territory. Simpson argues that "anticolonial strategies for the recovery of Traditional Indigenous Knowledge systems require ... Indigenous control over Indigenous national territories, [and] the protection of Indigenous lands from environmental destruction" ("Anticolonial Strategies", 2004, 381);

this requirement is also articulated in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and legislated in Canada. The intimate relationship between political self-determination and 'territorial integrity' has been a major focus in the discourse around Indigenous rights. This is in large part due to the importance of land and waterways to traditional Indigenous lifeways, which depend upon renewable natural resources for spiritual, cultural, social and subsistence activities. While this is widely acknowledged within Indigenous literature, the question of how to preserve Indigenous territorial rights and cultural vitality is complex.

How Do We Improve Our Footing?

In the second volume of the 1996 RCAP report, the commission maintains that to recognize the unique nature of the historical treaties, special rules must be developed by governments (in conjunction with Indigenous leadership) such that the treaty nations' understanding of the documents will affect the ultimate delivery of contract obligations (Canada, "RCAP", 1996, 35). Indigenous scholar Dale Turner points to one of the reasons why the treaty nations' understanding of the historical treaties might conflict with the legal or political narrative supported by Tom Flanagan and the Federal government of Canada. He argues that "ultimate sources of Indian explanations of nationhood are found in Indigenous oral traditions, yet for these explanations to be effective in Canadian law and politics they *must* be accommodated within the language of Canadian public policy"

(Turner, 2006, 26). While Indigenous peoples in Canada are deeply embedded in the legal and sociopolitical fabric of the country, scholars such as T.C. Goetze argue that governments are unwilling to engage in a meaningful discussion about enhancing or empowering Indigenous populations because Indigenous empowerment is only possible “at the sufferance of the state” (2005, 256). Goetze argues that this reluctance to engage in the dialogue represents the most significant impediment to effecting a meaningful shift in the relationship between Indigenous communities and non-Indigenous governments (2005, 256).

Whatever form this shift will ultimately take, there seems to be unanimous consensus within the literature that the relationship is not working well for Indigenous communities at present. RCAP reported that “disparities between Aboriginal and other Canadians are increasing, and they will likely continue to do so unless policies are radically altered” (Canada, RCAP, 1996, 30). If non-Indigenous governments are unwilling to participate in a dialogue which might work to undo some of the harm meted out by Settler-society over the last five centuries, the same cannot be said of Indigenous and non-Indigenous allied scholars writing in the academy. Scholars such as Margaret Kovach, T.C. Goetze, Lynne Davis, Adam Barker, and Heather Yanique Shpuniarsky focus on the ways that academics can work to shift the power imbalance and restore some measure of equity in Indigenous-Settler partnerships.

One theme which is consistently present in the literature pertaining to effective Indigenous-Settler partnership building, is the requirement that Indigenous partners maintain control over those aspects of a project which directly influence them, and that in these cases the agenda, and priorities of Indigenous people must take a central position (Kovach "Indigenous Methodologies", 2005, 145; Davis-Shpuniarsky "Spirit of Relationships", 2010, 339). Davis and Shpuniarsky argue that non-Indigenous partners may find seemingly legitimate reasons to avoid sharing control with their Indigenous partners (i.e.. an apparent or actual lack of experience, education, etc.), but that these rationalizations are unfounded and rooted in an "insidious belief of racial superiority" (2010, 339). The idea that non-Indigenous partners may unwittingly be rationalizing racist behaviour through the partnership process is compelling. Adam Barker, in his article 'Adversaries to Allies' offers an interesting explanation of how this might come about, and the extent to which colonial discourses of racial and cultural supremacy pervade our national psyche. He states that: "Colonial Settlers become so entrenched in the 'idea' of themselves as benevolent peacemakers, that the terrible social conditions that affect Indigenous communities across Canada are honestly surprising and confusing" (2010, 320). To counteract this subconscious ignorance, and work towards a decolonial space, Indigenous scholars and non-Indigenous allied scholars encourage non-Indigenous people to recognize that while they may not be consciously perpetuating unjust relations of power within their communities and through their interactions with

Indigenous people, they currently benefit from colonization and the continued control of Indigenous territories by the Canadian state (Davis-Shpunisarsky “Spirit of Relationships”, 2010, 341). Further, Barker argues that “to be in a position of privilege and power and not to question the source of that power and privilege indicates a deliberate choice of colonial action” (2010, 319). Notably, he does not advocate for a shedding of these powers and this privilege, but rather, demands that they be put at the disposal of those “whose power has been violently co-opted or stolen” (2010, 323-4). This is a powerful and evocative message, in that it does not seek to establish a guilt-complex in Settler-society, but rather, promotes the use of the spoils of colonialism to undo the unequal power relations it has created.

So, what might it look like to address these unequal relations of power in the tourism industry, specifically, and is there a stated or implicit prerogative to do so?

Adventure Tourism in the Sahtú

Sahtú’s regional tourism industry is largely comprised of adventure tourism products that make use of the region’s dramatic and varied landscape, as well as its abundance of wildlife for fishing, hunting, and photography. The relative remoteness of Sahtú’s forests, mountains, lakes, and rivers make them ideal locations for outdoor enthusiasts hoping to escape the bustle of urban life, while also presenting logistical and economic challenges

to tour operators. Tour operators can overcome some of these challenges by basing operations in Norman Wells, which has a concentration of services.

The town of Norman Wells (Le Gohlini, or *Tlegohhi* in the North Slavey language) is located on the North shore of the Mackenzie River, approximately 80 kilometres downstream of Tulita, which sits at the confluence of the Great Bear and Mackenzie Rivers and serves as the gateway to the spiritual heart of the *Sahtú Got'ine*³⁴—Great Bear Lake (Gillespie). Norman Wells hosts numerous grocery stores and hotels, the regional Tourism and Parks department, an important regional air carrier³⁵, a float base for amphibious aircraft³⁶, a relatively large airport capable of accommodating regional jets, and bases for two of the dominant adventure tourism businesses in the Sahtú.

There are over a dozen tour providers currently operating in the Northwest Territories, catering to a range of clientele (Spectacular NWT “Canoeing and Kayaking”). At the time interviews were conducted, the adventure tourism market in the Sahtú region suffered a nearly complete lack of Indigenous ownership, partnership, or employment. While individual Aboriginal fishing, hunting, and touring guides were available in any of the five Sahtú communities, all substantial operations involving staff, infrastructure, and a consistent national and international clientele were owned and run by non-Indigenous operators. In Norman Wells I was only able to arrange an interview with one

³⁴ Dene people who live around Great Bear Lake and have settled in Deline.

³⁵ North-Wright Air – Your Sahtú Delta Connector!

³⁶ Critical for canoe trips wishing to access remote rivers and lakes.

of the tour operators based there—it being summer, most of the operators were occupied on the river, or handling logistics from other bases of operation. To provide a representative sample of private sector approaches to social sustainability and the development of community relations, I was compelled to mine company websites to glean what information I could. Admittedly, this only provides superficial approximations of true corporate culture, however I think it's reasonable to assume that if these brief, public-facing statements are unable to muster much enthusiasm for improving the state of play, then the relentlessly busy outfitters who published them may not be able to either.

To serve as case studies, I looked at two outdoor adventure tour operators in Sahtú: Canoe North Adventures, and Plummer's Arctic Lodges. While these two operations do not express the full range of tourism products available in Sahtú, they are well-established companies and provide a glimpse into the region's current tourism environment. At the time, I also explored the websites of Nahanni River Adventures and Blackfeather but found nothing directly attending to Indigenous-corporate relations, which is, itself, something of an indictment. As a brief backgrounder, Canoe North Adventures, Nahanni River Adventures, and Blackfeather are likely the three most prominent canoe and raft tour companies in the Northwest Territories—they are all based in southern Ontario. By contrast, Plummer's Arctic Lodges, the oldest of the companies I looked at, specializes in fishing and hunting tours, based out of a series of extremely

remote lodges and camps, scattered throughout the territory, and concentrated on Great Bear Lake, in the Sahtú region. Plummer's Arctic Lodges is an interesting example in that its activities (primarily fishing and hunting excursions) rely entirely on the wildlife populations used by Sahtú Dene in their own subsistence economies. This implies that their operations impact Dene communities directly, and so consultation and partnership would seem like a natural requirement in their licensing process. This has not been the case, and Plummer's has followed its own corporate instincts in developing relationships with neighbouring communities, with limited success. Their website directly addresses this shortcoming: "We struggle to find interested and qualified people to employ in the adventure tourism business and it is clear that we need to do more on the ground to foster success in this way ... While the challenges in finding local people to provide mentorship to has continued to prove as difficult as employing local people, it was not without perseverance that we built Plummer's Arctic Lodges and it is with that perseverance that we continue to tackle the difficult social sustainability challenges of the north" (Plummer's Arctic Lodges, 2013-present). Because they don't expressly state what the challenges are to finding local labour, this statement leaves us to presume some deficiency in the workforce—a lack of skill, or an unwillingness to work at one of the remote lodges. Plummer's fails to acknowledge the role they play in dissuading potential employees. They also fail to expressly acknowledge the long and difficult history of Indigenous cultural and economic oppression in Canada. Recognizing this history is a

critical step in understanding the barriers that prevent more fruitful cooperation between Indigenous communities and non-Indigenous businesses.

Similarly, Canoe North Adventures has done little to engage with Indigenous communities in the Sahtú, in an official capacity. While the company maintains a summer base in Norman Wells, it is headquartered in southern Ontario, hires exclusively non-Indigenous guides, and solicits clientele from southern urban centres. While Canoe North maintains respectful relations with the Indigenous communities they pass through in the delivery of their tour packages, they have yet to initiate any effective consultation protocols, or develop partnerships with businesses in any of the five Sahtú charter communities. On their website Canoe North Adventures provides only a very limited response to issues of social and cultural sustainability: “We have a great deal of respect for local First Nation culture and are respectful when meeting in local communities. We embrace the involvement of First Nations through interpretive presentations and activities that will grow our clients’ understanding of the aboriginal culture and its significance to the region” (Canoe North Adventures, 2013-present). While this may seem like an adequate recognition of the need to engage with Indigenous communities, it belies the fact that, in practice, there is very little opportunity for Canoe North or its clients to access these ‘interpretive presentations and activities’. The very conceit of most wilderness tour companies is that they alone can provide their clients with journeys through *pristine, untouched, even primeval* landscapes—places devoid of human presence

and interference. This is a common trope that I, myself, grappled with as a guide for Camp Wanapitei, as we made our way up Great Bear River towards Délı̨nę at the start of my own relationship with the Sahtú. While it is safe to assume that gradual shifts in public opinion, education, and government policy have rendered overt expressions of racism socially unacceptable, implicit and even inadvertent racist tropes continue to plague Settler-society's conversations about Indigenous people and communities. Especially where colonial leisure and Indigenous life come into uneasy contact. In the Sahtú, where the value of a tourism product is predicated on an empty and untouched wilderness, then the people showing up in a motorboat offering you baked goods, dried fish, cans of pop, and many thousands of years' experience on the land that was sold to you as a *pristine wilderness playground* are not simply intruding on your vacation,³⁷ they are performing a violent narrative sabotage, bursting the mirage of explorer make-believe which undergirds the conventional colonial adventure fantasy.

To dig deeper into some of these questions, I was fortunate to conduct an interview with one of the owners of Canoe North Adventures, Lin Ward, in early August of 2014. I met with Ward on the front deck of a stunning timber-frame lodge that serves as Canoe North's summer headquarters, overlooking the North-Wright Air float base. Throughout the interview I was impressed by Ward's deep commitment to the industry, to the region, and to her clients and staff. "We believe in the region and the value of the region," Ward

³⁷ In their own land, no less!!

began. “It’s probably one of the best canoeing regions in the world. I think very few people understand that Norman Wells is a centre for some of the best rivers and hiking opportunities there are out there” (Ward, 2014). Together with her husband, Al Pace, Lin Ward has been running Canoe North Adventures for more than 30 years—25 of those in the Sahtú. At the time of this interview, they were running approximately ten trips per season. For most of the year, Canoe North is based in Ward and Pace’s home near Hockley Valley in Ontario, but once the tripping season gets going they move their operation to the northern lodge at the float base. Canoe North has a unique lease agreement with North-Wright Air, which has allowed them to build on the North-Wright land-lease, for which they pay a sort of rent. The relationship is reciprocal, because most of the trips Canoe North operates require amphibious planes to drop them off and pick them up again once they’ve completed their routes. Having been both a client of Canoe North and briefly an employee³⁸, I can confirm that it’s a very smooth operation. Clients fly into Norman Wells on jets, are taken to the lodge, and when it’s time to depart on trip they simply walk out of the lodge and step onto a waiting Twin Otter, or Pilatus Porter³⁹. The lodge and outfitting centre were completed in 2011, thanks in large part to a grant of \$250,000 from ITI’s Project Diversification Program (Zieba, 2014). “It’s been a hugely successful venture; it has increased our business, and it has ... made all the difference in

³⁸ They functioned as outfitters and logistics coordinators for our 2012 V2 canoe trip; I guided a trip for them on the Redstone River in the summer of 2014, after Norman Wells field research had been conducted.

³⁹ Two robust, amphibious bush planes.

our company,” Ward explained. “You know, we've won a lot of awards over the last few years. [W]e're a Canadian Tourist and Commission signature experience. People can look at that ... You know, the frozen globes, the operator of the year award, through the NWT” (Ward, 2014). Early in the interview, when pressed about the lack of Indigenous employment or consultation, Ward expressed frustration over her inability to develop better relationships with Aboriginal people in the area. “You know, one of the issues is that it is really, really hard to have a relationship with the Aboriginal communities... You know, we don't deal with a lot of Aboriginal people and you know ITI is probably the one area that we do, you know cause they hire people that are Aboriginal, but we don't have that opportunity” (Ward, 2014). Presumably, the opportunity to which she refers is to hire and work with Aboriginal people directly, or perhaps to consult with communities in a more formal manner. Unfortunately, she doesn't elaborate on this, beyond identifying a lack of follow-through from Délı̄ne: “I know Délı̄ne would like to get into canoe tripping, but they never come to us and show any interest in talking to us about it,” Lin began. “And you know I know the GNWT is trying to encourage Délı̄ne to get into tourism and maybe even canoe tripping, but there's so little opportunity to actually talk to anybody. I mean we're here at our base, we work really, really hard here and we spend our time on the rivers. So, I don't know when you're supposed to have time to talk” (Ward, 2014). This begs the question: is it simply a matter of finding the time to have

a good long chat about it, or is something more profound impeding the development of stronger relations between Canoe North and Aboriginal stakeholders?

My earlier interview with ITI's Richard Zieba, speaks to this. Commenting specifically on Canoe North Adventures, he pointed out that while Lin and Al have expressed real interest in developing local capacity, and that *Destination Déliᑁę* might open doors for effective collaboration between Déliᑁę and adventure outfitters, there is "a lotta pushback in the north among a significant number of people about southern operators in the territories" (Zieba, 2014). Ward touched on this briefly herself, admitting that "there [are] some people in town that absolutely love us, they are so supportive, they've gone to bat for us ... You know being outsiders ... it's harder to have a business here and those people no matter what they are behind us. And there's people out there that absolutely hate us, and they just wish we'd go away. And they're jealous of our success and they don't believe that we should be successful. But I think they're more in a minority, but I don't know. I mean there's some really good people here and they support us in what we do for sure, they know that we bring benefit to the community" (Ward, 2014). On its face, the statement: 'Canoe North brings benefit to the community' seems basically incontrovertible, within the context of a free-market, capitalist society—the business is thriving, its clients leave their trips feeling invigorated and inspired, the industry is increasingly drawing attention to the special character of the Sahtú region and, relatively speaking, Canoe North's operations have only a mild environmental

impact. But, aside from demonstrating that Norman Wells is *developing* and *progressing* in a general sense, what tangible benefits does the business bring to the region? Canoe North does not train or hire guides from the community, opting instead to import experienced guides from the south. Their clients are not drawn from the region, or likely even from Yellowknife⁴⁰, so it is not as though they are filling a recreational need in the community. Finally, in terms of economic activity generated by these companies in local stores and hotels, their contribution seems surprisingly minimal. From conversations I had within the community and with tourism industry employees, on background, I learned that much of Canoe North's dried provisions, canned goods, alcohol, and equipment is purchased in southern Canada, and driven up on the ice road in winter, to avoid the tremendous cost of such goods in Norman Wells. To cut down on the cost of accommodation for their guests, and to establish a distinct corporate totem fixed to the land itself, Al Pace and Lin Ward had a large, beautiful log cabin built on the North-Wright Air land lease. But, as I learned from Al when I was a client at Canoe North, the year before this research was conducted, the cabin was largely financed through a development and scaling scheme with ITI, provided not as a loan but a grant, and in turn Canoe North could charge tourists to stay at their lodge, while local hotels and inns lost that business. And, given that Ward and Pace spend most of their year, and are based in

⁴⁰ People for whom this sort of trip is more likely a backyard excursion engaged privately, with family and friends—as a family of Torontonians might venture into Algonquin Park, or Haligonians to Kejimikujik.

Orangeville, it is safe to assume that profits generated through the taxpayer-funded lodge flow back to Orangeville also. As Alison M. Johnston points out in her book, *Is the Sacred for Sale?*, “The ecotourism industry is highly mobile and dispersed, with offshore offices, unlike the Indigenous communities which it passes through” (2006, 68). As such, it is incumbent upon Indigenous communities to safeguard their territorial and economic rights, even in the face of seemingly benign, and small-scale tourism development.

It is clear to me that the business model employed by Canoe North and other tourism companies are not designed to harm the local economy or disenfranchise individuals. In most cases, these practices make good financial sense, and there’s nothing intrinsically unethical about how or why they were adopted. However, put together, it is hard to see what direct benefit accrues to Norman Wells, or the four other Sahtú Dene communities, simply by having adventure tour companies seasonally based nearby. And, while it seems like I’m picking on Canoe North, the fact is that this business model is repeated across the sector, and in some cases with even more exclusion, wherein companies⁴¹ send employees and clients in an impenetrable economic and conceptual bubble, to travel through Sahtú entirely ‘self-sufficiently’ without need to communicate or participate in the socioeconomic milieu of the region whatsoever.

It was apparent in our conversation that Lin Ward was pained by the opposition she had experienced from members of the community, and that this opposition was

⁴¹ My former employer Camp Wanapitei, on whose board of directors I currently sit, being one of them.

somewhat bewildering to her. Additionally, her willingness to improve relations seemed genuine: “I mean it would be really nice if we could have some Aboriginal people who would like to come here and maybe meet our groups,” she said, gazing out at the lapping shoreline of the purpose-built lake that serves North-Wright’s float base. “You know we have booked a lot of fishing trips for Morris Modeste up in Déline. You know I know that Verna and Bruce, you know they would love to have a tourism licence ... There's nobody that knows that river as well as they do ... It’s really hard to know how to be helpful. And I think one of the issues is that you know the opportunities to interact are very limited. I think it was really good this year that we got involved in the canoe races for Aboriginal Day. That was really positive, one of the nicest things that we've been involved in, and we gave canoe lessons and there was a real mixture of people in those canoe lessons” (Ward, 2014).

The juxtaposition of Ward’s desire to improve relations with the local Indigenous population, and her company’s obvious lack of effort to create meaningful and balanced relationships with Indigenous partners and employees, may be explained by Dion’s concept of the ‘perfect stranger’, wherein a non-Indigenous teacher, or other figure of authority, seeking to insulate themselves from ethical vulnerability, positions themselves outside of the historical context of settler-colonialism—they understand and present themselves as objective, unbiased, and benevolent ‘non-actors’. Dion writes: “One way or another, teachers, like many Canadians, claim the position of the ‘perfect stranger’ to

Aboriginal people [...] I argue that it is not an un-complicated position. It is informed simultaneously by what teachers know, what they do not know, and what they refuse to know. It is, for many, a response to recognizing that what they know is premised on a range of experiences with stereotypical representations” (Dion, 2008, 330-331). In the case of Canoe North Adventures, the state of bewilderment and concern expressed by Ward, while likely genuine, belies the fact that as co-owner of the pre-eminent canoe tripping company in the Sahtu, with decades of experience in the region, Ward has had ample opportunity to explore why Canoe North doesn’t enjoy stronger ties with the people whose land it profits from. She claims that “it would be really nice if we could have some Aboriginal people who would like to come here and maybe meet our groups”, yet won’t take the next step, and ask: “What are we doing to dissuade people from coming here to meet our groups, and what can we do to make space for the priorities of our Aboriginal neighbours?”

Earlier in our conversation, Ward explained away some of the local opposition to Canoe North as mere jealousy; she also suggested that while Délı̨ne wants to get into canoe tripping, they never come to Canoe North or show any interest in speaking with them about it. While these characterizations are indeed subtle, I had the impression that Ward was hinting that Indigenous community or business partners lacked the wherewithal and commitment to achieve the sort of success that Canoe North had found in the Sahtu. While I want to avoid suggesting that Ward was knowingly playing into

negative prejudicial tropes about Indigenous people, the implications made me uncomfortable at the time—and they still do. It seemed to me that Ward was reproducing tired narratives of Indigenous laziness, or a general lack of business professionalism—a lack of ‘follow-through’. Regardless of her intended meaning, Ward was completely overlooking the many privileges afforded to her and her husband which enabled Canoe North’s success in the first place. To say nothing of the copious gifts granted to the company by the GNWT, in the form of land leases, building grants, business improvement grants, and marketing investments. In her article, “Facing the Perfect Stranger”, Adi Burton points out that “[t]he uncomfortable conclusion, often hovering in the periphery, is that such reproductions make the perfect stranger complicit in many epistemological and ontological hegemonies that contribute to injustice and play an important role in suffering, conflict, and catastrophe” (2018, 178). By setting up a rather stark ‘us’ and them’ dichotomy in the midst of a confusion about what role she should play, Ward further validates the ‘perfect stranger’ application, wherein “[t]he position of the perfect stranger is thus located in difference: a lack – or an abdication – of relation, understanding, and responsibility to the Aboriginal other” (Burton, 2018, 173). While I don’t doubt Ward’s desire to ‘do the right thing’ in this context, the resounding conclusion I draw is that her distancing of Canoe North from the very real and present struggle of Indigenous people to assert their rights and effect cultural, political, and

economic resurgence in the face of massive countervailing pressures from Settler society, represents just the sort of abdication of responsibility that Burton mentions above.

While I did not attempt to ascertain quantitative measures of support or opposition to the guiding companies, statements made by Zieba and Ward confirmed my hunch that something about the adventure tourism industry was not sitting well with certain members of the community. Likely for various reasons, some aspects of these highly specialized, southern-owned, tourism businesses were sufficiently alienating to prevent substantive success in hiring and collaborating with Indigenous people and businesses. The way Ward framed it (and sitting across from the bobbing aluminum hulk of one of North-Wright's Twin Otter's I could almost believe her) the dispute was simply a disagreement between neighbours—different strokes for different folks. However, I got the impression that there was something fundamental at issue: a running tension between non-Indigenous business objectives, and the Dene's free exercise of social, economic, and political activities on traditionally-held lands. At one point in the interview with Lin Ward, she expressed opposition to the development of a patchwork of local tourism opportunities, saying: "In my mind you can't just have these individual places developing their tourism. Like you look there's Délı̨ne, there's Drum Lake, there's initiatives at Norman Wells that, you know, we do or other operators or North Wright does, but to actually look at the Sahtú and to know how to actually make it known in the world, it's a big picture thing and it's not to do with any of the individuals. Yeah, okay.

And you know the big picture stuff is much harder to deal with and a lot of people aren't comfortable talking on that level and trying to think about ... how we're positioned as a region" (Ward, 2014). In this statement Ward includes her own initiatives, uncoordinated as they are with a broader Sahtú-region objective, but in her enthusiasm for a sweeping initiative that would put the region 'on the map', overlooks the likelihood that such an initiative would inevitably favour the dominant tourism providers, such as Canoe North Adventures, and entrench the exclusivity present in the industry.

To foster more equitable tourism development, new local initiatives must first be given the opportunity to flourish—ideally with the cooperation and mentorship of established industry stakeholders. I will address this possibility towards the end of the chapter, when we explore 'Market Imaginaries' and the prospect of charting a new relationship between established tour providers and nascent Indigenous entrepreneurs.

Before I do, it serves the discussion to explore how the exclusivity of the tourism industry in Sahtú was not formed in a vacuum. Although the establishment of a coherent adventure tourism industry in the Sahtú is a recent phenomenon, tensions arising from it have a long and complicated pedigree within the broader context of Indigenous-Settler relations.

For Whose Benefit? Indigenous-Settler Relations

Throughout his academic career J.R. Miller has explored the complex historical relationship between Indigenous and Settler populations in Canada. His most prominent contributions to the literature on Indigenous-Settler relations are two books: *Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens: A History of Indian-White Relations in Canada*, and *Compact, Contract, Covenant: Aboriginal Treaty-Making in Canada*. Miller contends that Indigenous-Settler relations have often been shaped by economic factors, and that when the motives for partnership and treaty-making have been complementary, the outcomes of these relationships has typically been mutually-beneficial, and 'harmonious', and when motives have been 'antagonistic' or 'competitive', the consequences have been unfortunate, often disastrous (2000, 402-3). As such, Miller argues that in order to restore successful and mutually-beneficial relations between Indigenous and Settler populations, new and complementary reasons for coming together must be found and nurtured (2000, 403).

For the purposes of this study, it is important to remember that unlike other industries (such as oil and gas extraction, or mining) which are technically complex and extremely expensive (and, thus, privilege established, southern-based companies and expertise), the tourism industry allows for relatively affordable start-up models, and relies on just the sort of hospitality already practiced by many Indigenous communities. Where southern-based outfitters and guides may have technical skill around whitewater

navigation and rescue, and industry experience, the local Indigenous workforce possesses the cultural knowledge and wilderness experience to enrich a tourist's experience and provide them with much-needed social and traditional context.⁴² From where I sit, these respective strengths dovetail neatly together, and in the best-case scenario, cooperation and collaboration would be the name of the game.

Similar sentiments have been expressed in the literature around the integration of TEK and Western science by such scholars as D. McGregor, who, in her article, 'Linking TEK and Western Science', states that:

Equitable, long-term and mutually beneficial partnerships should be established ... based on a co-existence model such as that described by the Two-Row Wampum of the Haudenosaunee. Such partnerships would enable the involved parties to share information, including scientific knowledge and TEK, on a mutually beneficial basis (2000, 152).

When superimposed practically upon real-life partnership-building, however, this prescription poses challenges. One area which has illuminated these challenges is the resource extraction sector. Resource development generates employment, revenue, and training and education programs for Indigenous employees, and it is the principle driving force of the Canadian economy. However, the debate surrounding the extent to

⁴² An appreciation for the amalgamation of both Western and Indigenous perspectives can be found in the Mi'kmaw concept of 'two-eyed' seeing, where-in the individual learns to see through one eye with the strengths of Indigenous ways of knowing, and through the other eye with the strengths of Western ways of knowing. By using both eyes together, the individual may find interesting common ground, while accessing the profound gifts of both knowledge traditions (Bartlett, Marshall and Marshall, "Two-eyed Seeing", 2012).

which sustainable (and non-sustainable) resources should be developed, how they should be developed, with whose consultation and participation, etc., remains controversial and volatile. Resource development creates an opportunity for Indigenous populations (and their interests) to be both exploited and empowered.

Scholars that engage with these topics from the perspective of economic development, business, corporate relations, and Western political science disciplines typically emphasize economic factors in the presentation of their arguments. They also tend to normalize the inequitable power dynamic between corporations and Indigenous communities, by framing partnerships as something granted by corporations upon potential Indigenous partners, and by highlighting the challenges faced by Indigenous communities in meeting their economic development goals. Chase Hensell and Phyllis Morrow explain that: “Those with power can choose to enfranchise those without. Those with power make the rules and seek new ways to get others to comply” (Hensel and Morrow, 2010, 1).

In their corporate ‘best practices’ case studies text, *Corporate Aboriginal Relations*, Patricia Sloan and Roger Hill cite ‘poor education and inadequate skill development’ as major causes of the social and economic inequity of Indigenous people when compared to other Canadians. Their standards for measuring this inequity were strictly economic, citing “labour force participation rates, employment rates and earned income levels” (1). While these markers of inequity are undoubtedly significant, Sloan and Hill disregard

the historic and continued psychosocial impact of colonialism on Indigenous peoples, effectively implying that they are simply a marginalized sub-group of mainstream Canadian society. This inadvertently reinforces arguments for 'universal citizenship' espoused by Tom Flanagan, and Thomas Sowell. To address inequities, Sloan and Hill encourage educational institutions and employers to develop and implement skills training and educational programs that will respond to these deficiencies in the Indigenous labour pool (1995, 4). The prescriptions peppered throughout *Corporate Aboriginal Relations* unwaveringly focus on the importance of creating job opportunities for Aboriginal people (1995, 3), and puts this responsibility squarely on the shoulders of the corporations themselves, averring that "any commitment to Aboriginal participation must be anchored in clear corporate policies, reinforced by leadership of the Chief Executive and driven by explicit goals, targets and timetables" (1995, 1). This is misleading in that it presents corporations as benevolent custodians of Indigenous well-being, while the understated (though central) priority is that corporations develop a willing, trained, and effective labour force (1995, 39). This 'best practice' can be found in the workforce development mandate of Imperial Oil, a major employer and resource juggernaut in Northwest Territories, with a long and storied history in Norman Wells. Their primary workforce development goal "is to ensure that Aboriginal people have the background and skills they need to take advantage of them, while also helping to meet our business needs for personnel. Supporting education and training programs to build

workforce capacity in Aboriginal communities just makes good sense for everyone (Imperial Oil “Workforce Development”, 2013). There is no explicit mention of the sociocultural benefits or harms that resource industry employment may have on Indigenous people, understandably; the corporate world predominantly relies upon quantitative measures of success, and assessing social or cultural harm must incorporate qualitative evidence.

Underlying the corporate literature on Indigenous relations is the presumption that Indigenous communities are not well-equipped to meet the business needs of companies whose operations take place on or near Indigenous territory.⁴³ John Loxley, whose long and influential academic career in international and domestic development studies is characterized by a compassionate and respectful approach to development partnerships, focuses heavily on corporate priorities. He notes that:

The general environment in which most Native enterprises function is not a healthy one for business; if it were, we would not be discussing the problem of the economic backwardness of Native communities. The very essence of that backwardness continues to render it very difficult to identify business potential in most Native communities, leave alone realize that potential. Restricted market, acute social problems, lack of infrastructure, and a limited resource base are not ideal breeding grounds for business development (Loxley, 2010, 240).⁴⁴

⁴³ This emphasis is pervasive throughout the work of Patricia Sloan and Roger Hill, Tom Flanagan, John Loxley, Thomas Sowell, A. Howard and F. Widdowson, Chase Hensel and Phyllis Morrow, and others.

⁴⁴ He goes onto suggest that most effective measure of successful development “will be the extent to which the community will be self-supporting and free of dependence on the federal government” (pg. 87).

While this may be true in many or most cases, the unfortunate reality is that by attending exclusively to economic and corporate standards of success, the insufficiencies of Indigenous communities to respond to the needs of resource companies is easily misconstrued as evidence of insufficiency, or dysfunction, by *all* standards.⁴⁵ This has the effect of reinforcing racist and derogatory narratives surrounding Indigenous people in colonial spaces, generally. In *Decolonizing Methodologies* Linda Tuhiwai Smith claims that “representations of ‘native life’ as being devoid of work habits, and of native people being lazy, indolent, with low attention spans, is part of a colonial discourse that continues to this day” (1999, 56). We see the historic roots of this prejudiced assessment of Indigenous life coming up even in the Sahtú context; in reference to the history of early contact in Denendeh, George Blondin writes: “When the first Europeans met my ancestors, they found them to be very different from themselves. Early writers have described my people as having no knowledge of land ownership and no organized government. Others said they followed game to eat and acted like animals, that they were savages. Europeans accepted this label and decided aboriginal people could not be a part of the nation they were going to build. So, they cast us aside and separated us from the rest of Canadian people. We are still struggling for recognition” (Blondin “Yamoria”, 1997, v). In subtle

⁴⁵ Note: One could just as easily present evidence suggesting that corporate executives, by virtue of their myopic focus on profitability, are particularly ill-suited to safeguard ecological integrity, sociocultural well-being, and the spiritual health of their communities, and if society were differently ordered this would be a damning and injurious assessment!

ways, corporate literature around Indigenous relations still employs this sort of discourse, using it to illuminate the value of developing education and training programs within the community, the insidious result being that inequitable relations of power are perpetuated, and resource companies are able to paint themselves as benign and generous benefactors—this further normalizes the extraction colonialism in Canadian society (Fitzmaurice, 2010, 354). Further, the psychosocial impact of perpetuating, on a grand scale, a narrative that paints an Indigenous workforce as inherently ‘less than’, creates an atmosphere of hopelessness and despondency that critically impedes meaningful change from taking place, further entrenching the status quo (Alfred, “Peace, Power..”, 1999, 121).

With that said, there has been recent work looking at the ways that these balances of power can be disrupted through community-based economic development via a cultural heritage ecotourism product, wherein Mi’kmaw community stakeholders were able to assert their priorities and perspectives in the tourism development process in Unama-ki, otherwise known as Cape Breton (Maher P.T. et al., "Sustainability, Ethics, and Authenticity", 2018). Interestingly, this progress in consultation echoes some of the standards developed much earlier in the natural resource development sector in Northwestern Canada.

Resource Development as a Source of Indigenous Empowerment

Reforming the relationship between Indigenous communities and non-Indigenous tourism companies will require reimagining the role that Indigenous people, life, and culture might play in (re)presenting their traditional lands in the Sahtú region. Instead of framing adventure as taking place exclusively within an unpeopled hinterland (a landscape to be conquered and reconquered), the industry, as well as the communities, would be well-served by an updated approach to developing more substantial relationships. Undoubtedly, this will entail a lot of hard work, and deliberate effort, and the path itself may not be self-evident—but change is coming, with or without a clearly defined route. In an article on the development of the Mackenzie Valley Gas Project, written before various self-government negotiations were concluded in favour of the communities' petitions, Mark Nutall points out that:

In the Northwest Territories, negotiations for land, resource and self-government rights continue with the Deh Cho First Nations, while negotiations for self-government are in progress with the Inuvialuit, Gwich'in, and the Sahtú Dene community of Délı̨nę. Although traditional hunting and trapping practices remain vital to the daily lives of Aboriginal people in the Northwest Territories, commercial fishing, diamond mining, and the oil and gas industries increasingly provide employment. The recognition of indigenous peoples' rights has meant that many Aboriginal communities have entered into resource development projects through joint ventures with industry and government, impact benefit agreements, and environmental monitoring projects (Nutall, 2008, 621).

The resource development sector, which has a long and complicated history with Indigenous peoples, may be a surprising place to turn for examples of how best to nurture collaborative relationships, but considering the historic role oil and gas has played in the development of Norman Wells and the intimate relationship between adventure tourism and the land, it's well worth a second look.

While it is often understated, or overlooked completely, the complicated relations of power that operate in Canadian society are highlighted (and reinforced) through the process of natural resource development, as the economic priorities of corporations and governments collide with Indigenous (and non-Indigenous allied) concerns around Indigenous sovereignty, self-determination, and cultural resurgence. In this light, resource development represents a critical arena for the development of equitable, responsive, and respectful Indigenous-Settler relations in Canada.

Norman Wells occupies a unique historical position relative to Indigenous-corporate collaboration in the oil and gas sector:

Oil and gas exploration has a long history in Canada's North. Although explorer Alexander Mackenzie was the first European to notice oil seeping from the ground around the area that is now known as Norman Wells in 1789, Dene who lived along the Mackenzie River knew about oil in the area long before any explorer, fur trader or geologist. They mixed tar from the oil seeps with tree sap to waterproof their canoes, and they may have traded this valuable material with other people. In the early 1900s, Dene acted as guides to geologists who were exploring the region around Fort Norman (Tulita), taking them to Legohli, a place meaning "where the oil is" in the Dene

language. Imperial Oil Ltd began exploratory drilling for oil in 1919 and opened a refinery the following year in Norman Wells (Nutall, 2008, 619).

Considering the historically antagonistic relationship between the resource sector and Indigenous communities in Canada (and globally, for that matter) it may seem surprising that an effective model for Indigenous consultation and collaboration may be found there. Perhaps owing to the environmentally destructive capacity of resource extraction, Indigenous groups have typically been vocal in their demands for substantial consultation between themselves and the industry. In the Northwest Territories, two resource extraction companies, Dominion Diamond Corporation, and Imperial Oil, have taken extensive measures to engage with Indigenous community groups in establishing training and employment programs, community consultation forums for resource development, wildlife and landscape stewardship initiatives, and economic development programs for communities. In the Northwest Territories the result has been a predominantly positive and cooperative relationship between the companies and the communities on whose lands they operate. In their Workforce Development Mandate, Imperial Oil states that its “goal is to ensure that Aboriginal people have the background and skills they need to take advantage of them, while also helping to meet our business needs for personnel. Supporting education and training programs to build workforce capacity in Aboriginal communities just makes good sense for everyone” (Imperial Oil “Workforce Development”, 2013). As part of this process Imperial Oil is also committed

to establishing a strong consultation process, founded on respect for the legal rights of Indigenous people, and celebrating their traditional, cultural and social practices (Imperial Oil “Consultation”). A similar focus can be found in the employment and consultation mandate of Dominion Diamond Corporation, which operates the Diavik and Ekati Diamond mines in Northwest Territories. While the two mines function as separate corporate entities, with independent policies and initiatives, they manage to share a core set of values that promotes socially sustainable resource development. Dominion has established a long series of training and education programs (including managerial and executive training specifically geared for Indigenous employees), mentoring and scholarship programs, community development initiatives, Elder-initiated Traditional Knowledge preservation projects, and affirmative-action hiring policies (Dominion “Diavik”, 2012). For each of the mines the employment statistics demonstrate the success of these policies. Of all ‘Northern’ employees at the Ekati Mine, 51% are of Indigenous descent (Dominion “Ekati”, 2012), and at Diavik Mine, of all employees who registered their ethnicity, 22.2% self-identified as Indigenous Aboriginal (Dominion “Diavik”, 2012).

Further, these resource extraction companies recognize the need to engage with local communities to receive the benefits of local employment and community cooperation. It is mutually beneficial for this relationship to proceed with respect and

demands placed upon resource companies by the industry reinforce compliance with these values.

While the relationship between the resource development industry and Indigenous communities can be characterized by unequal relations of power and capital, there are some Indigenous, and non-Indigenous allied scholars who champion resource development (and the revenue it generates for communities) as an important tool for the political, social and cultural empowerment of Indigenous peoples. While environmental integrity is clearly of critical importance to Indigenous communities, the question remains as to whether this perspective is inherently at odds with the development of resource extraction industries on Indigenous territories. Gabrielle Slowey argues that “the integration of Aboriginal peoples into the Canadian socio-economic fabric...does not sound the death knoll for Aboriginal people or their cultures. In fact, [it] may mean just the opposite” (2009, 236). Slowey argues that the benefits offered by resource development are primarily economic and political. Negotiations over corporate access to Indigenous territory provide an important opportunity to exercise self-government, and advocate for increased employment, education and training for community members based on provisions set out through land claims settlements (2009, 229). Slowey presents an important point in her article *A Fine Balance? Aboriginal Peoples in the Canadian North and the Dilemma of Development*, stating that “it is possible that economic development is critical, and not antithetical, to the project of cultural preservation” (2009, 229). When

read as an opportunity for cultural preservation, and sociopolitical empowerment, one of the first concessions to be made is that development is not fundamentally inimical to the preservation of traditional values, or traditional lifeways: tradition and development are not mutually excluding. Slowey goes on to suggest that to understand the debate on development in Indigenous communities as a choice between maintaining traditional values and accepting a western way of life 'posits a false dichotomy', and that the goal is not to choose between the two, but to draw the best of both perspectives and epistemologies (Slowey, 2009, 229).

Clearly, the disruption of the western/Indigenous duality is critically relevant to the integration of science and Indigenous ecology in pursuit of effective environmental assessment policy.⁴⁶ In his article, *Dismantling the Divide*, Arun Agrawal argues that "it is only when we move away from the sterile dichotomy between indigenous and western ... when we seek out bridges across the constructed chasm between the traditional and the scientific, that we will initiate a productive dialogue to safeguard the interests of those who are disadvantaged" (1995, 433). The assertion that Indigenous Knowledge is fundamentally dynamic, that it can maintain its 'essence' while simultaneously adopting and incorporating foreign knowledge is a common thread throughout much of the anticolonial, or decolonizing literature presented by Indigenous scholars. Linda Smith

⁴⁶ Again, an answer to that duality may lie in the 'two-eyed seeing' concept introduced by Bartlett, Marshall, et al. (Bartlett, Marshall and Marshall, "Two-eyed Seeing", 2012)

confirms that the process of decolonization “does not mean and has not meant a total rejection of all theory or research or Western knowledge. Rather, it is about centring our concerns and world views and then coming to know and understand theory and research from our own perspectives and for our own purposes” (1999, 41). While integration and adaptation is a fundamental component of Indigenous life, to approach development with a degree of skepticism and wariness may be prudent. Presented in the same Mackenzie Valley article, Nutall quotes Chief Richard Kochon of the Bedhzi Ahda’ First Nation, in the Sahtú community of Colville Lake:

In 1993 we settled our land claims, and we already knew where all the oil and gas was located. Recently we have been discussing oil development with both our community and with industry. We still live in our old ways, and the government keeps wanting to develop us. We feel that any mixing of our cultural and traditional ways with new developments should come from our own people as we know best the needs of the community, not the government. The government can destroy our rights and take away our power, so we are being careful doing everything ourselves, even without lawyers as every community person has their own rights and their own voice; no one can take this away and we must continue to speak with our own voices. Some people want to live in the white man's way, and by doing so we will lose some rights, so we need to be careful (Nutall, 2008, 624).

One option for exercising care is the concept of co-management partnerships, which I’ll address in more depth in the second last section of this chapter. By striking partnerships of mutual aid and trust, it becomes possible to draw upon the strength of two disparate systems, to overcome the flaws or weaknesses in each, and to arrive at a

notable hybrid worth more, perhaps, than the sum of its parts. One example of this is through the integration of Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) and Western Science—specifically in the environmental assessment process for resource development. Through environmental assessment, resource development has served to empower Indigenous communities by providing a practical opportunity to embed cultural and traditional values and lifeways in development practices. While the capacity for Indigenous communities to wrest development control from corporations and government is heavily limited by the relations of power and capital as indicated above, Indigenous communities have been able (in some part at least) to demand that Indigenous epistemologies be incorporated into environmental assessments.⁴⁷ The integration of TEK and western science in environmental assessment marks a critical moment in the development of Indigenous-Settler relations, and provides an interesting and effective comparative model for developing cohesive, dynamic, and mutually-beneficial relationships between non-Indigenous tourism professionals and Indigenous communities. In the penultimate section of the next chapter, I will explore how the best route forward likely involves the development of a hybrid model in which the complementary strengths of Indigenous and Settler approaches come together to forge a rich new tourism product, the likes of which is entirely absent from the current milieu.

⁴⁷ The integration of TEK has been championed by Economic Development scholars such as John Loxley on the basis of its ability to address the social, as well as environmental repercussions of development on traditional territory.

As I sought to draw comparisons between the linking of TEK and Western Science, and the possibilities of linking Indigenous and Settler approaches to tourism, I wanted to identify common features or contexts shared by the two relationship-building exercises. Perhaps the most salient attribute shared by both is the intimate role land and water play in the unfolding and creation of these dialogues. So too do we see environment as the pivot point around which partnerships in resource development are cast. It should not be surprising, however, that the most advanced efforts in Indigenous-Settler relations have taken place in industries and contexts in which the environment (both its exploitation and custodianship) plays a central role. For one thing, harms done to land and water have tangible, long-felt impacts on the physical and spiritual well-being of Indigenous populations, and beyond that, for most Indigenous cultures, the natural environment is the site and source of many traditional activities, hunting and fishing for food, and the conduit through which cultural and spiritual expression takes place. While tourism may, at worst, superficially harm the landscape, it requires the use and interpretation of land in ways that might not conform to traditional customs or beliefs, and in extreme cases may even impact the way Indigenous communities are allowed to practice their culture and economies on that land. Considering the importance of the relationship between Indigenous peoples and the land on which they exercise their traditional and contemporary lifeways, a deeper look at that relationship will help us

better understand the importance of effective consultation and collaboration between non-Indigenous tour providers, and the communities through which they travel.

The Relationship Between Indigenous Peoples and the Land

In an interview presented by Scott Rutherford, Indigenous scholar and activist Bonita Lawrence cites aggressive resource extraction policies as the greatest threat to Indigenous sovereignty and cultural sustainability (Rutherford, 2010, 10). She goes a step further, critiquing Canadian society's silence over the continued expropriation of Indigenous lands for the sake of maintaining the status quo, and points out that the central problem with modern colonialism is "...the assumption that the remaining Indigenous lands of the world must still continue to be exploited for the sake of so-called 'progress' and that a fundamentally unviable western social order must continue to exist at the cost of the remaining Indigenous lands of the world" (Rutherford, 2010, 10). To understand what is at stake for Indigenous communities upon whose lands governments and resource companies conduct their business, it is necessary first to understand the critical role that land plays in the cultural, social, and political well-being of Indigenous peoples.

One of the most well-known and eloquent scholars writing about this relationship is Gregory Cajete, whose definitive text *Look to The Mountain: An Ecology of Indigenous Education* describes this relationship well. Cajete describes a two-way dialogue between the land and the people, whereby the land provides context and meaning for the cultural

development and maintenance of the people, and the people provide care and stewardship for the land. He writes: "Through the extensive use of oral tradition, ritual, and ceremony, Indian people established and maintained a dynamic participation with the natural world that deeply informed the meanings and understandings they had about themselves as a particular kind of people" (1994, 91). He describes the landscape as "a textbook of ecological understanding, interpreted through the traditional stories and activities of tribes" (1994, 91), and suggests that this intrinsic tie between cultural/traditional education and the land has enabled Indigenous peoples to be naturally capable and responsible ecological custodians.

This assertion is echoed in economic development texts which promote Indigenous participation in environmental assessment protocols; in the opening chapter of his book *Aboriginal, Northern, and Community Economic Development: Papers and Retrospectives* John Loxley discusses the Indigenous approach of 'enoughness' in resource use practices, whereby communities may only use so much as is required for their survival (2010, 13). He notes that, "as custodians, the current generation has responsibility for safe-guarding the land and animal, fish, and plant life for future generations. In practice, this custodial obligation finds reflection in Aboriginal resource management practices that are highly respectful of the need for conservation and replenishment" (2010, 15). This assertion is found throughout much of the literature pertaining to the integration of Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) in the development of environmental assessments.

Some Indigenous scholars, such as Leanne Simpson, Dale Turner, and Taiaiake Alfred are more vehement in their insistence that Indigenous communities maintain *control* over traditional territory, and the natural resources found on them. Simpson notes that the cultural vitality of Indigenous communities, and Indigenous Knowledge (IK) itself, “came under attack at precisely the same time Indigenous nations lost control over their land” (Simpson “Anticolonial Strategies”, 2004, 377”). She argues that in order to recover IK and exact Indigenous cultural resurgence it is essential that Indigenous Peoples “regain control over their national territories, and they must be self-determining particularly when it comes to the land” (2004, 379). Simpson has emphasized Indigenous control over traditional territories in pursuit of political, social and cultural goals, and this emphasis finds official expression in the 1996, 5-volume report, filed by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (Canada, RCAP, 1996). The report recognizes the importance of land for both subsistence uses and for economic independence, through the development of natural resources. The report states that “the desire of Aboriginal peoples to be self-government political entities can be fully realized only with a transformation in their capacity to provide for themselves. A nation ... needs to be able to provide for most of its needs, however these are defined, from its own sources of income and wealth” (Canada, 1996, RCAP, 826). This assertion can be found in policy documents emerging from Indigenous governments in their attempts to realize self-government—in

the Sahtú Dene Secretariat's land use policy, we see the importance of the land emerge in the language of the policy's primary mandate. It reads:

... Special attention shall be devoted to ... protecting and promoting the existing and future social, cultural and economic well-being of the participants, [t]o recognize and encourage the Sahtú way of life which is based on the cultural and economic relationship between the Sahtú and the land; [and] [t]o encourage the self-sufficiency of the Sahtú and to enhance their ability to participate fully in all aspects of the economy (Sahtu Land Use Planning Board, 2013).

While emphasis is put on the economic participation and well-being of Sahtú participants, central to the fulfillment of these economic goals is an encouragement of a land-based way of life; it would seem, at least for the members of the Secretariat, that one is not possible without the other, and further, that inseparable from the realization of 'self-sufficiency' is some degree of control over the management of territorial wealth.

Furthermore, for many Indigenous communities, the land and waters upon which they are situated provide cultural prompts that connect them to their heritage. This is of particular importance for Indigenous communities that are geographically isolated from large, urban centres, where limited and costly access to food distribution networks encourage supplementary harvesting from forests, rivers and lakes. Fish and game animal populations become a necessary staple of household diets, and as such these communities are intimately connected with the health and well-being of animal habitat.

These traditional activities are not merely economically prudent but serve as acts of cultural survivance. While the extent to which traditional economies are prioritized varies among the five Sahtú charter communities of Deline, Norman Wells, Tulita, Colville Lake and Fort Good Hope, Sahtú Dene traditional lifeways and cultural practices are interconnected with the landscape on which they occur (Sahtu Land Use Planning Board, 2013). Deeply tied to these traditional activities is an oral history based in Sahtú De,⁴⁸ that connects Sahtú Dene with their spiritual and cultural inheritance. In reference to the Mackenzie valley Gwich'in, who are anthropologically believed to be of Dene origin (McCartney, 2009, 77), Leslie McCartney puts it well, writing that “[l]ocations on the land served as mnemonic aids, or pegs, upon which myriad associations and oral narratives were hung; they indicated intrinsic ties between personal history and concept of self that are anchored to places on the landscape” (2009, 85). For this reason, the exploitation of land that occurs through non-Indigenous industry has implications beyond the impacts on the natural resource—I would extend this concern to include the non-invasive exploitation of the land for the purposes of tourism, especially when tour operators use inappropriate colonial narratives of conquest and *terra nullius*, to sell their packages.

The potential for environmental injury or the misuse of land by foreign visitors may create negative repercussions for the cultural health of the Dene. If the land suffers

⁴⁸ The traditional lands of the Sahtú Dene.

then the spiritual and cultural lifeblood of the Dene suffers. For these reasons, it is imperative that Sahtú Dene communities retain oversight and licensing control for all activities that might affect the health of the land.

The relationship between the Sahtú Dene and the land is reflected in the mandate of the Sahtú Secretariat, the chief governing body for the five charter communities that comprise Sahtú. It is this council which undertakes issues of Sahtú self-determination in the political arena; the Secretariat seeks to embed Sahtú values within the policies that govern its member communities, and guide development in a culturally- and socially-sustainable manner. The relationship between self-determination and cultural survivance is complex when played out in the negotiation of development policy. Gabrielle A. Slowey discusses this relationship in her essay, “A Fine Balance? Aboriginal Peoples in the Canadian North and the Dilemma of Development.” She argues that “...Aboriginal peoples confront a dilemma: choose to be part of development or have it done to them. In the face of this predicament, self-determination can be an important building block to more equitable power sharing and a means to ensure the inclusion and influence of Aboriginal peoples in the development process, if only to safeguard their cultural norms and practices” (2009, 232). In its mandate, the Secretariat states clearly that all Land Claims participants⁴⁹ depend largely upon land, water and wildlife for their ‘way of life and self-sufficiency, for their cultural and spiritual well-being and heritage’

⁴⁹ ‘Participants’ refers to registrants of the Sahtú Dene and Metis Comprehensive Land Claim.

(Sahtu Secretariat, 2013). This assertion is best articulated through the development of the Secretariat's most recent Land Use Plan, adopted by the Land Use Planning Board on April 29th, 2013, which states that: "... Special attention shall be devoted to ... protecting and promoting the existing and future social, cultural and economic well-being of the participants, [t]o recognize and encourage the Sahtú way of life which is based on the cultural and economic relationship between the Sahtú and the land; [and] [t]o encourage the self-sufficiency of the Sahtú and to enhance their ability to participate fully in all aspects of the economy" (Sahtu Land Use Planning Board, 2013). While much of the document addresses the economic considerations of effective land use planning, these priorities remain foundational to the rest of the plan. Unfortunately, these priorities have been all but ignored in the tourism industry's publication, *Tourism 2015*. The focus of this plan is entirely economic in its criteria for development, the inference being that so long as increased revenue is resultant, the plan will inevitably benefit the territory as a whole. Clearly there are political reasons for attending closely to the fiscal opportunities generated in policy-making. In reference to the results of Sahtú's land claim process, elder George Blondin writes: "Political and financial power gained from land claims settlement are positive steps toward a better life, but grassroots values of caring, sharing, respect and love for each other also have to be part of the mix. And these virtues easily get lost when money and power are involved. Dene control of social, environmental, cultural, political, and economic affairs must be centred in the heart"

("Yamoria", 1997, 231). This is telling advice, illuminating the priority of speaking, and acting from the heart—evoking the importance of family, community, honesty, in any economic development policy. This sits in sharp contrast to the approach of outside corporations, and governments. In the development of tourism policy, governments consistently cite economic factors as primary motivators for change. Erve Chambers, examines this phenomenon and provides an explanation for it: "It is far less risky and more tactful for tourism advocates to argue that a particular tourism development scheme will benefit a region economically than it is to suggest that there are also important and contestable ideological and cultural reasons to proceed with the project. Unfortunately, there has been a tendency for the economic analysis of the costs and benefits of tourism to disregard social and cultural variables, in part because they are difficult to measure in conventional economic terms" (2010, 35). While the economic repercussions of tourism are critical to an assessment of the industry, there are other, unquantifiable variables that must be taken into consideration in creating good tourism policy. This is vital for tourism products that exploit the traditional territory of Indigenous groups. The Sahtú Land Use Plan is not the first time Sahtú leaders have attempted to embed their land-based cultural values within policy. The first, and most significant attempt emerged through the Land Claims Process over a decade ago.

On the 6th of September 1993, the Sahtú Dene and Metis Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement was ratified by representatives of the Crown and representatives of the five

Sahtú Dene and Metis communities, in Fort Norman, NT. Sahtú Dene control over land and water usage was explicitly provided for in the Agreement in a few ways. The Agreement states that all participants retain unalienable rights to harvest game animals for the purposes of sustenance, and fur-bearing animals for commercial gain without government interference; it also prevents non-participant⁵⁰ members of the public from using Sahtú lands and navigable waterways for commercial or wildlife harvesting purposes without the agreement of a designated Sahtú organization (Aboriginal Affairs, 2013). Further, it demands that excepting cases of emergency no member of the general public may travel on Sahtú lands or navigable waterways for purposes of recreation or tourism without consultation with the relevant Land Claims organization.

The implications of policies which empower Indigenous communities to determine and control the tourism development process are significant. However, these policies must be enforced if they are to have any effect whatsoever. As Bunten points out, “The recent expansion of indigenous-owned and operated tourism has been made possible through industry-wide trends, policies designed to boost economies through tourism, and reclamation of indigenous resources through legal settlements with colonizer states” (“Deriding Demand”, 2014, 83). Unfortunately, the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment, as representative of the state within the sector, does not enforce the

⁵⁰ ‘Non-participant’ refers to an individual not enrolled in the Enrolment Register of this Land Claims Agreement, Indigenous or Non-Indigenous.

requirements to consult, as laid out in the Sahtú Land Claim. For instance, it is not the Sahtú Dene Council, but ITI which grants tour operating licenses, and they do so without direct consultation with the Council. If Land Claim beneficiaries were so inclined, this lack of consultation opens the GNWT to litigation, the outcome of which might lend the Agreement some teeth and reinforce the fact that a duty to consult is not simply a moral imperative, but a legal requirement. The spirit of these Land Claim provisions reinforces the importance of Dene and Metis self-determination in the utilization of Sahtú lands. However, in practice, the tourism industry is not living up to its responsibilities, and as a result nor do the individual businesses which operate in the Sahtú. Considering that the land claim is protected under Section 35(1) of the Constitution Act of 1982 (Canada, “Constitution Act”, 1982), these companies are breaking federal law and, since Canada ratified the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), they are also breaking international law – which, in article 32(1)(2)(3) confirms that Indigenous people “have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for the development or use of their lands or territories”, that “states shall consult... in order to obtain their free and informed consent prior to the approval of any project affecting their lands or territories” and “provide effective mechanisms for just and fair redress for any such activities, and appropriate measures shall be taken to mitigate adverse environmental, economic, social, cultural or spiritual impact” (UN General Assembly, UNDRIP, 2007).

With its use of weak and permissive language, the territorial government is complicit in this unacceptable status quo. On the *Spectacular NWT*⁵¹ website prospective adventure tourists are informed that “Land Claims give Aboriginal northerners ownership of certain lands within traditional territories, and a voice on how all lands and waters within the Land Claim region will be used ... It's always a good idea to check with the regional Claim organization before you set out on an outdoor adventure. Like any private landowner, they would prefer to know your intentions when you travel on their lands” (Spectacular NWT, “Sharing our Land”, 2013).

While the language of ownership illustrates that the industry acknowledges Indigenous sovereignty over approximately 40,00 square kilometers of Sahtu lands, including “those portions of the beds of any lakes, rivers, and other water bodies contained within the described boundaries of Sahtu lands” (Canada, “SDMCLCA”, 19.1.2(a), 1993) as provided for in the Land Claim Agreement, they fall short in their social and cultural obligations by suggesting that informing regional Claim organizations is a ‘good idea’. This is weak language and ignores the land claim agreement’s suggests tourists obey their own norms of social etiquette, without explicitly requiring that permission be obtained. In so doing, the industry places unwitting private

⁵¹ The newly branded NWT Tourism interface.

tourists in an antagonistic position and divests tour operators of their responsibility to honour the Sahtú Dene and Metis Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement.⁵²

Considering the importance of the environment to Indigenous tradition and culture, reliance upon collaborative partnerships with companies that seek to exploit the land for financial gain can create a disjunction in the goals of communities. For some community members, the intrusion of settler-owned business, and the privileging of southern financial interests may be re-traumatizing, as it reinforces the power imbalance between them, and the dominant, settler society. Slowey, for one, argues that we must recognize Indigenous people's historical dispossession by and dependence upon the Canadian state, and the mutually reinforcing relationship between the success of the resource economy and the continued dispossession of Indigenous peoples (Slowey, 2009, 230).

There is little question of the importance of resource development in the Canadian economy, and Slowey's certainty that development will happen with or without the cooperation of Indigenous communities acknowledges this fact, however odious it may seem. As such, literature regarding participation and consultation with Indigenous partners tends to take this certainty for granted. While the inevitability of development may hold true for tourism as well, it is perhaps still possible to enforce the laws around

⁵² Volume 1, article 21.4.2c(i) of the Sahtu Dene and Metis Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement states that anyone conducting commercial activities may have use of navigable waterways, shorelines and adjacent lands, once prior notice has been given to the designated Sahtu organization (Canada, Indian and Northern Affairs, 1993).

consultation, as outlined in the land claim agreement. Notzke outlines one such strategy, co-management, in her article “A New Perspective in Aboriginal Natural Resource Management”. She explains that resource-based co-management regimes are beginning to evolve in part because Indigenous people are gaining increased control over their land and resources. Also, as the dominant society’s consciousness around social justice and environmental stewardship has increased, so too has the politicization of these issues—leading to a re-framing of relationships between Indigenous communities and the rest of Canada (1995, 205).

A Case Study of Co-Management in the Sahtú: North-Wright Air

Done properly, Indigenous communities may use a co-management model in order to protect their economic, social, and cultural interests, and to ensure that a fair portion of benefits which accrue from development projects flow back to the community—be that in terms of profit, services, training, and/or employment. Notzke explains that “Aboriginal people are discovering that this Euro-Canadian device can indeed serve as a very useful tool for empowerment and result in effective impact management and in adaptive management procedures for resource development on aboriginal lands. As such adaptive management would necessarily involve all stakeholders, the most sensible framework would be a co-management scheme (Notzke “A New Perspective”, 1995, 206). For the purposes of this research project, my goal is to explore whether co-management

is an effective and appropriate model for improving the relationship between the tourism sector and local communities and their residents, and providing equitable access to employment, business, and services for Indigenous community members. There is a great body of new work on Indigenous entrepreneurship, sustainable ecotourism, and the development of ecotourism, some of which touches on the important place of co-management partnerships in the development of nascent Indigenous tourism markets. Tapping into the concept of two-eyed seeing (Bartlett, Marshall and Marshall, "Two-eyed Seeing", 2012) it's not hard to understand why a coming together of approaches often provides the best outcomes for new operators, looking to get into an established and over-saturated market. I didn't have the bandwidth to go deeply into these new literatures, but for further research, see: (Rasmussen et al., "Indigenous Entrepreneurship", 2024); (Carr et al., "Challenges and Opportunities", 2016); and (Graci, "Aboriginal Ecotourism", 2010).

Co-management is not simply a partnership between a local government and a corporation but is unique in prioritizing the relationship between members of the community and the resource or service in question. In their seminal work on co-management, Berkes and Preston define the term as "the sharing of power and responsibility between government and local resource users" (1991, 12). In the case of a typical corporate partnership, both parties would have parallel interests in terms of profit motive and management structure, however, in the case of co-management, a corporate

stakeholder (typically from outside the community) partners with a community body whose interests may be grounded in the protection and use of that resource. Notzke breaks down this feature of co-management in this way:

In regard to aboriginal people's thrust towards a right to resources-no matter whether we are concerned with treaty rights, aboriginal rights or rights evolving from comprehensive claims settlements-it is important to realize that native groups do not just want access to and a fair share of the resources in question, but that they strive for participation in the management of these resources, and that they want to share in the power to make decisions about the fate of the land and the resources it supports. Native people are also interested in an opportunity to contribute their traditional knowledge to the resource management regimes they help to set up. In short, they want to be partners in resource management ("A New Perspective" 188).

Notzke contests that while there is no established consensus on the definition of co-management, case studies help to articulate the effectiveness of co-management in a general sense. Key to these studies is an exploration of the 'characteristics' of the two management systems that are coming together, as well as the extent and 'nature' of their integration (1995, 188).

While conducting research in Norman Wells I was able to explore a Sahtú-based co-management arrangement up close, through an interview with Warren and Carolyn Wright of North-Wright Airways, Ltd. Pursuing a conversation with the Wrights was a natural step following my interview with Lin Ward. Canoe North Adventures and North-Wright Airways have adopted starkly different roles within their community, but they

are intrinsically linked. For one thing, Canoe North's base of operations is located on a lease held by North-Wright. At the time research was conducted, North-Wright was not, and had never, charged Canoe North for building and operating on one of its four lease parcels. However, it is understood that they enjoy exclusive access to Canoe North when it comes to shuttling on and off river. Warren Wright put it this way: "Somebody else with a float plane comes to [Norman Wells] and Al decides to use them, well, he's on our lease. You know like, we've got to have some control and that's partly why we never charge because, hey Al, you know like, Plummers Lodge isn't going to come pick you up and take you up the Horton because it's cheaper for you, you know like, now we got a conflict" (Wright, 2014).

Canoe North Adventures fosters few, if any, official relationships with local Indigenous organizations or businesses, but their relationship with North-Wright is robust, and pivotal to their success. On the other hand, Canoe North's charters with North-Wright contribute to their summer tourist season, which in turn supports their regular off-season operations. "It's only 6-8 weeks of flying," says Carolyn Wright, sitting at the Wright's dining room table, across a gravel yard from Canoe North Adventure's log headquarters, "while the company flies 12 months of the year. Although it's only a small part of the year, we think what it does for the summer is quite helpful" (Wright, 2014).

Warren agreed: “If we didn’t have it, you know, that summer operation, we’d have a struggle making it through the winter ... because all winter long we’re putting money out, not bringing it in. [P]ercentage wise, it’s probably a low percentage but without that you can’t make the winter” (Wright, 2014). Undeniably, this is one key benefit that the adventure tourism sector (and specifically, Canoe North Adventures) bestows upon the Sahtú region. Their charter flights help to bolster the off-season business model, ensuring that Sahtú residents have consistent, convenient, and reliable access to air travel into and out of the region.

The winter business Warren and Carolyn refer to is key to keeping the various Sahtú communities connected to the rest of the world. Aside from their summer charter business, which employs two amphibious planes out of their Norman Wells hydro-drome, North-Wright also runs scheduled flights⁵³ between the five Sahtú communities of Norman Wells, Deline, Tulita, Colville Lake, and Fort Good Hope, as well as to the larger centres of Yellowknife, Aklavik, and Inuvik.”⁵⁴ They describe themselves as the “Sahtú-Delta Connector,” and “Sahtú’s Own Airline”, aboriginal owned, and family run (North-Wright “Homepage”, 2024). Warren Wright came up to the Norman Wells area in 1974 to work for a North-Wright’s predecessor Nahanni Air. He worked with them for twelve years, starting a family with Carolyn and settling into life in Norman Wells. When

⁵³ Often referred to as ‘Sched Flights’.

⁵⁴ These flights are on conventional wheeled aircraft, between landing strips in the communities.

the ownership of Nahanni Air decided to scale down operations, Wright purchased the company, and rebranded it as North-Wright in 1986 (North-Wright “About” 2024). Due to increased government interest in extending their administrative reach into the Sahtú, and a surge in oil and gas exploration and diamond and mineral exploration, North-Wright rapidly expanded. At present they employ over 70 staff and operate more than 20 aircraft (North-Wright “About”, 2024). In 2006 they partnered with various Aboriginal Land Corporations from the four outlying Sahtú communities; in 2012 the Norman Wells Land Corporation signed on (Wright, 2014). In sum, the Aboriginal partners retain a 51% stake in North-Wright. This co-management structure serves the interests of the communities, as well as the Wright’s. On their website, North-Wright explains that partnerships with Indigenous organizations “allow the company to continue its current growth path by firmly establishing its corporate structure and solidifying its position as a regional leader, allowing the communities to have input on how to serve their residents best” (North-Wright “About”, 2024). The language here aligns neatly with the literature on co-management, wherein the needs of residents are closely reflected in the objectives of the community partner, and the company as a whole. Beyond that feature, however, Notzke explains that co-management remains difficult to define because “there is a continuum of co-management arrangements, ranging from those for example, that merely feature local participation in government research, to those in which local communities retain all the management power and responsibility” (“New Perspective”

1995, 190). To better understand where North-Wright's co-management arrangement falls on the continuum of approaches, Warren Wright provides a more granular explanation of the scheme:

We have a board and there's a representative from each settlement that comes in when we have our board meetings. So, they got the input in it, and I make sure they know when we're selling or we're buying something, you know, as far as a new asset for the airplanes or property. And, we kind of give them a heads up when we have to put the rates up and stuff, you know through their board, so they take it back to their members and you know, if there's any strong input about it they come back to [the board]. That works... that's Leonard Kenny was on the board, he'd take it back, Danny Gaudet from Deline, he's on it. He's - they're our front people to take it back to the people and say, 'Oh, you know, this is, you got to calm down on this. This isn't the problem, you know'. That's where it counts having them in the partnership, so, and the same with Good Hope. Norman Wells not so much because not involved as much in travelling as much as other communities because they have the jet service out here but it's just more investment for them (Wright, 2014).

Establishing a co-management arrangement with Indigenous organizations has also helped North-Wright employ agents in the various communities they service. Instead of struggling to relocate an outsider to the community as a point person for the company or hire through snowballing or family connections out of convenience, North-Wright has handed control of the local hiring process entirely to band partners in the communities (Wright, 2014). If the co-management model has any capacity to enhance and enrich relationships between established tour operators and Indigenous communities, it is likely

to start with employment. But encouraging companies to hire local staff, or convincing community members that they should work for a southern-based company, will likely prove challenging. On the one hand, adventure tour companies require their guides to have a baseline of training and experience reading and running whitewater, guiding groups of tourists safely down a river (some of whom may have little to no paddling skill), providing high standards of hospitality and professionalism (as understood by the dominant society)—in short, skill and experience that is difficult to acquire in small, remote communities in the sub-arctic. Alternately, community members may have priorities around family, hunting, fishing, and diverse community-based economic activities, that would be disrupted by guiding a two-week trip for employers and tourists by and large from Settler backgrounds. It's one thing to enter into an investment and corporate management partnership with a community, it's another thing to work hand in glove together. In my interview with Carolyn and Warren, Warren points out that beyond desk agents in the various communities, it has been hard to attract and retain workers in the higher-skilled positions at the company, such as pilots and mechanics—positions which would require living, working, and training away from home. “The employment side has always been a tough one ... trying to get pilots or trying to get mechanics. We've had some that are just natural, like a mechanic I think a young fellow from Good Hope - he was a natural if we just could have kept him, but you know, he, they're good sometimes for just the two months, then they're gone. Their family members

show up and they kind of lose interest, and then you don't, no reference to them again" (Wright, 2014).

The fact is that parties in a co-management partnership may be coming to the table from completely different worlds, and different systems for managing their economies and resources. Notzke explains that "the two systems are based on and operate within two profoundly different social realities, the protagonists of which have held each others' resource management systems in anything but high regard and commonly have failed to acknowledge the other as having any legitimacy. One of the fundamental challenges of co-management has been the recognition of the strength and potential contributions of each of the two systems of knowledge" ("New Perspective", 1995, 190).

Of special relevance to a discussion on tourism, is the way in which Indigenous and Settler management systems have been coming together through co-management of newly established Northern National Parks, such as Saoyú-?ehdacho, Tuktut Nogait, and Naats'ich'oh. They are of relevance in part because, like tourism, the development and use of parks involves the intersection of land rights, and leisure, concepts which have different meanings for Indigenous and Settler communities. Notzke writes:

The necessity for designing co-management schemes in the northern parks context stems from three facts. 1. A profound lack of fit between the conventional Euro-Canadian 'park' idea and northern aboriginal people's stake in the northern environment and its resources. 2. The ongoing process of the creation of new national parks in areas subject to comprehensive aboriginal claims. 3. The enduring importance of renewable resources to northern aboriginal mixed economies. Not only do aboriginal people lack a concept in

their languages for what is commonly referred to as a 'park', but the two main ingredients of the park idea, preservation and recreation or leisure, are somewhat alien concepts in aboriginal cultures ("New Perspective", 1995, 203).

This is why a mentorship model such as the one intimated in Chapter Two could be so advantageous from a training and employment perspective. This would involve a gradual integration of the two perspectives through a co-management regime, in which community organizations provide some investment, corporate governance, and screen potential hires to prepare them for training. Then, as in the case of extractive resource development, companies would provide that training as well as employment experience, helping to shepherd in a new crop of local talent from which to hire. For his part, Warren Wright is convinced that communities have an important role to play in developing the tourism sector in the Sahtú. "I kind of hope Déłı̨ę will see [more tourism] ... I think they will because Déłı̨ę's one of the biggest pushers for tourism in the area, you know, to get in the community, and I think ... it's going to work" (Wright, 2014).

In the next chapter, entitled *Destination Déłı̨ę: Completing the Circle*, I will explore the development and execution of Déłı̨ę ground-breaking tourism pilot project—what it tells us about the appeal of community-based, Indigenous cultural tourism, how established tour companies may be the key to engendering culturally-sustainable, local tourism in the Sahtú region, and whether it is possible to overcome the challenges which

have largely excluded Indigenous communities from the tourism sector and prevented them from reaping the full benefits of the lands they have regained some measure of control over through the settlements of land claims. In this chapter I will explore the concept of the “tourism imaginary” —a process through which tourists, tour operators, and Indigenous communities come to understand the narratives at play in the intricate dance of cultural tourism; further, I will introduce a novel term, the ‘market imaginary’ whereby tourism stakeholders are able to call into existence new tourism products, markets, and relationships, by drawing on a multitude of experiences, aptitudes, and perspectives to arrive at a better tourism future.

Chapter Four

Destination Déliṅe: A Case Study in Collaboration

Political and financial power gained from land claims settlement are positive steps toward a better life, but grassroots values of caring, sharing, respect and love for each other also have to be part of the mix. And these virtues easily get lost when money and power are involved. Dene control of social, environmental, cultural, political, and economic affairs must be centred in the heart (Blondin “Yamoria”, 1997, 231).

In this chapter I will explore the development and execution of the *Destination Déliṅe* pilot project, the legacy of cultural hosting that Déliṅe is renowned for, and what this tells us about the relationship between traditional Indigenous values and the development of culturally-sustainable tourism in the Northwest Territories. In this chapter I will present the final set of interviews recorded during my 2014 field research trip to the Sahtú region of Northwest Territories. These interviews give voice to the various themes introduced throughout the preceding three chapters, and their analysis represents the culmination of my efforts to document and highlight the important contribution *Destination Déliṅe* has made to the development of the region’s tourism sector. This pilot project, modest as it may have been, was unlike any collaborative tourism venture undertaken in the Northwest Territories to that point; for the people who designed and delivered it, and for the community members to whom those professionals turned for wisdom, guidance, and buy-in, the weight of external anticipation was considerable—but the rewards were many.

In this chapter, I investigate the power of tourism imaginaries to shape and guide tourism development, as well as to distort or augment relationships between Settler and Indigenous communities. I do my best to present the community of Délı̨ne as it is seen by some of its leaders, its Elders, and its youth; I also attempt to portray it as it may be experienced by outsiders—by tourists, by corporate partners, government officials, and even academic researchers—that is, as an extraordinarily welcoming, hopeful, and emergent town, perched on the edge of a vast and complex swathe of lovingly-stewarded hinterland. The *Destination Délı̨ne* pilot project provides us with a vision of the promise and practice of sustainable cultural tourism; further, it showcases the power of imagination to affect change in the process of economic development, illuminating a path forward not only for other Sahtú communities, but for aspiring communities throughout the rest of the territory.

In Chapter Two, Yellowknife: Tourism at the Centre of the Wheel, I looked at several examples of Indigenous-owned tourism operations, with a specific focus on how cultural elements connect to Indigenous cultural resurgence, and whether culture is a valid ‘destination’ in its own right or is be consumed as a ‘value-added’ component of more general tourism packages. In Chapter Three, Norman Wells: Tourism in the Sahtú, I investigated the tourism milieu of the Sahtú region broadly, pointing out that the majority of tourism-based economic activity is enjoyed by non-Indigenous tour operators, whose companies are based outside the territory, and asked whether non-

Indigenous tourism stakeholders have an obligation to consult or partner with local community members or businesses. These preceding chapters have provided important context against which to view the main act—*Destination Déline!*

For the Déline phase of my research, I recruited participants who could offer unique perspectives on three main concerns: the values and priorities of the community of Déline; the history and practice of consultation between the community and outside interests (with an emphasis on the tourism sector); and the development and execution of the pilot project *Destination Déline*. I was extremely fortunate to find many willing volunteers. For perspectives on community leadership, tourism, and consultation, I interviewed: then-current Chief (or, Ekwatide) Leonard Kenny; former Chief and self-government negotiator Raymond Taniton; Elder and historian Morris Neyelle; Tour Operator Morris Modeste, and, then-President of the Déline Land Corporation, Gina Dolphus. For some perspectives on *Destination Déline* from stakeholders outside the community, I spoke with Jason Knibbs of the Hotkey Marketing Group, Michael Blyth of Parks Canada, Warren and Carolyn Wright of North-Wright Airways and Jesse Fortner of GNWT's ITI Department, all three of whom we met in the last chapter. On the employee side, I was fortunate to speak with Suzanne Hall, manager of the Grey Goose Lodge, tourism director, and main point person for the *Destination Déline*tour package, as well as Bryanna Modeste, a young employee of the Grey Goose Lodge. Unfortunately, I was unable to interview any of the *Destination Déline* tourist participants, much as I would

have liked to, and so have to rely on Hall’s testimony regarding their reactions to the experience. Further, I would like to acknowledge that the people I interviewed do not speak for everyone in their community, organization, or company. Undoubtedly, each person in Délı̄nę has a unique perspective on the benefits and impacts of community tourism, but various constraints made a wider discussion impossible. I did not, for instance, find anyone willing to speak who was explicitly opposed to the venture. This is perhaps not surprising, considering that Délı̄nę is a very small town, and conspicuous criticism of a project that was otherwise enthusiastically embraced might lead to unwanted censure or ridicule—but this is mere speculation on my part.

Despite these shortcomings in the research, I contend that the interviews I did conduct paint an extremely vivid portrait of one community’s efforts to think outside the box, by showcasing the culture in which they have great pride, and in pursuit of increasingly diverse grassroots economic development.

Background on Délı̄nę

With a residential population of just over 500,⁵⁵ the community of Délı̄nę sits on the Southwest corner of Great Bear Lake, at the far end of what the maps call the Keith Arm. The community is located about four kilometers from the mouth of Great Bear River, which flows West to Tulita, where it mixes with the silty, snaking artery of the Mackenzie

⁵⁵ At any given time, there may be as many as 150 Délı̄nę beneficiaries living and working in Yellowknife, Edmonton, and other communities.

River; the current then flows past Norman Wells and into the Delta, before reaching Inuvik and the Beaufort Sea.



Fig. 2. Deline, Southwest corner of Great Bear Lake

The cultural history of Déłıne and its people is intricately woven into the landscape, which is why it's so important that outsiders engage in good-faith consultation before proceeding with commercial activity on the traditional lands of the Sahtúot'ıne. This history is best told by the community itself:

The Sahtúot'ıne are intrinsically linked to the Sahtú (Great Bear Lake). Their creation stories and history are written on the very Land whose name they identify with. Traditionally, Dene family groups lived in and travelled around each part of the Sahtú and its Watershed area. These founding families became known as the Sahtúot'ıne (the people of Great Bear Lake). The Sahtúot'ıne are the only people to have lived in and around the Sahtú, which is nearly 32,000 km². Over time, the family groups of the Sahtú came together and settled in what is now 'Déłıne' – meaning “where the water flows”. To this day, Sahtúot'ıne still remain connected to their traditional territories where they frequent to harvest and heal. This strong connection to Land has been credited for the strong Culture, Language, and Spiritually of the Sahtúot'ıne that has stood the test of time. Today, the Sahtúot'ıne live in Colville Lake, Déłıne, Fort Good Hope, Norman Wells and Tulı́'a which form the Sahtú Region of the NWT. Although there are close interrelationships among these communities, they are culturally, linguistically and spiritually distinct. The Sahtúot'ıne speak a Dene dialect known as Sahtúot'ıne Kədə́, which is also one of the official languages of the Déłıne Got'ıne Government. The Sahtúot'ıne have a

rich and vibrant culture. A strong connection to the land and to oral histories and traditional knowledge is important to the Dene, as well as to many Indigenous peoples. Déłıne has become an important place for cultural, spiritual and social gatherings (Déłıne Got'ıne Government, 2024).

Déłıne is blessed with terrain of immense natural beauty, and, thanks to the vastness of the lake and the sub-arctic lowlands stretching away to the tundra, the community positively rings with spiritual significance. This can be said of the Sahtú region in general, but nowhere is this as evident as in Déłıne, where schools of thirty-pound lake trout fin the hulls of your canoes, herds of caribou grace the near shore and, once the midnight sun finds its way to bed in September, northern lights ululate across the sky like fountains of electric soda. From the perspective of at least one expert, Déłıne has everything you need to launch a successful tourism product: “In northern Canada, particularly in the territorial North (Yukon, the Northwest Territories and Nunavut) the first three ingredients tend to be present: a pristine environment, access to and management power over land-based resources and a living connection with the land” (Notzke “The Stranger”, 2006, 207). A similar sentiment was expressed by Jess Fortner in Norman Wells, who proclaimed that “Mother Earth has provided an amazing place for any tourism product to really flourish. There's no question about it. I mean, once you're out on the land with a decent guide, you'll pretty much have a good time, if you're safe. You can't help it, it's so beautiful” (Fortner, 2014).

The Sahtúot'íne's own relationship to the natural beauty and ecological integrity of their traditional lands is not limited to passive appreciation but requires deliberate custodianship—an ethic that has been passed down through the generations. In my conversation with Chief Leonard Kenny, he explained that for people in Délı̨ne the land, the water, and its wildlife is their number one priority. “You keep it clean for all time, for everybody... [We] were always taught that since we were born. And it's a way of life ... the Elders say how we're here today is because of land, water and all the resources, what the Creator put on the Earth for us. And in today's world, what we see on television ... what all these industries are doing to the land ... it's just not right” (Kenny, 2014). Kenny went on to explain that the message from the Elders is that development only works if it's done the right way, namely, without harming the landscape upon which the community depends. In my conversation with former Grand Chief, Raymond Taniton, I was given my first glimpse into the potential promise of tourism as an environmentally sustainable source of economic development. In our conversation, Taniton explained that once or twice when he was Grand Chief, the council tabled resource development propositions that involved extraction and injury to the land—the Elders flatly rejected them. “That is the position from Délı̨ne... to protect the land. The way to do [economic development] is by tourism ... trapping ... artefacts, or crafts, all the museum stuff all have to come into play.” And, when he asked what sort of development would be acceptable, Taniton received this advice: “Raymond, I want you to protect my freezer’. I

said, 'Freezer?' like you know, 'So, what do you mean by freezer?' 'Fresh water, fish, and everything's out there. Take care of it.' So, we've done that. And that's why [we're] trying to work towards tourism" (Taniton, 2014). One reason tourism is so appealing from an economic development perspective is that it complements the community's own values, while making available for touring that which already residents cherish so deeply.

The Sahtúot'ıne's profound concern for the health of their land stems from a traditional reliance upon it for their cultural, social, and spiritual practices, to say nothing of their physical survival. In every conversation I had in Délıne, regardless of the questions I asked, the responses inevitably circled back to an interviewee's personal biography on the land. Take, for instance, my interview with Morris Modeste, a trapper, hunter, and occasional tour operator. When I asked how he started his tourism business, Modeste said: "I went up to grade 6, that's it ... But my dad needed help in the bush. There's eight of us in the family with me. So, he needs help. So, that's how – to trap with him, fish with him, hunt with him, how to do things, how to handle a net, how to skin animals and fish and stuff like that, fix up the fish. And that's how I learned, and I use that, where to fish, what my dad's teaching me and then into this outfitting thing on my own. And so, it helped me a lot with my dad's teaching. And so, that's how I did this by myself" (M. Modeste, 2014). In Modeste's response, there is no reference to the financial wherewithal needed to start a business, no mention of how he went about marketing the venture, or became licensed in the Sahtú – what matters most to Modeste is how he came

to have the knowledge necessary to be an outfitter, and that his father's teaching was rooted in the local environment.

One theme which emerged from my discussions is that when development activity (more specifically, tourism activity) is complementary to the routine course of things—meaning when it conforms to the values and norms long-established within Sahtúot'ine culture—then all is well. In one sense, it becomes an extension of the sort of teaching an elder relative might provide a daughter, or nephew, or grandchild, but bestowed upon someone from outside the community. However, when commercial pressure transforms the exchange of knowledge, things can go badly wrong. Take, for instance, the tragic story of the death of Modeste's own brother, who was pressured to take a client out on the lake despite unfavourable weather conditions:

Great Bear Lake, I've been warned by the ancestors and my dad, my mom, that don't – if there is a strong wind, wait it out ... You want to go on it? And when you fall in you won't last too long. It's too cold. That's why it's the boss. So, you have to wait it out. But when the tourists come in, I've been so lucky all these years there is always good weather. So, I pull through and the trips for them and that's why I've been lucky so far. But I always told them one of these days if you guys come in and big storm, big wave, I can't go out there. And you have to understand I said. That's how my brother drowned, the youngest one. He was at the lodge, some tourist pushed him, some older guy, which he – I was guiding him, either a year, two years ago, I went back, and this guy was a little pushy a little bit. So, my brother was 17 years old, and he pushed him too far and then he drowned over there (M. Modeste, 2014).

The lesson in this story is applicable beyond fishing tours and adventure tourism—it relates to the importance of respectful consultation and collaboration across industries. A company cannot operate in good faith if they are unaware of the cultural prompts and taboos associated with the use of land. And while the level of risk may differ from sector to sector, foreign companies stand to benefit if they respect the customs and traditions of the local communities which host their development projects. Why reinvent the wheel when TEK⁵⁶ is already poised to provide critical information on how best to interact with the land? Historically, the lack of consultation and respect for Indigenous values has not been a matter of ignorance, but of deliberate circumvention. As I've discussed at length in this thesis, unequal relations of power between Indigenous communities and the governments and corporations who've sought to exploit their traditional territories, has routinely ended badly for Indigenous people. Délı̨ne is no exception to this. In the case of the Sahtú Dene, the scars of exploitation have only just begun to fade. "Treaty 11 was misrepresented and quickly passed because oil was found at Le Gohlini (Norman Wells), and later in the Sahtú area, pitchblende was discovered; it was used to make the first atomic bombs. Most of my people couldn't write or read, yet they were coerced into signing documents they knew nothing about. Federal officials knew they'd better get title to the land from us quickly so we wouldn't stand in the way of all the money to be made from natural resources" (Blondin "Yamoria", 1997, 40). Délı̨ne's relationship to uranium

⁵⁶ Traditional Ecological Knowledge

mining and radiation sickness has been well-documented in papers, books, and documentary films. In short, leading up to the Second World War, uranium ore, mined at Port Radium on the far side of Great Bear Lake, was transported on the backs⁵⁷ of a generation of men from Délı̄nę. Members of the community believe that direct exposure to radiation contributed to the untimely deaths by cancer of an extremely high number of these former uranium workers (Bird, 2020), this despite a 2005 government report that found data pointing to such a link inconclusive. Fear of radiation contamination lives on in the community. In my interview with Elder and knowledge-keeper Morris Neyelle, he raised the spectre of the contamination at the decrepit wharf where I had been taken to fish for Grayling countless times.

I'd be curious about the dock. I can't tell if I go over there, I feel weird. I don't like being over there, but I can't tell if that's just because I know that there was stuff there, or if I actually, if my body feels like it's a sick place ... That's where the people go hunting, me, everybody here, for ducks. Ducks they have there in the springtime. Follow them out there and make - I could never make a fire on the dock from the wood scrap. It would just be green, a green colour. What do you call these cave radium, uranium? Whatever dust, radon, whatever, it's around there, so it goes around and you breathe it in. You breathe the dust in and it goes into your lungs. It takes 20-30 years to start bursting. It will start blowing up your lungs, and that's cancer. That's how it works ... That's why all the Elders that worked on Radium Gilbert, all the old guys died after 20-30 years because they breathe all this. That's why the scientist says don't go there. The scientists I knew that were experts (Neyelle, 2014).

⁵⁷ Literally, on their backs. The ore was shovelled into large sacks which men slung over the shoulders to unload and load from barges at an historic wharf at the mouth of the Great Bear River.

While the physical impacts of this chapter of Délı̨ne’s history may be in dispute, there is no question that the uranium mining exacted a morale injury upon the community. In a documentary film on the subject, Alfred Taniton is quoted as saying: “The poison they took out they made a powerful weapon out of it, so they dropped it on another country, and the people from that country also suffered by it,” he says in the film. “We think about that. It came from our land to be used to make other people suffer” (Alfred Taniton *in* Bird “Legacy”, 2020). It should not be surprising then that the legacy of uranium extraction in the Sahtú has led to concerns about resource development in the vicinity of the five communities, and a wariness of outside organizations exercising undue influence on the land and people of the Great Bear Lake area. The fact that Délı̨ne recognizes spiritual as well as physical harms inflicted by the atomic program is in keeping with the community’s position as the spiritual centre of the Sahtúot’ı̨ne. Owing in some measure to the strong language retention of the community (language serving as a primary vehicle of cultural preservation in many Indigenous communities) Délı̨ne has remained connected to its ancestral spiritual roots, in a way that seemed to be less obvious in other Sahtú communities. This connection was likely reinforced by the life and teachings of a Dene prophet named Louis Ayah, who lived and died in Délı̨ne in 1940. Ayah gave the people of Délı̨ne more than 30 prophecies, and a code of conduct by which to live their lives. The example he set lives on in the community and has helped his people navigate the complicated and fraught decolonial experience.

In memory of Ayah, who died in 1940 at the age of eighty-two, the Délı̄ne community built a large house for gatherings on the property where the prophet's little cabin once stood. They began to meet there regularly to talk about the things Ayah had told them. Elders urged young people to go to the meetings as often as they could. Soon the house was crowded with young and old people sharing Ayah's teachings with each other. Slowly, the community began to change. Some people began to slow down on their drinking and others quit altogether. Délı̄ne Dene used Ayah's teachings and their own culture to help people live better lives. Since then, a lot of other communities have taken the same kind of action to stop alcohol and drug abuse and other bad things. Leaders and spiritual people try to bring people closer together to help each other once again, inspired by Ayah and his teachings (Blondin "Yamoria", 1997, 113).

The imperative to bring people together for cultural and healing purposes is perhaps Délı̄ne's most enduring priority. From the testimony of numerous community members, and from my own experience volunteering at a traditional Hand-Game Tournament in Délı̄ne, and the 2014 Délı̄ne Spiritual Gathering, I can attest to the extraordinary hospitality extended by the community on both official and personal levels. In our interview, Chief Kenny tied Délı̄ne's capacity for hosting back to *Destination Délı̄ne*, drawing a direct line between an historic priority and a contemporary economic opportunity: "Délı̄ne has a tremendous record of hospitality, you know, for other communities I've been in, that type of project seems to be perfectly suited to Délı̄ne, you know? Everybody's willing to open up and share what they have, or welcome" (Kenny, 2014).

While I was in Délı̄ne, the excitement of the pilot project tended to overshadow the community's existing tourism scene, but it is not the only game in town. In fact, owing to the remarkable landscape and remoteness of Great Bear Lake, the town has been the destination of adventurous travelers for decades. Notzke identifies several factors which are key to the successful development of aboriginal tourism in Canada: "[A] pristine and attractive natural environment; access to and management power over renewable resources; 'connectedness' with the land (and/or water) in physical as well as spiritual terms; sophistication of industry knowledge and/or access to industry partnerships; capital; and, skilled manpower. Not surprisingly, the challenges faced by aboriginal people involved in the industry are vastly different depending on whether they live in northern communities, where a land-based way of life still prevails, or whether they are residents of southern reserves" (Notzke "The Stranger", 2006, 206-7). In Délı̄ne, each of these factors is present, in varying measure, and the two which may be lacking (namely, sophistication of industry knowledge, and native capital, are met through the partnerships developed in the development of *Destination Délı̄ne*, as we will see in the next section of this chapter.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Again, there has been more recent work than Notzke on the development of Indigenous tourism, the relationship between tourism and community economic development, cultural sustainability in tourism, and the extent to which engaging in tourism development validates existing claims related to proprietary rights to traditional lands, but I was unable to include those much wider conversations within this project. For more reading, please see work by John W. Colton, Kelly Whitney-Squire, Chris E. Hurst, Patrick T. Maher, and R. Harvey Lemelin. Specifically: (Hurst, C.E. et al., "Conceptualizing Cultural Sensitivity", 2021); (Colton, "Exploring the Relationship", 2010); and (Maher P.T. et al., "Sustainability, Ethics, and Authenticity", 2018).

For a bit of context about the tourism milieu in Délı̄ne, I return to my conversation with Morris Neyelle. “I believe it was 1964 when the first tourists arrived. Along the lake. Started working for money, before that it was just trapping. So, during the summer, like right now, they would be out to these lodges, all summer, until September. I remember the first one was up to September. That was how tourism started. They would fly in tourists here from the lodges to go fishing. We’re more focused on tourists... culture we have produced to get tourists to Délı̄ne ... a lot of history. It was a part of it” (Neyelle, 2014). As Neyelle points out, while the community is increasingly trying to showcase culture and history in the development of their tourism sector, the historic draw for tourists has always been fishing and hunting. In my own experience, the trout and grayling fishing in Great Bear Lake is second to none. Near the mouth of Great Bear River, you can pull in two-and three-pound grayling with literally every cast; a little further out into the lake, you are bound to catch fifteen, twenty, thirty-pound trout within ten or fifteen minutes of trolling. If you’re lucky, you might land a forty- or fifty-pounder—in short, the lake is bountiful, and makes any fishing you do afterwards in Southern Ontario seem like an utter waste of time. While commercial fishing tourism has been dominated by Plummer’s Arctic Lodges,⁵⁹ outfitter and tour operator Morris Modeste maintains two

⁵⁹ Owned by American Chummy Plummer, Plummer’s draws wealthy clientele from around the world, and provides them with fly-in lodge experiences at various points around Great Bear Lake. Increasingly, locals from Délı̄ne and elsewhere have been edged out of the guiding positions at Plummer’s.

tourism licenses, commercial insurance, and two fully equipped boats to cater to American and Canadian tourists coming up for fishing vacations. He pointed out that because of the short open-water season, and the high price of the plane ticket from Yellowknife⁶⁰ he doesn't see very much business (M. Modeste, 2014). Tourists often stop short in Yellowknife and charter fishing boats to explore the depths of Great Slave Lake—just as Don Morin and Joe Bailey expected they would. Modeste describes his business, and tourism philosophy this way:

I have two boats and so I can take four people out, limit two each boat, tourisms, fisherman. And I hire local people for the other boat to come with me out there. Mostly I have two and I take them out myself. That's what I've been doing all these years. But these ten, how many people coming in, and the one doing the afternoon, in a traditional way somebody needs to explain it more to me. If they want to ask a lot of questions, which I'm sure they could cause people – but to me I don't want to brag about things I can't promise and that's who I am. I always tell the tourist you guys come over and want to catch a fish? I will get you a fish. But every tourist they say they want big fish. They want to catch a big fish. That's one thing I can't promise. You got to be there at the right time, right day, right time then you catch them. But that one's out of my hands I say. The one thing I can't promise you. I'm sorry, that's the way it is. Nature, let nature take care of it (M. Modeste, 2014).

Before *Destination Déline* came about, providing some added structure and focus to Deline's tourism initiatives, the sector was shepherded by the Déline Land Corporation

⁶⁰ Approximately \$1300 in 2014, roundtrip from Yellowknife—which is a 50-minute flight in a tiny plane.

(DLC)—indeed, the land corp (as it's commonly called) is the wing of the Délı̄nę Gó'ı̄ne Government that represents the community within the *DD* partnership.

To begin our interview, then-President of the Land Corporation, Gina Dolphus, explained that the DLC is an organization which 'looks after' all the beneficiaries of the Délı̄nę Land Claim Agreement, signed in 1993. The land corp, as it's commonly called, administers any economic activity taking place on the lands selected in the land claim, and manages any assets developed thereon, for the benefit of all residents who are party to the land claim settlement (Dolphus, 2014). Undoubtedly, the most significant tourism asset owned by the community is Grey Goose Lodge, an extremely beautiful, modern hotel with full-commercial kitchen, a striking dining-room and lobby, and 12 spacious guest rooms. Much of the tourism activity in Délı̄nę centers around the lodge. "Tourism is very important because we own Grey Goose Lodge. We have a hotel called Grey Goose and we like to bring tourism here. We have a beautiful lake and it's famous for fishing too. We like to advertise to people throughout the world that we have a place here in the Northwest Territories called Deline. We like to invite and entertain our guests with cultural, traditional stuff and arts and crafts; all traditional homemade stuff and also how we have our traditional food prepared and all that. We like to share it with the public and tourists if they come to Délı̄nę" (Dolphus, 2014). An important feature of the lodge is that it lends an air of legitimacy and professionalism to any venture taking place in or around Délı̄nę. No matter how rough or rugged the terrain is, after a day on the land tourists can

be feted in style at the Grey Goose—as Warren Wright expresses here, while describing the experience of a group of Japanese tourists:

We didn't have the heritage hotel at the time or nothing, you know, and then they went onto Deline. Délı̄ne put on a drum dance for them, they had their Grey Goose Lodge finished, it was the first nicest, lodge hotel I would say in the whole Sahtú. The Grey Goose was done, they gave them a fabulous meal, they put a drum dance on while they're eating, they toured the town and of course their buildings and stuff. Build them some culture, they came back here, we brought them back here the next night, had a supper here, and hands down, Norman Wells was not ready for Japanese tourists. There was no infrastructure, you know other than our float base ... but Délı̄ne had everything to offer them. That was interesting. You mean, holy shit, the people are right. Now we knew at the same time they had the infrastructure, but the people weren't ready for it. To be there every time for them, every time you got to count, you got to be here for these people. So, that was really interesting (Wright, 2014).

Indeed, the lodge sets Délı̄ne apart from the rest of the Sahtú communities. However, as Wright points out, without effective staff training and the growth of human resource capacity, the lodge cannot live up to its full potential—this is true of any serious tourism venture, including *Destination Délı̄ne*, and I will discuss it in further detail in the next section. Another key element necessary to the growth of a regional tourism sector is effective marketing—without it, the lodge and community stand little chance of drawing tourists up from the South. Sometimes this is achieved independently, through a community-based approach. More often, however, remote communities rely on

partnerships with established tourism companies, tourism boards, and marketing agencies to achieve their goals, and spread their message far and wide.

Raymond Taniton, Grand Chief in the early '90s, identified this in reference to sport fishing ventures. These initiatives were launched in partnership with other companies, but ultimately fizzled out. "We tried everything we can to market the tourism issue. We did [a] partnership with Plummer's Lodge, John Plummer. We got another company to do sport fishing and all that and also with our lodge... it was a part of this whole tourism issue. Supporting the infrastructure and that the marketing is — was one of the biggest issue, marketing... and we sort of slacked down for a while ... I know some of local or individual outfitters like sport fishing or picking. I know some of the people that tried it, like myself, I tried it for sport fishing. Like, I had a license and ITI gave me some funding to do sport fishing but it's not a money-making thing. It has — you have to market" (Taniton, 2014). Throughout my interviews I routinely encountered disappointment with the outcomes of these sorts of tourism partnerships. Complaints ranged from a lack of profitability to a lack of substantive collaboration in the planning and implementation of ventures, to a disregard for traditional practices and conservation efforts. One of the most common partners has been Chummy Plummer, of Plummer's Fishing Lodges, with whom the community, and individual members of the community, have repeatedly attempted to partner at various levels for hunting and fishing ventures. Chief Kenny explained that despite the big game hunting success that Chummy Plummer

enjoyed, when the community attempted to partner with him, to launch hunts guided by their own people, they were rarely successful. “[I]n terms of making money, we never really seen that much profits, even though we know, you know, there is a lot of money made ... but by the time all the bills were paid we were [only] making a little bit” (Kenny, 2014). It’s worth noting here, that Plummer’s is Deline’s only official neighbor on Great Bear Lake. There is Délı̄ne, and there is Plummer’s—with their dozens of lodges and cabins scattered across hundreds of kilometres of Great Bear Lake. In the past, Plummer’s maintained good relations with the Sahtú Dene, providing employment for dozens of guides, cooks, cleaners, and maintenance workers from Délı̄ne and the other Sahtú communities. However, over time, and especially under the management of Chummy Plummer, that relationship has diminished dramatically. When I asked Morris Modeste about whether Plummer’s still employed people from Deline, he said no.

Since 1976, I was over there one time and he’s got about 30, almost 30 guys, from Winnipeg. Natives, I forget who they are, where the hell – I forget the natives from down there. There was 30 of them from there. There are just a few from here. At first he was doing that, hiring a few of us and then now, now he doesn’t hire anybody. Just two cooks to go to Plummer’s Lodge, not cooks but girls that help out and laundry and dishes and stuff like that. Just two girls over there, three weeks this summer, but no guys been – it’s been like - so he gets his own people from outside, University people there. Like okay where does he put his sewerage? Where does he put it? Is there any oil spill there that they’re hiding? Cause people over there, they will contact the people over here and then they’ll shut him down. They won’t give him any license to go on the water again, to pick up gas from here which by the big barge here, that he comes here for, or other things. He won’t lease any land from out there for fishing. But he still does. See what I mean? He goes to places, he flies – there’s not much fishing, it’s poor fishing around Plummer’s Lodge now. And then

he's got to go to other places around Plummer's Lodge to fly out maybe to Macintosh or ----- pass and with ----- pass we do the traditional harvesting area and – but he still goes in there and sneaks in there and fishes in there with his float plane. And he still does, like he doesn't want Délı̨ne people to know so he doesn't hire people (M. Modeste, 2014).

Modeste was not able to provide substantive evidence that Plummer's disposes of its waste inappropriately, or that they access traditional harvesting areas to make up for a depleted fish stock; rather, his suspicion seems to come from a place of frustration that the Sahtúot'ı̨ne are not being involved in major commercial activities on land for which they feel responsible. Chief Leonard Kenny also recognized the lack of employment from Plummer's but chalked it up to the professionalization of the industry. “[W]hen I was, you know, a young man I worked as a guide but at that time you didn't really need all these certificates. But now, because of the liability issue, you have to hold a guiding course certificate, and all this kind of stuff, boat safety ... all those things ... so, I think because of that, those reasons, most of the people Chummy hires now are from the South. Um, and so employment wise we don't really benefit anymore at the lodges outside” (Kenny, 2014). What Chief Kenny points out here is a major limiting factor to the labour capacity of remote communities such as Délı̨ne. Insurance companies and an increasingly discerning clientele require that guides have industry-standard training to meet certain benchmarks of knowledge and skill—even if those aptitudes have been developed in other ways, without a certification to prove it local guides may have trouble finding work or getting insurance. This is one area where partnerships with existing tour companies,

such as Canoe North or Blackfeather, could be extremely useful to the community. Staff from these companies often possess a level of certification that allows them to instruct and hold examinations; in a perfect world, southern-based companies could provide staff to fun courses for local hires or allow them to challenge an exam in lieu of completing a course.

In his role on the Délı̄nę Land Corporation Board, Raymond Taniton has been privy to much larger-scale partnerships, such as between the land corp and Parks Canada in their co-management of Saoyú-ʔehdacho National Historic Site. I was curious to learn if this experience has provided him with insights relevant to tourism-specific partnerships. His response to my question was wide-ranging and provides interesting insights into the tensions and antagonisms that play out between partnered Indigenous and Settler organizations. I asked him, simply, if Délı̄nę was better off developing a new tourism venture independently or partnering with a company that has experience launching large tourism ventures.

I'd prefer independently because whenever we go down south, it's just, its... I don't trust them. I don't how they live, but when we work together — work together then it would be good. Not, doing whatever they like, no. Do what we see fit for here, and whomever, then sure. Even, problems... partner with one company there... but you know, I just joined the land corp not too long ago. I got appointed in and I knew commerce was a part of the land corp but thinking like here we're so worried about this modern land here and here we have this barge coming in and just, I don't like that. I don't need that. I hope self-governance, important self-governance fast. We build a cabin — it's a traditional cabin, build culture cabin, culture camp, that both non-aboriginal and Dene can learn from. Now, it's been dragging out for almost 2 or 3 years

now. I told them and said, how could — to take a measurement of a stove or a building and take a measurement on our culture. It doesn't come together. Our culture built different. I told them that it's, you know, if you guys are taking too long why don't we come with our own money through the band and we build our own cabin. We're build our own culture camp right beside Parks, we had enough rules, we had enough arguments, we'll do it our self. That's easier. Yeah, without Park Canada's standard because that's our right. It's in the agreement that, nothing, the act itself will not interfere with aboriginal rights, aboriginal culture, everything. So, like I said we can do our own thing. It won't be like that, up to your Parks Canada standard or administration, what kind of ... we can just walk away from your guys. We'll do our own thing. I have a right to build right beside Parks Canada cabin. I have the right (Taniton, 2014).

Taniton's remarks highlight one of the most profound stumbling blocks to partnerships of this kind, namely, that the two parties may be approaching a given project from completely different perspectives, and with contradictory or even competing priorities. In the case he mentions above, it seems that the community's priority is to get a culture camp/cabin built and functioning as soon as possible, while Parks Canada, no doubt, has countless design and construction standards that one of their buildings must adhere to. It may seem like a quotidian detail, the carpentry details of a cabin, but in fact these sorts of disagreements may simply act as conduits for broader and more intractable conflict down the road—two to three years is a very long time to build a cabin, after all.

Despite some of the concerns raised by interview participants, much of the literature suggests that for remote communities with limited experience hosting sophisticated tour packages like *Destination Délice*, partnering with industry professionals is critical to making a tourism venture successful, viable, and sustainable

over time. And, as I learned more about how *DD* took shape, it became clear that the pilot project was nothing if not collaborative. It brought together the best of what Délı̄nę has to offer, with the resources and support of GNWT's Department of Industry, Tourism, and Investment, the tour package planning of Routes to Learning (formerly Elder Hostel), and the marketing expertise of Hotkey Marketing Group. Perhaps the greatest distinction between this collaborative affair, and the partnerships that came before, was that this was initiated by the community itself, and developed with community priorities at the centre of the process. In my interview with Chief Kenny, he emphasized that the community "decided to do this on [its] own, and this is our first year that we're doing something" (Kenny, 2014), which suggests that despite the collaborative nature of the project, it was seen by Délı̄nę stakeholders as an independent venture reflecting the community's desire for self-determination in all things related to culture, the land, and economic development.

The Lead-up to Destination Délı̄nę

Before diving into the partnership structure of the *Destination Délı̄nę* pilot project, and how it came about, it may be helpful to present at least a silhouette of the product—the size of the tourist group, the activities they will do, the duration of the tour, what the organizers hope tourists and hosts will gain from the experience, etc. While there were many key people involved in the development and delivery of the finished project,

Suzanne Hall, who served as both Grey Goose Lodge Manager and Délı̄nę Tourism Coordinator in the summer of 2014, was perfectly situated to provide an overview of *Destination Délı̄nę*. While she was not present for the initial development phase, she was effectively hired to launch it. In our interview, Suzanne Hall explained that she was originally hired for a two-week contract to provide an assessment of community and Lodge capacity to execute a new tourism plan that was based on culture immersion. As she learned more about the project, she felt drawn to participate, and when the town posted a tourism coordinator position, she applied and was quickly hired. She sold everything she owned and moved to Délı̄nę (Hall, August 11, 2014). In her acceptance interview, Hall negotiated to have management of Grey Goose Lodge tacked onto the coordinator position, because she understood how key the lodge was to a tourism venture of any significance. Hall describes *Destination Délı̄nę* this way: “The package really is the people and the culture ... [W]hat we’re selling is, spend a couple of days with the Dene, learn about their culture. And while this is really still a pristine environment, what makes it shine is the people. They’re still really steeped in culture. They’re one of the few First Nations communities that, for the most part, their first language is their original language, North Slavey. And holding onto a language really helps you hold onto that culture And because of that, they have this wonderful gift to be able to share that. And they’re very open and welcoming people” (Hall, August 11, 2014). From the first moments of our interview, Hall touched on numerous important themes around remote

cultural tourism, both its strengths and its challenges, which emerged in earlier interviews and from the literature. For instance, the need for Déliṅę to get away from a 'model community' approach, with unnatural timetables, and mock cultural displays. "[I]t's not a matter of bringing people in and putting on a show, because it's a small community. If we were to sort of put on a show ... then it's not really working with the community. We need to work with what the community has ... this beautiful way of life. So why change that?" (Hall, August 11, 2014). Another key person in the development of *Destination Déliṅę*, was Jason Knibbs, of the Hotkey Marketing Group. Based out of British Columbia, Hotkey has a lot of experience developing and marketing Indigenous cultural tourism. Knibbs was able to mediate between the priorities of the community and the realities of the market:

[W]e knew that whatever package we put together, again wasn't gonna be a mass tourism thing, it was never gonna be for what the industry calls FIT ... fully independent travellers ... this was only gonna work if it's a pre-packaged group. It has to have a heavy cultural component, so less ... activity, more ... cultural. Of course we want to get them out there on the water, you know fishing, boating and that sorta thing. Eventually we knew what we wanted to do; we knew we also wanted to try to get North Wright Air involved for you know flight—for a Mackenzie Mountains package. And we wanted to get as much of the community involved as possible, right. Doing the hand games like they just did now, getting as many of the local fishermen involved. But we also didn't want ... The important thing was we didn't wanna make something up, we wanted clients to kind of experience the daily life, you know ... These guys who are going fishing on the ... Checking on the nets anyway ... Right, so let's get ... two or three people onboard the boats. [T]his is a controlled group, you know this is what we're gonna do, this is our idea for Monday, you know when they come in, you know this is what we'd like from you, you know we'd like you to meet them at the airport. Tuesday this is what we see happening on

Tuesday and this is what we see happening on Wednesday, we'll give everybody a breather by taking them out of town. Taking them to Norman Wells, you know [get everybody] to refresh. This is what we anticipate Thursday and if we could finish off with a band on Thursday with you know with something going with a cultural feast you know for the final night, give them a really good send-off (Knibbs, 2014).

Suzanne Hall fleshed this out further, getting into some of the detailed activities that organizers hoped could be included:

So, walking with the Dene for a day could include going out and checking their fish nets. And coming back and having lunch at one of the Elders' homes, and listening to their stories, and helping them prepare the meal. Learning what that means to prepare a meal. Making dried fish and learning why that's important. And, you know, the offerings to the lake. Whenever we go out on the lake we do an offering to the lake, whether it be tobacco or tea leaves and ask for safety and thank it for the bounty that it shares with us. And depending on who you go out with, they may well share some of their local lore as well and some of their beautiful stories. So, you really get an understanding. You don't just come and go, "Oh, it's a beautiful lake and the water's so clear and that's wonderful." Which it is. But you also get a deeper understanding, because these people have lived off it, with it, on it for so long. When you learn the stories of how their ancestors survived up here, it adds a whole different depth to it. And shore cookouts, how it was traditionally done. When you'd cook a fish and have your meal on the shore. Pretty basic. Spending an evening down at the prophets' house with the Elders. We'll have a translator and just have tea with the Elders and listen to their stories. Really it can be so many different things, it's hard to pin it down and say this is exactly what's going to happen on your adventure. And you need to be open. But what I can guarantee is if you're open, there are so many amazing experiences to be had (Hall, August 11, 2014).

While the purpose of *DD* was ultimately to showcase D el ne people, culture, and way of life, and to spur alternative economic development, it was also understood from the

outset to be a pilot project—a pioneering exemplar of how to do cultural tourism in a way other towns could emulate. This secondary function, as a test case, was extremely important to partner stakeholders from government agencies, and was a point of pride for Déliņę. The hope was that *Destination Déliņę* would illuminate the strengths of the model and root out capacity and logistics issues in order to improve it for future iterations—in Déliņę, or in other communities. Hall even imagines people from Déliņę performing a training role, disseminating what they’ve learned from *DD* throughout Sahtú and beyond. “Having done it here, that could lead to other opportunities for the locals here because then they’ve been through it, they’ve tried it, they’ve learned what works, what doesn’t work ... [They] could go into other communities and help them make that transition and help spread the knowledge. Because what I bring in - I have knowledge, but it still has to be translated to what works in the environment. So, so much of it is about what works in each unique community” (Hall, August 11, 2014). This is one of the essential elements necessary for achieving sustainability in Indigenous cultural tourism—programs must reflect the unique characteristics of its hosts.

It is worth pausing here, briefly, to clarify some of our terms. For some working definitions I turn to Bunten and Graburn who identify Indigenous Tourism as “any service or product that is a) owned and operated at least in part by an Indigenous group and b) results from a means of exchange with outside guests” (Bunten and Graburn, 2009, 7); and also to Wall, who, in his article *Is Ecotourism Sustainable*, claims that ecotourism is

sustainable if it is “economically viable; ecologically bearable; and ethnically and socially equitable for local communities” (Wall, 1997, 486). With these concepts to ground our discussion, I would like to expand and merge these definitions, so that we can understand sustainable Indigenous tourism to be any service or product owned at least in part by an Indigenous group, involving an exchange of products or services with outside tourists, that is economically viable, ecologically bearable, and socially and culturally supportive/regenerative⁶¹ for the host community. Moving forward, this hybrid definition will be useful to measure the relative sustainability of *Destination Déliņę* and to more cogently identify shortcomings in the business practices of non-Indigenous tour operators in the Sahtú. Missing from the initial mention of cultural sustainability is an active mechanism for achieving this. Throughout this thesis, a common running thread has been the importance of effective consultation between business and Indigenous communities. This has underpinned examples of effective corporate or government relations with Indigenous partners, and it has been the main sticking point for Indigenous stakeholders who feel ignored or left out by businesses operating on traditional lands. The literature emphasizes the critical role that community consultation and engagement play in promoting sustainable tourism: “If sustainable forms of tourism are to be set in place it is vital to involve residents in the planning process and to keep them informed

⁶¹ I’ve altered this because cultural and ethnic equity is not simply a necessary component of sustainability but is entirely central to the project of Indigenous cultural tourism—thus we can push the standard further.

and consulted about the scope of any development” (Keogh, 1990, 158). In a case study of perceptions of tourism in Clyde River, NT, Nickels, et al. explain that “sustainable tourism development requires local input and involvement and it is imperative that local people have continual access to information about the industry, starting from the earliest stages of its growth. We believe that every effort should be made to inform the community as thoroughly as possible about the impacts of tourism development. This will aid in building local competence in the planning and management of the industry” (Nickels et al, 1991, 166). The process of engagement does not merely bestow legitimacy upon the venture, it also can serve to inform and educate the local population and provide them with avenues for further participation and personal benefit. With this in mind, an expanded view of cultural sustainability in the delivery of tourism requires substantive engagement with Indigenous communities and their membership and, if possible, with the aim of providing opportunities for individuals to benefit through participation. This is, of course, especially for ventures headed by non-Indigenous tourism operators. However, the same effort should be taken by Indigenous-owned and operated businesses—especially when the community itself is the main draw for tourists. Indigenous management of a tourism business does not exempt ventures such as *Destination Délyne* from engaging directly with the community, through consultation, in the form of public information sessions. The value of this process was clear through the development of *Destination Délyne* Without broad community acceptance and support,

tourists would likely not feel welcome in town, and would not experience the rich cultural immersion that was the very conceit of the pilot project. And the timing couldn't be better. For government agencies whose responsibilities include a tourism mandate (such as GNWT's ITI), community-based projects are increasingly appealing, as they tend to favour models of cultural sustainability that the public is demanding (Weaver, 2010, 206).

In the case of *Destination Déline*, public consultation was present from the very beginning. Before I explore what that consultation looked like, I want to explore how the project got started in the first place. Because the project was so collaborative, there is some confusion about exactly how it began. However, though the initial generative spark has proven elusive, everyone I spoke with agreed that as planning for the project gained momentum, there was major support across the board. Gina Dolphus recalls that there was immediate financial backing and planning support from the GNWT's Department of Industry, Tourism, and Investment, represented by Jess Fortner in Norman Wells. "In the beginning, when we started talking about it we got involved with their staff from Norman Wells. They helped us and the community, the Land Corp. itself and staff, we all got involved and we made it happen. They really supported us in funding and also in the resources they have available in Norman Wells. They really helped us ... with finding a professional group to help us put the plan together. So, everybody was involved" (Dolphus). For his part, Fortner seems to have enjoyed the process and felt enthusiastic

about the support he was able to provide, on behalf of the territorial government. “I’m not sure what generated the first spark, whether it was the community that came to the GNWT or the GNWT that came to the community. I’m not sure what started it, but there must have been some spark that initiated the glorious fire that we got into. [It was] a successful one, I must say. So, it was a long, arduous process, about a year and a half of developing a business plan, developing and ensuring that there was strong community support from the band office and the land corporation, and the other stakeholders in the community that have an interest in tourism (Fortner, 2014). Suzanne Hall wraps it up succinctly, outlining the four main partners: “Okay, so my understanding is that it has been in conjunction with the community (the First Nations office here) and the Délı̄ne Land Corporation, and ITI. And they contracted out to a marketing company called Hotkey Marketing, so bringing them in. I believe they were working on this for at least a year. Sort of in the background and pulling things together, pulling the resources together before bringing me in to do a launch on the program. Because I know before I got here Hotkey Marketing had already ... booked the first two groups coming in” (Hall, August 11, 2014). To recap, the project partners at this stage include the community of Délı̄ne (represented by both Délı̄ne First Nation, and the Délı̄ne Land Corporation), the GNWT’s Department of Industry, Tourism, and Investment, and the Hotkey Marketing Group, who have arranged for two *Destination Délı̄ne*-based tour groups to arrive this season. For his part, Jason Knibbs, of Hotkey, remembers the origin of the project this way: “The

company is called the Hotkey Group. It's started by my business partner, Jackie Frederick who has been working with Northwest Territories Tourism for the last few years to represent them in North America. So, two years ago she arrived here in Délı̄nę... I think it was just by accident. She was on her way to Norman Wells to meet with ITI. And ITI suggested she stop in here in Délı̄nę on the way to check out the lodge and the community, because I mean the lodge had been here, but they really weren't ... doing anything with it, as far as ... a broader tourism program. So, Jackie was here, and she met with some of the Elders here and she met Morris Neyelle and I think that's the beginnings of how this whole thing started. He took her around and she just absolutely fell in love with the place and immediately saw the potential ... for tourism here" (Knibbs, 2014). From this stage, and over the course of a year, a business plan was developed, and *Destination Délı̄nę* (as representative of the partnership between the community stakeholders and hotkey) was able to petition their government partner (ITI) for financial support through the GNWT's Tourism Product Diversification and Marketing Program, in order to invest in infrastructure and equipment, as well as to officially hire Hotkey to develop and promote the tourism product (Fortner, 2014).

Hotkey was uniquely positioned to understand what the market was interested in and make suggestions as to what *Délı̄nę's* most marketable or appealing strengths were. From the sounds of it, the process was quite dynamic. Gina Dolphus, president of the Délı̄nę Land Corporation, explains that Hokey "would come to us and give us some idea

on what should work and what might not work, and we just supported everything. Like, they have communication back and forth, so I pretty well supported everything that was in the plan. It worked out very well” (Dolphus, 2014).

Throughout my interviews around the *Destination Délique* pilot project, I got the sense that despite the variety and number of stakeholders and perspectives at play, there was a natural cohesion amongst the parties that made for an extremely positive collaborative arrangement. It seemed like people were able to engage personally with the project, above and beyond their official roles or capacities. Fortner, for instance, describes leaving his Norman Wells post for a week to help Délique pull off their inaugural tour. “So, as we were getting closer into June, July, we had some deliberations here and thought wouldn't it be nice if we could offer a little bit more support just through some human resources. So offered my services to Grey Goose Lodge for the week that the tourists were coming in, just to do whatever they needed to do, just to ensure that they had an extra hand on if they needed it. And Grey Goose Lodge accepted, so I went down there for a week when the first tour group came in August 15th. And sort of got - there's a word for it, but ... anyway. Seconded, I guess, to Grey Goose Lodge, under Suzanne Hall, the manager there, and yeah. Did whatever she told me to do, essentially” (Fortner, 2014). Throughout my interview with Fortner, he was modest about the role he played— Hall, however, said that Fortner was integral to the Grey Goose Lodge component of the experience, running around bussing and serving in the dining hall, gathering and

preparing equipment for boat tours, meeting and greeting tourists if there was a gap in programming. As a public servant, he demonstrated flexibility, dedication, and a remarkable capacity for adopting the priorities of the community. Fortner had been the manager of tourism and parks for ITI in Norman Wells for just over a year, when I met him. In our interview, he clarified the primary roles of ITI in the delivery and development of tourism in the Sahtú region. He explained that the two primary functions of the territorial government in the tourism sector were regulatory and business development support. “The Tourism Act sets out the definitions of what a tourism activity is, and then it regulates tourism activities and those people that provide those tourism activities. And so, I guess ... fundamental components behind that Act are consumer protection and safety. So, safety for the consumer as well as, I like to think, safety for the guides and safety for the tourism operators themselves. So yeah, as a regulatory responsibility we try to uphold the various, I guess, parts of the Act that speak to safety and consumer protection, primarily ensuring that the tourism operators have insurance and that they are using safe equipment. That the areas that they're operating in, the stakeholders have been informed, there's been a consultation process, everybody knows what's going on, public, transparency. And as I said, safety is, you know, encouraged, I suppose” (Fortner, 2014). The second set of responsibilities, namely business development, primarily benefits “those people who are prepared to guide or hold tourism operator licenses” (Fortner, 2014) who are looking to kick-start their

businesses or launch a new initiative. ITI helps business development through infrastructure investment, the provision of staff and guide training, mentorship opportunities, business planning, and marketing. Fortner explained that ITI also reaches out to private land holders, and land claim beneficiary organizations, in areas affected by new tourism development applications, and provides them with the opportunity for consultation and input.

Beyond the core partnership at the heart of *Destination Déline* there are a couple of adjacent partners who nonetheless offered opinions and input into the process and were actively rooting for its success. We've already heard from one of them, North-Wright air, who was poised to offer sightseeing tours as a value-added element of the immersive tour package. One further partner we have only heard brief mention of in the interview with Raymond Taniton, is Parks Canada. As the federal body responsible for the administration of National Parks, and National Historic and Cultural Sites, Parks Canada entered into a co-management arrangement with the Sahtú Secretariat and the Déline Land Corporation in the establishment of a massive National Historic Cultural Site, situated on the two most prominent peninsular lobes that make up the unique topography of Great Bear Lake, Saoyú and ?ehdacho which, together, make up Saoyú-?ehdacho National Historic Site. One of the mandates of Parks Canada is to promote the sites which it oversees, and so the site manager for Saoyú-?ehdacho, Michael Blyth, viewed the development of tourism in the area as a boon to the site, which could help to

increase visitor numbers and get the word out about the recently designated, and quite remote National Historic Site. In my interview with Blyth, he explained that from an agency perspective he would like to see *Destination Déliņę* function as a seed from which other regional projects grow, which will ultimately encourage people to get out to the sites. A second priority is to inform Canadians of the existence of the sites, and local tourism is one way to spread the good news. "That's still one of the main purposes that these places are created," Blyth said in our interview. "Aside from protecting the cultural values and commemorative integrity of the national historic site, it's that it's being set aside for all Canadians" (Blyth, 2014). Beyond his mandate to increase exposure to the sites, Blyth explained that the initial cooperative management agreement signed for administration of Saoyú-?ehdacho emphasized the role Parks Canada would play in developing local capacity alongside their Sahtú partners. As such, they have a vested interest in seeing ventures like *Destination Déliņę* succeed, providing opportunities for on-the-job training, and experience. "We're going to be watching this ... very closely, because we're gonna be looking at what is the best type of product to potentially be developing here for Saoyú-?ehdacho. I guess there's different forms it can take. Whether we branch off and we build on this current destination with the group that has come in or we look at maybe this isn't the right type of group. Maybe a different type of [tour package] would be a better fit. This past summer, we offered the same trips over in Tuktut Nogait and once those kind of develop along and we get a better sense of what might or

might not work in Délı̄ne, what the community would be comfortable with, what we may be able to market successfully, what is there a demand for. Looking at similar type trips. Possibly run by Parks Canada; possibly run by another private outfitter. Sky's the limit as far as how that might work out ... We are interested in making sure this works" (Blyth, 2014).

So far in this chapter, we've explored some of the perspectives and motivations of various *Destination Délı̄ne* stakeholders, but there hasn't been much discussion of the consultation process that was undertaken in developing the pilot project. In her article, *Is the Sacred for Sale?*, Alison M. Johnston explores the importance of consultation for those tourism products which benefit from Indigenous cultural content or exploit Indigenous territory.

Cultural content and cultural interpretation in tourism products is a major concern among Indigenous Peoples. Ecotourism companies generally profess to offer something 'authentic'. Few communities, however, recall any conversation of substance with tour companies operating in their midst. Tour operators regularly survey satisfaction among clients, without first ensuring appropriate community consent, evaluation and monitoring. In ecotourism, a destination's draw is measured not only by the extent of the biodiversity and the fashion of local species, but by the prevalence of tribal peoples. Whether an eco-tour is purely nature oriented or includes ethnic components, chances are that the local Indigenous culture(s) will be featured in the marketing package and/or trip itinerary without community permission, input or equitable exchange. This unauthorized use of culture for marketing is one of the ethical issues raised time and again by Indigenous Peoples (Johnston, 2006, 86).

While Johnston raises an interesting critique of the industry—one that is particularly relevant to non-Indigenous-owned camps and outfitters like Canoe North Adventures, Blackfeather, and Camp Wanapitei—her argument is less applicable in the *Destination Déliņę* context, wherein the community itself has developed the project in order to showcase its cultural heritage and contemporary Indigenous life. Further, from everything I heard, Hotkey and the Déliņę Land Corporation held numerous information and consultation fora and were able to adjust the plan to address concerns brought forward by the public. While the people from Hotkey Marketing are not community members, they were actively solicited by the community, and brought in as skilled partners who could lend professional experience and industry acumen to the project. Without their expertise, it is very unlikely Déliņę could have successfully launched such an ambitious and niche product to international markets. As Notzke puts it: “Tourism is about partnerships, and nowhere is this more relevant than for newcomers to the industry like aboriginal tourism product suppliers targeting a niche market. Among the various representatives of the travel trade, tour operators are by far the most important for local product providers to consider as potential conduits for accessing the international market and part of the domestic market. Having their product incorporated in a package designed by an inbound or overseas outbound tour operator not only provides the critical mass of products to attract clients but also gives the local operator access to a marketing

network and marketing expertise, that would otherwise be missing” (Notzke “The Stranger”, 2006, 110). Owing to a history replete with cases of corporate racism and exploitation, there is a tendency when discussing Indigenous-corporate relations to assume some level of coercion on the part of business and, its corollary, naivete on the part of Indigenous communities. “Too often, Indigenous hosts in the cultural tourism enterprise are described as if they have been coerced into participating in the creation and performance of an inauthentic product, stripping both themselves and the tourists who pay to encounter them of any honorable intentions when, in fact, the cross-cultural experience mediated through tourism is much more complex” (Bunten “Paradox of Gaze”, 2010, 57). Highlighting and exploring the consultation process is one way to defang prejudicial tropes associated with the development process; it restores the impression of agency and deliberation to Indigenous communities, and perhaps allows for a fair reading of corporate values.

In order to honour the enthusiasm I encountered in the community, writ large, I’d like to discuss some of the hopes and aspirations expressed by the community, engendered by the promise of *Destination Déliņę*. Beginning our discussion of the consultation process in this way should set a more balanced and accurate tone, after which I will explore some of the steps taken to prepare the community and staff for the incoming tourists. I will then raise some of the concerns that people in the community had about the pilot project, and how *DD* stakeholders attempted to address them.

Unfortunately, I was not present for any of the information sessions, and most of the testimony I gathered about community support/opposition comes from people within the *DD* team. However, I have chosen to operate under the assumption that this testimony is accurate and reflects the reality on the ground.

One of the benefits raised through official and casual consultation, was the chance for the community to showcase its traditional territory for the sake of ecological preservation. Suzanne Hall, the manager of Grey Goose Lodge and Délı̄nę tourism coordinator, explained it this way: “What I’ve learned from this community and the Elders in the community is, I believe, part of their hopes, if I’m understanding them correctly, is that people will see what a beautiful gem this is and how crystal clear the water is. And how areas like this need to be saved. And so, it will help draw attention to that matter. And it helps them save the areas from getting destroyed whether it be fracking or whatever else big corporations want to do. So, you know, if they generate income in another way it’s better for everybody” (Hall, August 11, 2014). Hall illuminates two important points: on the one hand, people hope that increased public exposure to the Délı̄nę region will encourage conservation efforts and, on the other, that with the development of tourism, the community will be less economically dependent on extractive resource development. Chief Kenny also emphasized that tourism was an environmentally sustainable option for community economic development: “Tourism is, what we’re doing here doesn’t really do any harm to the environment. You know, if all we’re doing is taking the fish out, and

there is rules in place for the tourists not to take more than one ... two a day, one for shore lunch and one to take home. So, we just, and then you're putting back the other fish, whatever you catch. So, I believe there's, it's a good way of making a living. Very little harm to the environment" (Kenny, 2014). The expressed desire for environmentally sustainable economic development presupposes that the status quo does not prioritize the development goals or values of Deline. It presumes that development will be done *to* them, and in a way that harms the environment—a presumption, no doubt, based on the historical record.

Elder and storyteller George Blondin puts it plainly: "Had my ancestors been given a chance to show the newcomers what they knew, life would probably be a lot different today" (Blondin "Yamoria", 1997, vi). Unfortunately, those 'newcomers' who have a stake in the development of Indigenous lands have rarely been eager to hear what Indigenous people have to say, or give credit where credit is due. I return to a point I made about non-Indigenous tour operators, preferring to market their experiences as taking place in an empty, harsh, and untamed landscape. By perpetuating the myth that the North is an empty frontier, its land becomes available for exploitation and its people reduced to an exotic, or otherwise useful, commodity—to trade as value-added cultural components of your canoe or fishing trip, or labour for your exceedingly productive diamond mine. In my interview with Warren Wright, he recounts a discussion with another pilot at one of Chummy Plummer's lodge docks:

Well - it's, I can give us an example, I was out at a fishing lodge once and, you know, another pilot he met me at the dock - the people I was taking in went to do their thing at the fishing lodge. So, the pilot takes me off for the coffee and he's from down south and he just comes up for summer three week to fly these airplanes up here and then he goes, maybe who knows where he goes for the winter to fly, maybe the Maldives or something. Anyways, he's this one pilot, takes me off to have a coffee and first thing out of his - we talked about local people, I said, you know he says, 'There was no natives on Bear Lake' - I'll take Bear Lake as an example - 'Bear Lake until the fishing lodges came and the white man came'. All I said to him, 'Well, how do you explain the ancient trails right up behind the lodge?', I never seen the guy again, he got up and left. We can't have people that are going to come, and shoot down the system, say that nobody lived here before the white man. That's not - the last thing is true. So, there's so much culture, and like I look at, you know as a white person with my culture, you know I don't have a culture. You know, I grew up on a farm, you know I went to the city, I don't have any culture, background, but I look at the native people, they got culture, I mean it's all there. They grew up in that culture and they're still there (Wright, 2014).

The erasure of Indigenous presence on the land serves two functions for the adventurous or enterprising Settler: to increase the sense (both internally and reputationally) that what they are doing is unique, challenging, profound, or otherwise valuable; and to justify anything they do on or to the land. Morris Modeste has a rather grim view of the relationship between his Great Bear Lake community and the government, which highlights the worst-case scenario if Sahtúot'íne land rights are not respected. "In the future, near or far future for sure they're going to come up here and destroy this water or pump it out. Cause the water's going to be like gold in the future for sure. And the land - just like we're not the boss of it anymore for me, the government's taken over it and it's

sad. We still hunt and fish on it. But I'm pretty sure they're going to, okay you have a limit of two or three caribou a year and that's all cause the caribou is down. Those kinds of things my ancestor never heard of in the past. And those kinds of things are coming and for me it's sad. But, yeah well, like I said the government, they do what they want. They're here and we're done here. That's all I see" (M. Modeste, 2014). Despite Modeste's pessimism here, the hopes expressed by the community link economic development via tourism to the preservation of the environment. There is an acknowledgement that money talks. If tourism becomes profitable in the Sahtú, there will be less ambivalence about harming the environment, on which most tourism models depend. Economic development is a significant motivating factor for Northern communities that seek to grow their tourism industry. In a case study looking at tourism in Canada's Western Arctic, Nickels et al. found that

Clyde River residents have a positive attitude toward tourism development with the industry's potential to bring economic benefits clearly being seen as a major drawcard. In the absence of any other viable means of economic stimulation such a response is perhaps to be expected. Less expected, however, is the high level of agreement on the cultural benefits of tourism and the ambivalence towards the environmental costs. In the face of ... concerns growing over the ability of Northern communities to maintain their subsistence systems there has been much attention paid to the potential role that tourism can play as an engine of economic growth. The industry is strongly promoted by the GNWT as part of a broad strategy to improve economic conditions and job opportunities (Nickels et al., 1991, 166).

Although this case study was conducted in the early '90s, the GNWT has continued to promote tourism as a favoured route toward local economic development—*Destination Déliᑎᑎ* was not only the most recent effort in this direction, but it was also the first of its kind to involve the collaboration of local businesses, Indigenous governments, the territorial government, and industry professionals. Without question, many eyes were on Déliᑎᑎ to see how things would unfold. “Mary Ann Baya and Jess Fortner, they are both representatives of ITI, and they have been wonderfully supportive. And they’re actually coming out ... they’re watching this too. They – everybody wants this to be a success. They really do. And my understanding is, you know, the Premier of the Territories is watching it too ... they’ve invested a lot, and they really want it to fly” (Hall, August 11, 2014). Speaking on economic development, Chief Kenny identified that tourism has been a priority for the community for a very long time, but only now are they putting a major plan into action. “When we did [the community economic] plan, years back, we identified having tourism as the main economic opportunity for the community, for employment, for the local ladies to generate income through arts and crafts ... so there’s some spin-offs that we saw would really benefit the community” (Kenny, 2014).

Beyond economic considerations, there was also excitement for tourism’s capacity to raise the profile of the local culture in the eyes of young people in the community. This feature was first raised by Richard Zieba, back in Yellowknife, who explained that retention of language and culture was one of the primary drivers of these sorts of tourism

development initiatives. The relationships between young people, culture and language retention, employment, tourism, and traditional subsistence practices are complex and resist simple explanations. However, these themes were raised repeatedly throughout my Délı̨ę interviews. As you'd expect anywhere, the Sahtúot'ı̨ę love and cherish their children, and want the best for them. However, the south beckons—television, social media, and videogames inject a steady stream of enticements to young people, drawing them away from this insular, remote, and, in some ways, quite limited village. The chasm between generations has perhaps never been so extreme, and finding a way to draw young people toward tradition is a challenge. This, from Morris Modeste:

My relative from Tulita visited me over here. She said Morris, you would be surprised that a lot of these young kids would like to go out on the land and they love it when they go out on the land. That's what she said, in Tulita. But here I said, how about here? She told me, well, here it's just hard for people. Like okay we need some people we don't want an older guy, we're going to take people and kids out. We need four students. And the parents say my kid's not going in the bush. They're not going to make a living like that ... the parents are afraid for them, that something's going to happen to them out there. Well, life is full of risks, hell that's the way it is. But anyway, any other kids in the community, no. All they do is – I said all the do is spoil them. I think that's what the parents are doing. And they get up nice and warm in the wintertime and then the parents cook them bacon and eggs and then they drive them to school. And the school is just over here. I said, when I grew up we only had a 45-gallon stove and we had to get wood. My dad - and then we got up early before my parents. So, we grabbed frozen bannock, then we run to school, 40 below. That's how I grew up. Hell, that's how you got to be if you want to be strong minded and to support yourself. But these kids you do that and they think they're going to get everything on a silver platter. But their parents are going to die, and they got no skills. They're going to be pitiful. That's how I see them (M. Modeste, 2014).

Naturally, Modeste's opinion of the capabilities of Délıne's young people is coloured by his own life experiences and the way he has made his living. The fact that these kids have "no skills" when it comes to fishing or hunting or trapping, does not mean they are unskilled across the board. Or, for that matter, unemployable in the south. It's a classic clash of generations, and when you speak with the youth themselves, they don't seem pitiful in the least. They simply have different priorities. I was fortunate to speak with a 21-year-old community member named Bryanna Jane Modeste,⁶² who was raised in Délıne, but also lived in Fort Smith, where she worked at a youth centre. Beyond her own life experience, working in Smith gave her insight into the challenges faced by young people in the North. "[I was a] youth worker. Basically, just [hung] out with the kids, making sure that they're like ... you gotta talk to them and ask them about their day and everything, make them feel special and all that. And plan activities with them, make sure that they're not always on the computer, cause that's what they go for, like straight when they come in through the door, they just go for the computer and I'm like no, can't do that" (B. Modeste, 2014). She went on to point out the tension between modern technologies and traditional culture and explained that the appreciation of culture and language may be a function of getting older and, with more experience in the South, coming to see those teachings as the unique and special gifts that they are. "I know when

⁶² I am unclear on her relationship to Morris Modeste, ironically. But they are not, at least, close kin.

I was a kid, I wasn't really interested in the whole land thing and the culture, but now that I'm older I'm just like, it's my culture, I gotta know it, I should have been paying attention" (B. Modeste, 2014). At the time of our interview Bryanna Modeste was working at Grey Goose Lodge and was there when *Destination Déline* took place. In this position, Bryanna took reservations over the phone, made housekeeping lists, did invoicing, and ensured the guests were well cared for as they prepared to go out on wilderness excursions. This is exactly the sort of work Richard Zieba was hoping to encourage through the tourism development policies set out by ITI in Yellowknife: "If we can get young Aboriginal people interested and involved in outdoor adventure sector of the industry, we think that they ... You know that they could be role models for other folks ... Other young people" (Zieba, 2014). The reason this sort of role-modelling is so important is that under- and unemployment is likely the greatest challenge facing young people in Sahtú right now. One of the first things Bryanna mentioned was that she hadn't expected to find work when she returned to Déline. "It's really hard for people my age to get jobs in this town. It's just ... I was happy to get a job, it's like came here, wasn't expecting to get a ... Like there's so many other people in town that are, like, probably better than me and everything, it was just ... I don't know ... Weird" (B. Modeste, 2014). When I asked her what barriers prevented young people from getting jobs, she said that there isn't enough work, and that for the positions that are hiring you need training and experience, but there are very few entry level positions available for young people to gain

that training or experience. She was encouraged by Délı̄ne’s push towards tourism and speculated that it could generate employment for her generation (B. Modeste, 2014). However, when I asked if she had plans to settle in town for the long term, she was unequivocal: “No, absolutely not. I wanna travel, I wanna go around the world. I wanna swim with the sharks and see lions ... there’s a lot I want to do to, not be stuck here. I just came back here to, like, get one last visit here and then try to move out of the north and then go down south and get on with life” (B. Modeste, 2014). The premise that one can only ‘get on with life’ by moving away from town gets to the root of why culture and language retention is such a struggle. If real life exists elsewhere, then what is the value of adopting traditional knowledge and expertise that is grounded in the community? The upshot of this is that brain drain is underway in the Sahtú. “I think there’s over 200 members out there all working for the government or mine, or other positions,” explained Raymond Taniton. “And that’s the question, how come you guys don’t come back and work for the community? Why? There’s nothing in Délı̄ne, there’s no facilities. We try to build a youth centre here, it fell apart. There’s no swimming pool, there’s no — there’s hardly anything” (Taniton, 2014). It should not come as a surprise then that the overwhelming hope of the community is that *Destination Délı̄ne* and programs like it will provide purpose and a viable career path for young people—one that allows them to remain in town and utilize a hybrid of traditional and contemporary skillsets.

Along with hopes and expectations, the consultation process illuminated concerns that the community had about making Délı̄nę a focal point of tourism development. Presumably in part due to rumours about Plummer’s harvesting techniques, some community members expressed concern about the impact of tourism on surrounding wildlife populations. Jason Knibbs recounts a conversation he had with an elder, nearly identical to the one recounted by Raymond Taniton at the beginning of this chapter—the Elder pointed out to Great Bear Lake and told Knibbs: “[I]f we're gonna do this, I need you to protect my freezer, you know which is the lake you know and protect my fridge, which is the land” (Taniton, from Knibbs, 2014). Concerns about protecting wildlife reserves stem from an understanding that these resources have been sustained for many thousands of years, in part because the human population drawing from them has remained modest. There is a real concern that once southern populations realize the good thing Délı̄nę has going, the community will be overrun with outsiders. Knibbs explains that in the initial consultation phase, “Everybody was a little bit hesitant ... I think when they hear the word tourism they think a mass of people arriving to the community and just kinda running around and you know going through you know the stores” (Knibbs, 2014). This was foreseen early on by Richard Zieba who, well before *Destination Délı̄nę* launched, noted “there's some communities that are wary of tourism, primarily the concern is that they'll be inundated with tourists and tourists will change the nature of the community” (Zieba, 2014). Zieba takes the concern a step further, explaining that it is

not simply a question of sharing resources, but a fear that a flood of outsiders will change the very character of the community. Morris Neyelle suggested there should be a limit or control of some kind (Neyelle, 2014), and Taniton echoed Neyelle, while providing more granularity on the point:

The issue was brought up many, many, many, times in the past. And... how many will come? You know, it might be nothing, [or] it might be thousands. You know, those kinds of questions brought up so many times during our meetings. Their sort of needs to be a control somewhere, you know. They have to respect our culture and who we are as Aboriginal and Dene community. So, there needs to be more marketing or more consultation with community members. That's a key thing, you got to consult your members because if you have like, you know, 500 people coming in, you know, people in town are wondering what's going on. [I]t will be good to have people come in, and see the culture, and see all the set up, like the teepees. The people are nice here, so, they share and — but they have to respect the rules, the rules, and the Sahtú Dene claim (Taniton, 2014).

Concerns about outsiders breaking the community's norms came up in the Clyde River case as well. "The main fears of residents revolve around the potential lack of community involvement in the industry and the possibility that tourists may break local rules. For the people of Clyde, local involvement in the planning and control of the tourist industry is of paramount importance. At the same time community members support gradual tourism development; allowing the potential impacts to be monitored on a regular basis. It is also clear that residents want to have priority over the use of traditional hunting and camping areas" (Nickels et al., 1991, 166). Tension between economic development and

the preservation of culture is present across sectors and has recurred in various guises throughout this thesis. As Indigenous sociologist, Duane Champagne, writes “[n]ative communities are greatly concerned about economic issues, but they do not wish to sacrifice culture, preferred institutional relations, and their internal social relations in favor of economic development” (Champagne, 2008, 1153-4). As such, the question of balance was a recurrent theme throughout the consultation process, and when viewed in the context of Délı̄nę’s traditional values around hosting and hospitality, maintaining balance and capacity becomes extremely important. If there isn’t enough to go around for community members and tourists alike, the result is not just a logistical problem, but intrudes on the community’s sense of itself. It would result in a moral injury. Gina Dolphus felt this weight, going into the project: “Yeah, we have to look after our beneficiaries plus visitors, plus tourism if we have them. So, they’re all different parties and we have to make sure everybody is well and well fed and taken care of” (Dolphus, 2014). Jason Knibbs was involved in most of the community information sessions, and he attempted to assuage the concern that the community would be overrun by stressing that it will be a small group, their movements would be controlled, and that despite some free time, they would be moving through town as a group, and not simply wandering through people’s yards and homes (Knibbs, 2014).

A further concern that comes from the literature on community-based tourism is that individual members of the community may find it difficult to gain a stake in the

development which is occurring around them. In the case of tourism development in the Inuit community of Clyde River, expressed “difficulties in gaining a stake in the ownership of the industry because they often lack access to the requisite capital and skills. The close linkages between travel wholesalers, airlines, and accommodation networks can also make it difficult for local people to become directly involved in the industry, with "outside" operators often retaining the bulk of the profits. The opportunity costs of resident involvement in the industry must also be considered” (Nickels et al., 1991, 161). So, beyond the commerce generated for makers of traditional arts and crafts, if residents are not directly participating in the program as guides, teachers, Elders, etc., then they may stand to gain nothing from the tourism, despite their inherent role as subjects of interest to the tourists.

An additional concern raised in the development of *DD* comes not from the community, but from the industry professionals brought in by Délı̄nę — this is the issue of consistency and capacity.⁶³ “There's no question the skills are here in the Sahtú all ready to deliver incredible experiences out there,” began Jess Fortner, of ITI in Norman Wells. “But there's a little bit of capacity issue as far as the small business and responsibilities, the bookkeeping and all the paperwork. And, of course, the willingness to do it” (Fortner, 2014). Gina Dolphus reiterated this concern, arguing that getting the right people in place,

⁶³ This point was raised in the Yellowknife chapter, as a potential challenge Délı̄nę would need to overcome if *DD* was going to be a success.

when they were needed, and communicating this need efficiently would involve a steep learning curve, best facilitated by communication and human resource professionals (Dolphus, 2014). As Fortner put it, it has less to do with skill or aptitude than with willingness to prioritize the tourism work. Suzanne Hall, who at the time of our interview had already been working with staff at Grey Goose, even as the arrival of the first *Destination D elinqe* group fast approached. "The expectations for long-term work are very different here. It's not – it's a relatively new thing to be working in the eight-hour day. So, you know, sort of work two hours, work hard, go home, take care of your family, all those other things that are priorities. So when we have sort of, you know, if we have this schedule block of time of about a week of going hard, eight hours every day, yes there will be fatigue ... [T]rying to find a balance between what has been traditionally of importance and somehow making that work for what the travellers' expectations are, that's been a challenge and probably will continue to be a challenge" (Hall, August 11, 2014). Although Hall was under a lot of pressure (as manager of Grey Goose Lodge, and tourism coordinator) to make sure staff were hired, trained, and reliable, she displayed equanimity about the tasks which might disrupt a conventional work schedule. "So far, I would say one of the biggest challenges would be consistency, and its consistency in delivering the personal product. And by that I mean the direct one-on-one service. Because survival here has always been sort of first and forefront, and by survival I mean where does your next meal come from? Like, if its caribou season and somebody in the

community takes down a caribou, the priority in the community is that whoever is needed to go and butcher that caribou and bring it back, that's what happens. You have to go and do that. So, then I may not have staff at work because of that" (Hall, August 11, 2014). One final capacity issue had to do with licensing and safety training around boating. Despite that many of the men and women interested in working for *DD* had been handling boats on Great Bear Lake for decades, they did not have the certifications required to be insured under the pilot project. Hall pointed out that most of the training courses operate in Yellowknife, and besides, the men may be too busy to devote an entire weekend plus travel to the certification (Hall, August 11, 2014). But to address this, ITI invested in a boat safety workshop in Délı̄nę two times in the months leading up to the tour groups' arrival (Zieba, 2014). Hall explained that the ITI workshops were not only more convenient, being in Délı̄nę, they were also "a little bit more, how do I say it, culturally appropriate. [T]hey've sort of stretched it out over a few days and made language less of a barrier for it and taught in ways that was – most of our people here, they're not used to sitting on a computer and reading through and poking buttons to take an on-line test. So, they brought somebody in, and ITI supported that to work with them. Because we know the knowledge is there, it's just translating that to one of the tests in the end. And so, all the guys that were interested went and got that. So now they can work through us" (Hall, August 11, 2014). Adjusting these courses to better resemble traditional pedagogies is not only more effective but also honours a spirit of reconciliation

and Indigenous cultural resurgence. And one of the key features of Indigenous pedagogy, is learning through experience—learning by doing. What better way to sort out the flaws in the plan, then to execute it? “So really this first group that’s coming through in a week now, will be our sort of let’s see how it flows. Let’s see what happens. Let’s see maybe what new stuff we need to change to inform them before they come in or – there’s a lot of learning to be done” (Hall, August 11, 2014). The big question that remained to Hall and other interview participants, was whether all their preparation and hard work would pay off. Would the community pull it off? Would *Destination Délyne* be everything community members and tourists hoped it would be? And, perhaps most fascinating of all, would the community and the tourists conform to the expectations they had for each other?

Tourism Imaginaries

One narrative device that has gained traction in the social anthropology of tourism is the *tourism imaginary*. This term refers to the relationship between tourist and host, and to the complex interplay of expectation and identity which guides and determines the course of that relationship. “[T]he strength and power of imaginaries, as opposed to personal imaginings, lies in the fact that they are widely shared by people and that they increasingly circulate across the globe” (Salazar and Graburn, 2014, 3). Much like a stereotype, the tourism imaginary is not simply the result of an individual’s wandering

imagination, but becomes entrenched through shared stories, positive and negative alike, distributed through various forms of media, interpersonal storytelling, deliberate marketing, etc.—the key difference being that in tourism, a host consents and may even conform to the imaginary in order to achieve a successful tourism product, while simultaneously imposing upon their visitors their own imaginaries. Salazar and Graburn identify that “[t]ourism imaginaries can be traced back to more general sources, including: parental and family milieu; early worldviews; early prototypes of self and alterity established through family interactions, stories and attitudes, even including the animal world...” (2014, 7). In the case of tourists seeking Indigenous cultural experiences, the imaginary often involves an expectation of witnessing ‘authentic’ Indigenous life—a mirage of the traditional, wherein Indigenous peoples and communities are locked in an imagined, pre-contact state of being. This imaginary may best be fulfilled through cultural displays, by staging a model community, or through other contrivances of *traditional life*, despite the fact that Indigenous communities have been active participants⁶⁴ in their own social, political, and technological progress for millennia. While the trajectory of progress in Indigenous societies may have shifted dramatically with the arrival of Europeans, they have never been static, and are as authentic riding fuel-injected Skidoos, as dogsleds. Arguably, more-so.

⁶⁴ Willingly or otherwise.

All that being said, Indigenous tour operators and employees may seek to fulfill the imaginary in order to profit from it, sometimes by highlighting those features of their heritage which they imagine play into tourist expectations, and sometimes by fabricating or recreating tropes or artifacts that have nothing at all to do with their own cultural histories (such as in the case of Don Morin including an archery range to lend his Aurora Village a more authentic flavour). However, the host's efforts are only half the equation. "In order for the imaginary to be fulfilled, visitors must suspend their knowledge that the encounter is staged expressly for them. This creates a double bind of the imaginary, in which visitors are conscious that hosts play to an imagined authenticity that can never be reached (because it doesn't exist outside of the imagination) yet hosts present heritage that is part of their lived experience within and outside the tourism context" (Bunten "Deriding Demand", 2014, 86). Throughout the scholarship on cultural tourism, questions about exoticization and authenticity continually recur. Who is positioned to judge authenticity? How should authenticity and the exotic be measured and marketed? Does reclamation of these terms by Indigenous hosts empower communities, or set them back?

In the introduction to their book *Tourism Imaginaries*, Salazar and Graburn paraphrase Amirou, arguing that "tourism involves the human capacity to imagine or to enter into the imaginings of others. Stories, imaginings, and desires, running the gamut from essentialized, mythologized, and exoticized imaginaries of Otherness to more realistic

frames of reference, often function as the motor setting tourism in motion” (Salazar and Graburn, 2014, 1). The capacity of the human tourist to temporarily inhabit the experience and perspective of historic or contemporary locals⁶⁵ is part of what makes travel tourism so compelling—to step outside your life and immerse yourself in an unfamiliar new reality can change your outlook on the world, and provide perspective on challenges you may be facing in your own life. Cultural tourism can be transformative, when done well—when the relationship between tourist and touree is predicated on mutual respect. Inherent in this relationship is a process of exchange—an exchange of ideas, goods, knowledge, feelings, money, food, artifacts and art, etc. But, as Swain argues, tourism “circulates ideas about authenticity, both in terms of tourist myths believed to re-create authentic feelings and knowledge, and the tourees’ myths, stories, and understandings of authentic feelings and knowledge, mediated by the how, whom, and what of a particular local destination” (Swain, 2014, 104). While conventional units of exchange, such as money, goods, food have a baked-in market value, cultural displays and traditional knowledge are only valuable if deemed authentic by the tourist—who may not be well-equipped to make such an assessment. “While indigenous control is the defining factor of this industry, it is limited by market demand. For this kind of tourism to generate business, visitors must agree that the hosts are indeed “indigenous” according to their own sets of criteria...” (Bunten “Indigenous Imaginaries”, 2014, 83).

⁶⁵ However superficially the inhabiting or contrived the imaginary.

Which may be an issue. As I alluded to when referencing snowmobiles and dogsleds, authentic Indigenous life in the Northwest may look quite different from the tourism imaginary of this region. The average tourist's expectations of the Northwest Territories are likely grounded in myths generated over the last few hundred years by Settler-society, for whom the far North has always represented an exotic, dangerous, and idealized space. As such, it should not be surprising if their gaze seeks the exotic, and if they use the exotic as stand-in for authenticity. The more exotic the better. But, far from discouraging unrealistic expectations of the people and communities that tourists will encounter, marketing agencies, tourism boards, and government ministries embellish this feature of the region because they understand it sells: "The NWT is blessed with a rich cultural fabric every bit as exotic to southern Canadians, and the rest of the world, as cultures beyond our borders. There is strong demand in Europe, Japan and among certain market segments in North America for travel experiences that include encounters with authentic Aboriginal culture. Authenticity is the key word here. Travelers interested in Aboriginal experiences are looking for the real thing. They want to participate and learn" (GNWT "Tourism 2015", 2013, 13). While participating in Aboriginal culture and learning from Aboriginal people are great ways to expand your perspective and enrich your life, the inference that such learning and participation is only valuable if the Aboriginal people are sufficiently exotic seems problematic. The exoticization of Indigenous communities often engenders one or both of two dominant orientations:

scorn and idealization (Theodossopoulos, 2014, 57). Either orientation represents a distortion of reality that objectifies the Other, and it can work in both directions. From visitor to host, or host to visitor. “[T]hese two types of exoticization often coexist in parallel in the tourist imagination, producing contradictions that set in motion the imagination of local hosts. The host communities gradually develop their own versions of exoticization, as they categorize and stereotype tourists. Thus, at any given moment, parallel layers of exoticization participate and inspire any given tourism imaginary” (Theodossopoulos, 2014, 57).

To avoid the worst impacts of these layers of exoticization, it is critical that cultural tourism involves an exchange based on mutual respect, wherein both parties, host and tourist, are able to present themselves in an honest and reciprocal way. Indigenous communities and tour providers should have the capacity to broadcast, for themselves, who they are, what they are about, and what they’re willing to offer tourists, instead of relying on outside parties, or foreign tour operators. Ideally, this self-expression will carry through to the level of the individual employee or guide, as well. In her article *A Case Study of Indigenous Imaginaries*, Bunten describes how Indigenous employees who are able to chart their own path through the transmission of cultural information and traditional knowledge, instead of playing up to antiquated imaginaries of domination, experience a greater sense of investment in the project. “[C]ultural identities are intimately tied to the workplace, a crucial site where workers’ bodies, identities,

ancestors, beliefs, and landscapes make up the tourist attraction” (2018, 44). As such, the way in which workers are viewed by tourists, or the ways they are compelled to present themselves, can inflict harm or provide benefit to the worker, depending on whether they are compelled to conform to inaccurate or out-dated tourist imaginaries. “Through the cross-cultural tourism encounter, Indigenous hosts navigate complex, entangled tourism imaginaries, including their own expectations for what they hope to get out of the workplace experience. Although they feel pressure to respond to the imaginaries implicit in the tourist gaze, Indigenous tourism professionals often adhere to their own cultural norms of representation, protocols regarding the sharing of traditional knowledge and concepts of the self” (Bunten “A Case Study”, 2018, 44). Often what is taking place in these interactions, in the best-case scenario, is a capitulation of the historical power-dynamic between Indigenous and Settler-society. The Indigenous hosts are likely approaching the exchange with their own established imaginary of the Settler tourist, and in order to provide a hospitable and satisfying experience for visitors, must rectify or suppress negative feelings. “Hosts’ own imaginaries about visitors are informed by their cultural attitudes toward guests and how to treat them, as well as historical relations between themselves and outsiders. For indigenous tourism workers, this often entails rectifying negative feelings about serving and entertaining members of the dominant society before engaging in any kind of tourism work. This process requires managing the very ideologies that excused ethnocide and are constantly recycled within dominant tropes of

difference. Resistance is an integral aspect of this process, a self-protective mechanism that balances out acts of self-exoticization” (Bunten “Indigenous Imaginaries”, 2014, 91).

In the following section I will explore the concept of the *market imaginary*—a term I have borrowed to describe the deliberate use of an imaginary to engender a more ethical, more dynamic, and ultimately more fulfilling tourism market, with *Destination Délice* as an unwitting Beta version. Baptista points out that “the product for sale in community-based tourism is not just any kind of product; it is a moral one, which means it has to match the imaginaries that constitute the modern moral order of the tourist-consumers. In assisting the commodification of the imaginary of community, the community-based tourism specialty is a response to the broader growth in demand for ethical goods and services mostly in, and for, Northern Atlantic societies” (Baptista, 2014, 136). As the demand for this sort of product increases, and tourists become educated on the implicit harms of adventure tours that ignore Indigenous presence, or exploit Indigenous culture and land in order to extract profits from the region, it is incumbent upon government and industry professionals to foster programs like *Destination Délice*, which seek to do tourism differently.

Market Imaginaries

The term *market imaginary* sprung to mind while I was juggling an analysis of contemporary literature addressing the *tourism imaginary*, with a review of my interview

notes. Two interviews in particular, one with Chief Leonard Kenny and one with Jess Fortner, reminded me of the link between the origin of *Destination Déliņę*, and my motivation to apply to the Frost Centre and conduct this research. At the risk of taking credit where credit is due to the people of *Déliņę* I am fortunate to have Chief Kenny's words to lean on:

Um, you know we haven't really discussed it, but I'll tell you what ... since you guys came, way back, a few years ago ... you know after you guys went through here, and there wasn't really a planned trip, I just invited you guys to come and then you guys came. And it was your word of mouth that pretty well spread like fire and about a month later after you guys got back to wherever you came, I got calls from all these canoe organizations from South ... some in Ontario, especially in Norman Wells, and uh, and a couple more, I can't remember ... but, they've been calling me saying that, you know, you guys had such an amazing experience in the community, that they wanted to work something out with the community to see if they could do it again. Bringing the canoes up, whether they start from here, or Norman Wells ... and, uh, there was a lot of hype about that after your experience, and we left it at that. And it sort of died down now, but after you guys went through here, and I think, uh Norman Wells ... the Canoe North, is the one that kept phoning me, and uh, wanting to do something. And it never really panned out, but I think the interest is there, it's just a matter of somebody, like an organization has to do something if they wanted to go ahead with it. But, yes, there's a lot of interest, and uh, I think, even from yourself, you're back here, because of your experience ... (Kenny, 2014).

The key take-away here, for me, was that once *Déliņę* had hosted a group of outsiders, had shown us around and fed us, and included us in a traditional hand-game demonstration and a circle dance, and brought us into the rhythm of their community for two days, the experience provided a reimagining of the possible—what was possible for

the community, and for the market alike. Southern-based operators and camps suddenly saw the benefit of bringing their groups to Délı̨ne, and Délı̨ne realized that what they had was special, and people wanted to experience it for themselves. In the interview with Richard Zieba, he connects the interest expressed here by Chief Kenny to the idea of developing a community-based pilot project in Délı̨ne—*Destination Délı̨ne*. Later, in Norman Wells, I reiterated to Jess Fortner that I thought most of the barriers to Indigenous participation in adventure tourism were due to a lack of imagination. On the part of the market, the sector, and the labour pool. “So, because it's not a possibility,” Jess replied, “Nobody's conceived it as an ambition or a goal?” (Fortner, 2014). I offered that if Sahtúot'ı̨ne people were given an opportunity to seek training in the Sahtú area, by adventure tour companies who set up mobile training workshops in order to develop a tourism sector that blended adventure tourism with cultural-immersion,⁶⁶ because that's what the international and domestic markets were informed was available in the Sahtú and were clamoring for If! This, in essence, is the line of thinking that I term the *market imaginary*. An entirely novel market, formed out of the imagination of a community, and a handful of industry professionals. In the case of tourism imaginaries, expectations for what one will encounter embed themselves on the subject automatically, through the regular digestion of cultural tropes, stereotypes, rumour, and marketing that is designed to play-up certain well-worn tropes. In the case of the market imaginary, a fresh view of

⁶⁶ Much as the Māori have done with overwhelming success in New Zealand.

what is possible in a community-based tourism market is deliberately crafted, and then disseminated, giving rise not only to more equitable and accurate expectations of Indigenous life and commerce in the minds of tourists, but also providing an appealing model of self-expression for would-be Indigenous tour operators, and tourism workers.

Naturally, after arriving at the term, I looked it up online. I found the work of Dr. Joanna Grabski, Dean of the College of Integrative Sciences and Arts at the University of Arizona, who explores the Colobane market in Dakar, Senegal. In the article and documentary film which came out of her research in Senegal, she explores the relationship between commerce and artistic imagination. She discovers that the market is a place where any object can be repurposed, and any person inspired toward entrepreneurship. She explores how the market connects merchants and artists to the rest of the world and allows them to transcend structural poverty and develop a level of self-determination (Grabski "How Dakar...", 2014). While we use the term somewhat differently, the spirit of creative reinvention is present in both uses, and I deeply appreciate Dr. Grabski's willingness to provide me with links to her work in the process of my own writing.

While reimagining adventure tourism through a cultural and community-based lens seems somewhat novel for the Sahtú region, the power of cultural exchange in the tourism context is nothing new. In her research about tourism in the western arctic, Notzke writes that among tourists surveyed, 94 percent highlighted their encounters with

aboriginal people. Many of these interactions were casual, or privately arranged (as opposed to featured as a component of a tour), but when asked about the highlight of their trip, “54 percent considered it to be their ‘personal encounter with native people;’ the next most frequent response, with 29 percent, referred to their ‘native guide’s performance’, and 20 percent particularly enjoyed the country food” (Notzke “The Stranger”, 2006, 91). What Notzke’s research uncovers is that what matters most to tourists are the moments wherein they are allowed to connect with their hosts on a personal level. She writes: “The strong emphasis placed by visitors on their personal encounters with aboriginal people and on their native guide’s ability to communicate his/her culture to the traveller is extremely important. It corresponds closely with the response given by most tourists when asked what they were particularly interested in: 77 percent wanted to find out more about people’s everyday life. Learning about people’s daily lives from the people themselves seems to constitute an important measure of the quality of a visitor’s aboriginal tourism experience. This sounds very simple, but is anything but simple. Putting on a paid performance for a visiting public is much easier than sharing one’s life in a genuine manner” (Notzke “The Stranger”, 2006, 91). While the organizers of *Destination Délyne* may not have had Notzke’s research in front of them while designing the pilot project, their aims line up so well with the literature that they might as well have. In retrospect it seems almost obvious, that the authenticity people are

craving is not for an exotic, imagined Indigeneity, but the authenticity of everyday life, and of human connection. Tourists simply needed to be told a different story.

It seems fitting that this research uncovers narrative as the prime mover in reshaping the tourism milieu, when Indigenous oral tradition has been making and remaking the world since time immemorial. Myths are the structures around which we organize our cultures, our commerce, our beliefs about what the world is and what is possible within it. Selwyn argues that such myths are “at once ‘liberating’ in the sense that they are vehicles for imagining the possible, and ‘desirable’ in that they lead perception away from the pragmatic realities of history and political economy. In these senses tourism myths reveal one sort of truth in the process of concealing another” (2000, 403). It is far harder to shift a paradigm than it is to rebuild infrastructure, adjust certification and insurance requirements, and train up a new generation of workers. Fortunately, the paradigm is shifting. Notzke argues that broad social changes in our society have begun to spill into the tourism industry. “Environmental concerns, a new sense of social justice and human rights and a stronger pre-occupation with healthier lifestyles coupled with the never-ending quest for ‘something new’ lie behind the growth of new types of ‘alternative tourism’” (Notzke “The Stranger”, 2006, 72). As such, Délı̄ne and other communities are striding onto fertile ground. And the implications go beyond the tourism industry itself. Bunten argues that indigenous tourism is not just an opportunity for local economic development, but “should be understood as part of a

larger project among subaltern communities to redefine dominant notions of the Other in a postcapitalist global economy. Indigenous culture promoted at touristic destinations are products of Western ontologies that tend to isolate hosts' worldviews and traditions into fixed geographic and temporal spaces that comprise the landscape of tourist imagination. With more possibilities to make connections with potential customers, indigenous communities are taking advantage of these discourses in developing tourism sites" (Bunten 83). This is where I diverge from Bunten. I would argue that when Indigenous hosts are able to create and shape the market imaginary, their product becomes decoupled from existing tourism imaginaries, and the 'landscape of tourist imagination' is profoundly transformed. The tourist's source of knowledge and experience shifts from the dominant society to their Indigenous hosts, and *this* is how notions of the Other are redefined—by bringing the tourist inside the community, however briefly, to gaze back out at the busy-ness, superficiality, and foreignness of the South. It is exactly for this reason that more of Sahtú's tourism industry should rest in the hands of Indigenous governments and operators.

In my interview with Fortner, a representative of the tourism and parks department, he was explicit about the importance of Indigenous involvement in tourism: "If you're going to have an aboriginal tourism product, it's essential. Those tourists didn't come up to see me, to meet me. Or Suzanne. They kind of, I guess, appreciated the fact that Suzanne was there to help and do her part, but they came up to meet the local people.

They wanted to learn and speak with - learn from the local people their traditional stories, their traditional ways, and see how they fish and see how they maybe one day hunt and see how they canoe and see where they go and why they go there” (Fortner, 2014). Bryanna Modeste tied the question back to the relationship between the community and their traditional reliance on the land. “We live off the land, we still do. Like even though there's a store and all that, there's Elders in there that just eat mostly fish all day and there's people that go fishing everyday and people still go hunting and they just like ... It's not like we're dependent on the land anymore, but we still just try to keep that alive you know. It's important to the people ... It's their nature, they just stick with it you know” (B. Modeste, 2014). Instead of identifying the importance of Indigenous involvement from an economic development standard, or moral standard, she points out Délı̄nę's connection to the land, as if to say ‘well, of course we should be involved. Isn't it obvious?’ She also made the connection between this work, and cultural preservation, arguing that bringing tourists to the land is “ ...helping us stay with our culture and all that, cause we have to know all this stuff, so that tourists can learn about all this stuff, you know” (B. Modeste, 2014). Gina Dolphus highlighted the importance role she feels the community has to educate the public about themselves and their way of life. “That's the thing we want to do is educate the people that come and help and support them and tell them what we have, what we're all about, what's available, what we can do to help them and we want them to promote our tradition and cultural; what we eat, where we

live, what we wear like traditional clothing, and what it's made out of and everything. So, we want our cultural tradition to be known out there. So, we're here and also what we have to offer tourism" (Dolphus, 2014). In my interview with Morris Neyelle, he described tourism as an opportunity to show the way the Sahtúot'ine live, to showcase their land and the lake, and the way they have been good custodians of the environment, in a way that is relatively safe and will provide money for the community (Neyelle, 2014). Jason Knibbs echoed this sentiment, from the public consultations he held on behalf of Hotkey. "[T]hey saw it as a positive way ... to share their culture, to share their language, you know their ways, cause what I've learned is people here really do wanna tell their stories, like they really do wanna talk about themselves ... Once you ... They're really shy, but once you get going, you know they really wanna you know talk about you know their history and their ancestors and you that whole thing. So I thought they saw tourism as a way you know to do that" (Knibbs, 2014). Tourism, as a mode for transmitting cultural knowledge, while simultaneously stimulating pride in the next generation, is not achieved through 'direct transmission, such as through a lesson or talk given by an elder to a pupil; rather, the process unfolds organically, from within an individual's own process of uncovering, such that pride and understanding bloom within the soil of an inward-looking exploration. And, as such, the act of giving (from interpreter or guide to tourist), bestows a gift upon the giver. This important benefit of tourism is of profound significance to those workers who have a chance to experience it. We'll hear more about

it from Bryanna in the final section of this chapter, which looks at the delivery and outcome of the first *Destination Délı̄ne* tour.

But, before we do, I'd like to flesh out the fantastic, collaborative hybrid model that Délı̄ne's market imaginary is leading the sector toward. In describing the importance of Indigenous participation in Sahtú's tourism industry, Fortner had one moment of qualification—he hedged on the idea of Indigenous participation in adventure tourism, without first ensuring guides meet industry standards of training and experience. Which is, on its face, a sensible requirement. In the interview he said “it's absolutely essential when you're creating an aboriginal tourism product that definitely the local people, the local guides are critical to the success of the business, I think. Or at least to meet the expectations of the tourists coming in. Now if you're into something else, like if you're talking about a different type of product, like adventure canoeing or white-water rafting or something, it might be a bit different. It might be more essential to have the best quality guide. If that person happens to be an aboriginal person who wants to do it, great. If not, I think that's up to the individual operator. It's not for us to say, or for GNWT to say” (Fortner, 2014). What this suggestion misses is that when research was conducted it was extremely onerous for local Indigenous guides to access this sort of training or build the experience necessary to qualify for adventure tour guide positions. So onerous, in fact, that as far as I could tell, there were no fully qualified, Sahtúot'ı̄ne white-water guides to be found anywhere. The entire sector was run and staffed by non-Indigenous

Southerners. Now, as Fortner points out if there are no trained local guides, companies are compelled to hire from outside the local labour pool, and there's nothing wrong with that. Adventure tourism can be dangerous, and you want highly skilled people guiding your tourists downriver. Furthermore, these trips are quite expensive, and so clients expect a certain standard of care and service. Richard Zieba, as head of ITI went into more detail about what may be lacking in the labour force:

We recognize that a lot of the expertise, especially for outdoor adventure, lies outside the territories. So, we talk with them about you know what requirements around guides, what are they looking for in guides, what skill sets are required and so that primarily ... Well, there's two issues I guess, was technical skills required, which people don't have here and how you actually go about obtaining them. And then the maturity level, so you know technical skills are not the ... Maybe it's not even the most important ... A lot of outfitters we've talked with, it's the maturity level and customer service and be able to handle conflict on trips, that's really important. So, we are actually working on a youth mentorship program at this point that we wanna launch next year that will be ... That's intended to encourage operators, northern and southern based to ... It's more than to just hire local youth, but to actually mentor them through a series of processes required to get those skills and ultimately get employment in the north and possibly own and run their own businesses ... And there's issues with literacy levels as well. And you know the ability to make a living in the industry. Like if you were a home-grown outfitter here ... Like the successful operators in the territories, most of them have operations throughout Canada and internationally. You know in order to survive, you know they're not just offering trips on the Mountain and the Keele [rivers], they're doing other things to generate income. So, there's an issue of the business model as well in terms of being an adventure outfitter that would be a barrier to say if somebody from Délı̄nę who wanted to establish themselves as a fulltime outfitter in the adventure sector ... and for somebody who's paying that much money, coming here ... Quite often it's you know people save up for years and do this trip ... They expect a high level of service on those trips, so the guide is critical ... It's really important (Zieba, 2014).

With that said, there's nothing inherent to the local labour force that suggests they could not be trained up to industry standards on all fronts. What was surprising to me was that there wasn't any real effort being made to start that process. Not only were there no local, Indigenous guides in the adventure tourism sector—there weren't even any trainees, apprentices, or volunteers. In short, despite best intentions from Canoe North, Blackfeather, and Plummer's, there was no mechanism in place by which young guides could be trained, could build experience, and in time find employment in senior guiding positions. I argue that this is due to a lack of imagination on the part of companies, and regulators. Government could and should do more to incentivize these sorts of programs and relationships. A positive first step would be to enforce existing rules around registration and consultation, so the communities know who is coming in and out of the region for commercial purposes. In my interview with Michael Blyth of Parks Canada, he admitted that there is very little regulatory oversight at Saoyú-?ehdacho, meaning that consultation between private operators and local governments is not taking place. "As far as the administration goes, it's quite experimental. It's not a national park. And we haven't gone very far with the fee structure. I think the license regime hasn't been put in place. We're really, at this point, any tour operators that are passing through and using the site should be ... if they're commercial operators, they really should have a business license with the agency. Private operators should be registering with us for safety

reasons, mainly ... Larger operators could be offering things like kayaking trips or canoe trips, hiking trips, other type of hard adventure, back country activities. If they're operating on the site, they should be applying for the business license and our board would be looking at it and they would have to discuss and make sure they make clear how they want that cultural component communicated or respected or otherwise dealt with" (Blyth, 2014). There are probably multiple reasons that the private sector does not communicate its activities to government agencies and local authorities more effectively. I don't believe operators' motivations are nefarious, but are perhaps based in inertia, and borne out of an outdated status quo that has yet to be amended by the powers that be. I would argue, however, that their ambivalence toward community engagement is troubling, and may actually be preventing them from improving their own business models, to say nothing of what they may be depriving local workers from enjoying. One critique of my proposal, levelled by Fortner, was that maybe young people in Délı̄ne and the other four Sahtú towns, don't actually have any interest in working in this sector—that there is no *there* there. I argue that that is part of the market imaginary too. Once the community sees a path to participation, some will undoubtedly take the opportunity to train—and if I can use my own decades of experience guiding as a measure, I believe the experience will be enriching and rewarding for them and may even deepen their connection to the lands and waters of Sahtú.

To speak seriously about the issue of tourism experience and capacity among community members, this was one of the concerns raised by outside tourism stakeholders, by Indigenous tour operators in Yellowknife, by government officials, Deline's tourism coordinator, and given as an excuse for not hiring locally by various tour operators. It is a real concern. Notzke identifies the same trend in her research, but points to a natural solution, writing that "[t]here is a lack of industry knowledge but frequently there are successful partnerships with experienced tour operators, some of them aboriginal" (Notzke "The Stranger", 2006, 207). The solution seems so simple! Close the gap between operators and communities, bring them together in partnership, and each will complement the other, filling the gaps in capacity and knowledge, as required. "The importance for all tourism stakeholders to recognize and consider indigenous interests and sensitivities has repeatedly been emphasized. Understanding, however, must be two-directional. Indigenous tourism is considered a niche product, which increases the importance of *professionalism* in its delivery. Even more than other sectors of the tourism industry, niche products are faced with an extremely competitive marketplace and an increasingly sophisticated clientele" (Notzke "The Stranger", 2006, 257). It may be the case that tour operators have the expertise and staff to train local hires themselves, or they could introduce communities to the professionals who train their staff down South; better yet, organize training workshops in the Sahtú for the benefit of their own junior guides, as well as local trainees. In my interview with Richard Zieba, he

identified Wendy Grater, of Blackfeather, as having suggested the GNWT could send interested candidates to her for training in Ontario. "Wendy has said that if we could get kids down to their base camp in Ontario to do their training, that she'd be very willing to bring people on as guides, it's just they have their own training regime and program and then there's the certifications as well. So, we have training funds that we could support people who are interested in obtaining certifications. And it's only \$3,000 per individual, so they'd have to do the course over several years. But we're working with Department of Education, and Aurora college on tourism labour force marketing ... A labour force market strategy and this would be one area we're pushing for" (Zieba, 2014). I asked Chief Kenny if he had considered anything like this, either sending community members down south, or bringing trainers up to Deline, and he replied that he had. "Uh, yes. Through Aurora College, Arctic College, um, I think we ... work with ECE, those are the organizations that deliver training programs for things that we need people to have. In today's world, because liability is such a big issue, you need people certified in all aspects to go to work, whether it's truck driving to, uh, tourism, you know you're gonna need certifications, so those ... even hospitality training for our local people, because it takes years and years to build a reputation but also, you can lose it overnight" (Kenny, 2014).

So, I've covered what the established tour operators bring to the table, in terms of industry expertise and training. But what about the community? Well, if the literature on Indigenous tourism has anything to say about it, most tourists highlight their interactions

with community members as important and meaningful elements of their travel experiences. In my own experience, our decision to divert from our planned route to visit Deline, and gain even the briefest insight into Sahtúot'íne culture, was more than worth the extra distance we had to cover. It enriched our trip and deepened our connection to the land for the subsequent five weeks. The landscape we travelled through was transformed from an empty, unforgiving wilderness, to one overlaid with human geography, filled with historical and cultural significance—a place that positively rang with the drums and singing of our Dene hosts. Think how much deeper we could have gone if accompanied by a local guide! Zieba put it well, saying: “There's one huge advantage for a local guide, somebody coming from the area, they can bring that aspect of local culture and you know they're from the community and from the area and I think that could really enhance the experience of the guest” (Zieba, 2014). Warren Wright echoes this sentiment, adding more detail, with specific mention of Canoe North's ultimate trajectory. “I think it's pretty important, you know in their long run of survival, if they can get...in Canoe North's case, get the guide, a guide from the community to go with them on the tours. Not only to help guide the boat but to tell the legends of the country. You know, that's all going to add to it even if they took one canoe trip a year and focused on that whole aspect, whether they even got the guide - take an elder along with them to be with the camp and tell them about... there's, they're going to learn a lot about the country and the ways of the people in the past. Its - take the Keele River, that river's

got so much history from the aboriginal side, from the moose skin boats coming down there, they got people that help built those last ones. There's a history there to tell about the moose skin boat because these, some of those old Elders they grew up in those, you know, coming down the river in the boat as a kid, you know, so. It's all those stories that they could add to that one trip... I think it could go a long way" (Wright, 2014).

While there may be hurdles to increasing the number of local guides, or to creating new collaborations between established outfitters and the five Sahtú communities, there is ample evidence supporting the need to do so. Arguably, the 2014 *Destination Délı̄ne* pilot project was one big step in the right direction and, considering their legacy of hosting significant cultural events for all the people of the Sahtú region, it is only fitting that Délı̄ne should be the one to lead the charge.

Destination Délı̄ne: *How Did it Go?*

Finally, I would like to present some of the results of the pilot project, in the form of testimony from key players who helped bring *Destination Délı̄ne* to fruition. As mentioned earlier, I was unable to speak with the tourists who participated in the tour, but a strong impression of their time in Délı̄ne comes through in the words of their hosts. Suzanne Hall and Jess Fortner provided vivid accounts of the broad strokes of the tour, and I will begin with them to interpret events and convey the spirit of the week. First, from Suzanne Hall:

It was overwhelming and wonderful at the same time. From the moment the group arrived, I know that they felt welcome, they walked in ... You kinda have to come to Délı̄ne to get it, but you get out of this little plane on a dirt tarmac, you know a dirt runway and look around and you see no faces that look like yours and a whole bunch a nature. And I can only imagine what they're thinking in that moment, and they walked up the stairs and I greeted them ... Raymond Taniton was there to greet them, and Chief showed up at the airport as well to greet them. And their smiles started then it really didn't stop. It went from you know a handshake the minute they got off the plane to hugs when they left four days later. It was an amazing experience for everybody I think, the staff as well as the tourists. Absolutely amazing, overwhelming, exhausting, but fabulous. I learned so much more ... You know I thought I'd done all my research and had all my bases covered and if something goes awry, this is what we're gonna do and you know we ran down the list on a few situations from plan A to plan F and you know I really only had a plan B, so ... But the neat thing is that it all came together, it may not have always come together in the way that we had put pen to paper, but Délı̄ne steps up, the residents of this town were so behind making this happen and so if you know if we were missing a key person for an event, it sorta went down the chain. Suzanne needs someone to do this bang, bang, bang, bang, bang and someone would show up. So, it was a really neat experience to see all that come together and you now in most cases from the guest perspective, it certainly wasn't seamless in some cases they noticed, but what they also noticed was how everybody did step up and fill the gaps and made them feel welcome and kept them entertained until a plan was in place and they were just floored by it. You know the local people here are just ... I think it's like anything, no matter who you are and where you are, you tend to ... Although you appreciate the bounty of what you have in your backyard, you take it for granted, you don't see it as unique and beautiful and I think it was a really eye-opening experience for a lot of the staff in that they were able to see things again through the guests' eyes and to really appreciate what a fabulous backyard they do have. And you know what everything got delivered in the end. It was whether or not also that the group wanted to participate in some of the activities, which was an interesting learning curve for us as well. You know the tour company had said you know they had laid out this is what we want to happen, but then the physical capacity of the group that came didn't necessarily match all of the activities that we had scheduled. So, then we had to come up with some plan B's for that, which was a learning curve for us too, we didn't necessarily expect that, so now we know, but the first night that the group go here, it was the final night of Délı̄ne's Spiritual Gathering and so we

were able to whisk our guests from the airport, have some dinner. We had Michael Blyth and some other participants from Parks Canada come and do a presentation on the area. Urban Academic as opposed to a cultural presentation and then we took them down to the drum dance and it was family night, so there were lots of games going on, lotsa laughs, the guests really liked it and you know what was really amazing is it was brought to Chief Leonard's attention that our tourists were very tired, they'd had a long night the night before out looking for the northern lights and then all day travelling. So, they were really tired and needed to go home and the dance probably wasn't going to actually start until after midnight. So, we actually ... 2 is when it actually started and so Chief Leonard sorta cut into the activities that were going on in the moment and switched them over had a couple dances so that the tourists would be able to see what a drum dance is and participate before they had to leave, which right there is ... That's a testament to how welcoming this community is. So that was amazing, I think you know the guests were blown away right there, that such a change in a schedule is such significance for the community ... They were willing to make that adjustment. They did ... What else did we do? We went canoeing and that was a capacity one too, not all of the guests were able to take part in that, so we came up with a backup plan and some of us went for a drive and went berry picking so that we were able to have similar experiences, just one was on the water and one was on the land. We went out and checked the nets ... The fishing net, with a couple of local gentlemen and then learned how to clean the fish and they loved that... (Hall, August 26, 2014).

And, in reference to the collaborative nature of the project, Hall commends Fortner, whose efforts clearly went beyond the remit of a typical government official:

There was so much support for this, there really was. Jess Fortner who I believe that you met, is a government employee, works for ITI and he is a government employee like I have never seen in my life. You know he was all over it helping us out. He did dishes, he bussed tables, he served coffee, he helped me with climbing up a cliff to get guests where we wanted to get them. You know and you think of a stereotypical government employee, that's not what you picture and you know Jess pulled out all the stops to help make sure that those little behind the scene things that maybe weren't running a seamlessly as we would have liked, that all got done and it's really nice to know that you have such a

strong support team behind you that really are cheering you on (Hall, August 26, 2014).

Fortner was equally enthusiastic about the outcome of *Destination Délı̄ne*, and his comments rhyme with what we've learned from Notzke and Nickels, et al. about similar community-based tourism efforts in Clyde River and the Western Arctic:

I had a great time. I had a great time, yeah. It was really nice to see the community so accepting. I wasn't sure, actually, going in whether or not the community as a whole would be accepting of tourists, but my concerns were unwarranted, because from the very first time these tourists showed up at the airport, community leadership was there, they were shaking their hands. Other members of the community there welcoming these tourists. And that's what started the ball rolling and it went right into the evening. There was the big drum dance, which the community was out for. Very accepting of the people there. And that was probably the big turning point right there, just seeing all that support and making the tourists feel comfortable and welcome, and the sort of barriers were dropped. They had a great time after that. Really, really successful. And the feedback that we're sort of seeing from those tourists near the end of the trip and after they had left, sort of reinforced that idea that the, I guess, ability to be so close of the community and even doing just simple things like making bannock or checking the nets and then watching a local cut the fish up and fish fry it, was very special for them. What the people in Délı̄ne were doing was no different than, I think, what they do on a regular basis. They check net, they cut fish up, and they fry it. They make bannock, they go for walks and pick berries and they drum dance, and they play hand games tournaments, they hang out with their Elders and drink tea. They bead. They sew. And that's what those tourists really just went to see. I probably wouldn't change that much. It wasn't broken so why would you fix it? Being able to make that connection and have that sort of a little bit more intimate relationship with the people in the local community. That was the big difference maker. Some of the comments we heard from the tourists where they've been to beautiful places with incredible landscapes, but never got the chance to sort of meet and talk and hang out with the locals as they did in this trip, which is what made this one more special for them than some of these other places they have been (Fortner, 2014).

This impression reiterates the importance of the human connection in the delivery of cultural tourism and supports Déliņe's belief that their community was engaging enough in its own right to warrant a tour package based exclusively around the daily life of the community.

While the tour was a resounding success, there were certainly challenges—some of which were unexpected, and others, around capacity and reliability, that had been anticipated well in advance. Jason Knibbs, from the Hotkey Marketing group, identified the reliability of staff and the commitment of community members as significant challenges moving forward. “You know ... when we say we need three boats on Tuesday, you know we need ... You know and they're getting paid for it, but we need them to show up, you know. And you know we need them to be engaging too ... We need to stress it, you know these guests they wanna hear your story, you know so don't be afraid to you know to talk to them and they're gonna ask questions” (Knibbs, 2014). I infer from this statement that some of the guides, staff, or community members were less forthcoming than he would have liked, however, it's worth noting that this was the first such tour of its kind, and it would be unreasonable to expect the whole community to suddenly professionalize overnight. As Hall pointed out, “there's always things you can improve upon. But one of the charming factors about going to visit a place like Déliņe is you kind of maybe almost want to see the flaws. There's nothing wrong with it. It's okay

to see the flaws. This isn't Las Vegas" (Hall, August 26, 2014). Though Hall and Knibbs are both industry professionals, their perspectives on the issues came up seem somewhat far apart, and I can't help wondering whether it has something to do with Hall living in the community full-time, with plans to remain there for an indefinite period. Perhaps her own immersion in the culture and community gave her an appreciation for the different pace and set of priorities in this remote Dene town. She also had expected to iron out some of the issues for the second tour which was scheduled later in the month. Sadly, that was not meant to be. Due to a few participants dropping out due to poor health, the group was not considered viable, and the tour had to be cancelled. Hall explained: "As I've started having to tell people that the second one has cancelled, it has certainly been met with some ... Has been met with disappointment. You know they really jumped on board with this, they came together, and you know they were really in that frame of mind, okay we wowed number one, now let's get number two, let's do this thing. And so, I'm sad for them and I'm sad for us too, I would have liked a second go round, because of course like I said it didn't off seamlessly and it would be nice to have that second chance to see what we could do to you know do some preventative maintenance and make sure some of those little oopses don't happen. But things happen, so" (Hall, August 26, 2014). Despite Hall's equanimity about the disappointment, the loss of the second tour points to the relative precarity of this nascent project. In its first year, certainly, there wasn't the sort of demand or momentum that people would have liked to see.

I was curious what the tourists themselves were like, and whether that factors into the viability of the model. The literature suggests that the type of tourist visiting a community strongly determines what sort of connection will take place between tour group and locals, and whether the exchange will be smooth. Nickels, et al. explain that “[s]ome tourists will want limited interaction with local residents, while others will seek contact. Some tourists will expect high quality services and amenities and will not adjust to local conditions while others find such adjustments appealing” (1991, 162). From what I heard, the group were engaged and very interested to hear what people had to say. Early in my field research, Don Morin raised a great point, explaining that if the people headed to Délı̄nę were interested in coming all the way out to Great Bear Lake to learn from the Dene, then “they probably are coming in with some level of knowledge or some level of respect for the community” (Morin, 2014). This seems to have been born out in the case of *Destination Délı̄nę*. One potential challenge stemming from the tourist demographic here was that they were quite elderly, for the most part. This may relate to why participants for the second tour were compelled to drop out, last minute. While this demographic typically has the time and resources to engage in travel of this sort, there are also programming challenges inherent in accommodating them. Morris Neyelle stated that they couldn’t do much at all. “They’re elderly. So, they’ll fall apart, they’re cold here... younger people — go through waves. You can’t do much with them. You have to take care of them actually, really good” (Neyelle, 2014).

While conducting my post-*DD* interviews I was keenly interested in the benefits experienced by the workers, guides, and community members, even in the short term.

Suzanne said that she saw a tremendous amount of sharing and learning between tourists and hosts, as well as significant growth among her staff, in terms of skill and knowledge:

You know for the people coming in, the outsiders for a lack of a better word, it's ... The ability to appreciate another culture and how they've adapted over time. But then the adaptation is continuing with them and through them as well, which is also very interesting to follow, and I haven't had a whole lotta time myself yet to reflect on that and sort of what that means. And yeah for the staff to see what this opportunity even means. Most of them ... You know I had a lotta questions about well what is a tour group, what does that really mean and nobody asked me that until they were here. You know what does that mean, who does the bookings, where do they come from? And then that also opens up a whole bunch of learning opportunities and we pull up a map and say this is where New Jersey is and this is where Alabama is and you know to put it in context, otherwise it's just somewhere out there. So there really are learning opportunities from every angle (Hall, August 26, 2014).

Beyond gaining skill and knowledge, cultural workers often express an increased sense of pride in being able to share what they know and realize how much it's appreciated by outsiders. Bunten states that "[w]orkers generally gain positive feedback from their interactions with tourists, including a sense of pride in sharing their culture in addition to any monetary compensation. For those who work in the heritage industry year after year, the positive outcomes of working in tourism generally outweigh the negative" (Bunten "Paradox of Gaze", 2010, 55-6). Bryanna Modeste, as an example of, expressed

wonder that these tourists would venture all the way up to Délıne to learn about her culture:

I was amazed, cause like they came from the US, like all these different places in the US, it was like whoa they came all the way up here to Délıne, that's weird. I was like I didn't even know they heard about this place, you know. And I liked it, they were so nice. That one lady Pat was just like always coming and talking to me and I was just like hey. It was fun kinda getting to hang out with all of them. I got to show them my drawings and they're like oh my gosh you're such a good artist and all that and I was like I wanna become a tattoo artist one day. They're like you should try it and I was like I will. I like it when tourists come to Délıne and it's like if they had a good time here and they leave, and they'll tell more people and then more people will come here and then it just ... It spreads (B. Modeste, 2014).

The enthusiasm Bryanna demonstrated for the tour experience goes a long way to validating the project simply in terms of creating opportunities for young people in the community. It appears that this is just the sort of cultural sharing which serves to empower and engage young workers, instead of exploiting their perspectives and experience as a side-show element of a larger tourism product. The community-based model engenders mutual respect between tourist and host. Bunten contends that "Indigenous employees express a preference to work for these kinds of tour companies, where their personal experiences add value to the products they deliver. They come to work with a different sense of investment in their labor than what might be expected of workers in places that merely play to imaginaries of domination; their cultural identities are intimately tied to the workplace a crucial site where workers' bodies, identities,

ancestors, beliefs, and landscapes make up the tourist attraction. In this setting, one that is both indigenous and Western at the same time, employees seem to genuinely enjoy sharing aspects of their cultures, past and present, with their customers. They see their work as a way to celebrate their cultures and educate the mainstream public” (Bunten “Deriding Demand”, 2014, 90-1). When I asked Bryanna whether this sort of work could keep young people in town, she was far more hopeful than she had been during our first interview. “Absolutely, except I’m not like a tour guide person. But like I know other tour guides, they should like teach some of the younger kids how to do that, [but they probably do] and everything, just teach them how to like take people out and show them what’s what and where’s good fishing spots and all that. And then maybe the kids would like stick around and like be a tour guide and all that for the hotel here and stuff like that” (B. Modeste, 2014). Bryanna’s pride in Délı̄nę and the cultural legacy of the Sahtúot’ı̄nę was in full evidence. “Like, I have this thing for Russian languages and then at the Spiritual Gathering I was listening to them speak Slavey and all that and I was just like okay, Russian is second now, and Slavey is first. I was just like, it’s an awesome language. More people should just come and enjoy Délı̄nę and just be here and learn the ways of our people” (B. Modeste, 2014).

Chapter Five

Conclusion: Where Do We Go from Here?

I would be remiss if I didn't acknowledge the significant span of time between when field research was conducted for this project, and when the majority of the thesis was actually written. One of the benefits of extending a project of this kind is that it allows for reflection on how the sector is changing over time—it provides a sense of *trajectory*. Without question, the NWT tourism sector was increasing in popularity and sophistication throughout the twenty-teens. Visitor rates were up, and so too were the number of unique tourism products (GNWT, "Tourism 2020", 2016). However, the Covid-19 pandemic, and multiple bad forest fire years completely derailed the sector, and the territory is still struggling to get back on track. It is no wonder then, that the most recent iteration of the GNWT's tourism plan is titled: "Tourism 2025: Roadmap to Recovery".

With some sadness I must report that in the long-run, *Destination Déline* proved not to be a commercially viable product. One silver-lining is that its stakeholders were spared the ravages of the tourism climate that befell the territory in the early 2020s. It is my understanding that *Destination Déline*, and the resources surrounding it, continued into a second season, but that the marketing team could not tap into a reliable source of tourists to make the tour really sing, and so the project stalled out. With that said, the impact of the planning and development process, and the generative spark which

originally ignited the imaginations of the people of Délı̨nę, continue to impact the economic and social direction of the community. Over the last ten years I have seen at least a half dozen professional videos, images, and travel articles highlighting and celebrating Délı̨nę specifically—beyond this, each subsequent tourism plan put out by the tourism department at the GNWT has featured images from the community to showcase the welcoming and culturally significant tourism options available in the territory. For these and obvious personal reasons, I don't believe the pilot project, or the research conducted about it, was in vain. While this research captures only a brief moment in time, that moment proved a fascinating lens through which to view the remarkable and exciting Sahtu region, in all its complexity and diversity, and I'm extremely grateful to have been given the opportunity to be part of that.

Throughout this thesis, I have explored the complex relations of power which exist in Canada and, specifically, the Northwest Territories' tourism sector. As part of my research process, I was fortunate to speak with many talented and engaging people, who brought insight and nuance to the discussion. In Yellowknife I spoke with various prominent Indigenous tour operators, whose understanding of international clientele and the regional market laid the groundwork for imagining what it might take to launch a successful tourism product in the remote expanse of the Sahtú region. In Norman Wells I spoke with Jess Fortner of the GNWT's Tourism and Parks Department, and enjoyed a ranging discussion about the limitless possibilities, and real challenges faced by

Sahtúot'ine communities wanting to engage more deeply with tourists, through cultural and community-based tourism models. In the Wells, I also spoke with non-Indigenous tour operators, who expressed real interest in partnering with local businesses, and hiring locally, if only the labour force were interested, and qualified. Finally, I spent many weeks in Délı̄ne, learning from its people, and sharing in the welcome and hospitality that they are renowned for. During and after my field research I grounded much of my analysis in contemporary literature on the subject, diving into such topics as Indigenous-Settler relations, Indigenous-corporate collaboration, and the tourism imaginary.

Following my time in Délı̄ne, in 2014, I have often wondered what challenges persist that threaten the viability of small-scale, grass-roots projects like *Destination Délı̄ne*. While I have maintained many of my relationships with people in Délı̄ne, Norman Wells, and Yellowknife, I have not kept up to date with the state of tourism in town. In 2014 there was a lot of hope that tourism could be transformative for the town. Morris Neyelle, the late Elder, hunter, fisherman, and friend, put it this way after spending time with the *DD* tourists: "I like people to know there's still people that depends on the land and it's so important up here. That's why I keep ...maybe it will change them, maybe they will see it differently. They don't know what they need or what they have...through tourism too [they may learn]" (Neyelle, 2014).

Despite the optimism for what Délı̄ne could offer the world, the fact remains that Délı̄ne is only a tiny point of light in a vast arctic sphere, and it is a challenge for a specific

niche product to stand apart and gain notice, especially in such a remote location. As Joe Bailey warned, “[y]ou can't compete with Yellowknife, you know. You know they can get all of their experience here; they can do canoeing here you know. They can do everything here and they have this ... Like I said this thriving little, tiny metropolis here and it's pretty cool and yeah and it's tough for Sahtú ... Tough for Sahtú, I wouldn't be ... I don't know how they're gonna do that” (Bailey, 2014). Competition for northern cultural experiences comes from much farther afield too, such as Yukon and Nunavut—even Iceland and the other Scandinavian countries. During our interviews, Jason Knibbs of Hotkey argued that Délı̨ne had to really jump on the opportunity in 2015, because other regions were going to snap up potential tourists.

I think our challenge is and what we stress to DLC all the time is this may be unique here, but you know Nunavut can do it, Iceland is definitely doing it, you know with their First Nations product. So, the competition is really ... You know with the Northwest Territories, it's say Iceland, right when you have a direct flight from Edmonton to [Reykjavik] or whatever it is over there right, from Iceland Air is now starting to fly direct. You know Vancouver Edmonton over there, for the same price as flying to Yellowknife ... Yellowknife to Deline, right that's what the competition is. Right, so if you know ... You know if you're gonna buy into it, you know let's buy into it, but the opportunity is right now ... Right, the opportunity is right now. If we dither and you know if you [wait] on it, you know it's never gonna happen, right because know Iceland Air has just giving away seats you know to get people there. Actually, I think it is Iceland, there's a small First Nations Community up there that is getting cruise ship traffic. And that was a complete fluke where their community is so similar to Délı̨ne right, they were losing their youth to the cities, right to universities in the cities, cause there's no jobs in the little place. They're traditions were dying off, you know the language was kind of going away, cause they're so remote. And then one day ... I can't remember how it was, but somebody from the cruise ship, cause the cruise ships go right past there out there. One of the guys from the cruise ship decide to stop in into the town and

just see what was going on, cause he sees the colourful houses and you know as he go by and he starts talking to these people and he recognizes there's a product here. So now the cruise ships, they stop and it's now a ... I mean they're not staying overnight, but they're getting people off the cruise ships, you know taking them over in Zodiacs and then landing in the town and they're meeting the people, they're staying for lunch and they're buying you know arts and crafts like crazy. So there's so many parallels of how this little community seized on that opportunity, they didn't wait and say oh you know we don't know about this and blah, blah, blah ... They said yeah do it, bring them. You know as long as you're not you know trumping all over our you know our land and you know that sort of thing. You know we want it, you now bring it in here, because they recognize what tourism and dollars can bring you know to the community. Yeah. So that's kind of the ... You know the opportunities now, you know cause everyone else is ... They'll do it, you know if Délı̄ne doesn't wanna do it, you know someone else will do it" (Knibbs, 2014).

Knibbs' point makes sense from a strict marketing and business perspective, but as we know, there are many other factors which need to be considered as the community embraces such an intimate and personal type of tourism. Furthermore, Délı̄ne will not be able to succeed in its tourism ambitions, regardless of how enthusiastic it may be to achieve them, if some of the capacity issues are not addressed. And, for all the reasons discussed in previous chapters, it is unreasonable to put that challenge entirely on the shoulders of the Délı̄ne Land Corporation, or the people of Délı̄ne.

Following my field research, I developed a series of policy options that would bolster attempts to increase Indigenous participation and employment in the tourism sector and improve community capacity so that Délı̄ne could maintain its cultural tourism sector in a sustainable and viable manner. For Délı̄ne, and the other

Sahtú communities, to fully realize their touristic potential there must be policies set in place that acknowledge Indigenous ownership of the land, and incentivize partnerships, and employment within the adventure tourism sector. The reason adventure tourism is so important here, is that it is the mainstay of Sahtú's tourism sector overall and it requires more training and expertise, so if the labour force is trained to participate in adventure tourism, they will be well-rounded for employment across the sector broadly.

With an increased focus on tourism in the Northwest Territories, it seems a unique and exciting moment for the industry to address the issues raised in this paper and determine an effective and respectful way forward. While *Tourism 2015* has set out an ambitious and forward-looking program of priorities, it has failed to address matters of social sustainability.

The two most pressing concerns for the adventure tourism market in the Sahtú region are: 1) a profound lack of consultation between Southern-based tour operators and Indigenous communities, in contravention of Canadian law, which requires consultation, accommodation, and free, prior, and informed consent for commercial activities taking place on lands administered under a land claim agreement, and 2) a near total lack of Indigenous employment in adventure tourism products which, at best, deprives community members of an additional and occasionally lucrative income stream and, at worst, harms community members by perpetuating colonial policies of exclusion and

erasure. While these issues have deep-seated historical origins, there are several basic policies the GNWT Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment and its partners could initiate that would serve to improve the adventure tourism environment and promote Indigenous participation.

To address the first issue, the Sahtú Secretariat, the five charter communities of Sahtú, and ITI must establish a formalized consultation practice, that would synthesize community, regional and territorial consultation, and penalize or freeze out companies that attempt to circumvent the consultation process. Tourism licensing should be decentralized from ITI to the Sahtú Secretariat (and other regional councils), and ITI should provide tax-based incentives for companies that partner with Indigenous community organizations. In effect, this would transfer (or 'devolve') power from the territorial government to regional Indigenous governments who are, in fact, the rightful custodians and beneficiaries of the land as laid out in the Sahtu Dene and Metis Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement. In Chapter 19, section 1 of the agreement, one or more designated Sahtu organizations shall receive title to the settlement lands, and through this/these organizations the participants "shall manage the control and use of Sahtu lands, including: a. the development and administration of land management programs and policies; and b. the charging of rents or other fees for the use and occupation of Sahtu lands" (Canada, "SDMCLCA", 19.1.6.ab, 1993). By disentangling tourism permission structures from the territorial bureaucracy, the Sahtu region could begin to free adventure

tourism from the settler colonial project—guaranteeing the sector’s relevance throughout the forthcoming process of Indigenous resurgence. Beyond this, a forfeiture of permitting authority would serve as an acknowledgement that, especially given Canada’s constitutional recognition of Indigenous land claim rights, and its ratification of the UN’s Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Indigenous political and territorial self-determination is a fundamental pillar of reconciliation between Indigenous peoples and settler society.

In order to address the second issue, that of limited Indigenous employment in the sector, ITI and its partner organizations should establish adventure tourism training programs geared towards Indigenous and other Northern youth; communities should work in partnership with ITI in this endeavor such that traditional and cultural values could be integrated into program curriculum; businesses should be encouraged by industry partners to establish mentorship programs which would further train Indigenous and other Northern youth as to the specifics of program delivery for their particular clientele and activities, and through the consultation process indicated above, businesses should be compelled to consult with communities on program content to enrich the tourism products offered to their clients. It seems clear that without a system of penalties and incentives many businesses would just as soon ignore their obligations to social sustainability. However, an alternate reading of these relationships, with a clear emphasis on ethical responsibility, will demand that businesses operate in accordance

with certain standards of respect. Andrew Barker puts this obligation at the forefront of his assessment of alliance-building between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. He writes that “[i]n order to restore a measure of balance to the inevitable power relationships and imbalances in society, Settler people must be willing to take the power that has been granted to them by virtue of their ‘membership’ in Settler-society and put it at the disposal of those whose power has been violently co-opted or stolen” (Barker, 2010, 323-4). And if companies are not swayed by a moral imperative, there should be backstops in place to revoke the tourism licenses of companies who are not compliant with the laws.

The proposals offered above would provide an opportunity for tour operators to live up to the spirit of this call to action and participate in restoring the balance of power within the Sahtú region. They would empower Indigenous communities to protect and revitalize their cultural traditions and regain control of the lands outlined in the Land Claim Agreement. And while the implementation of these proposals would mark a drastic shift in adventure tourism policy in the territory, industry partners would ideally introduce them gradually and organically, as they became integrated and accepted.

The impetus to do this must come from the Sahtú Secretariat, and the various community land corporations, as they are the ones with the mandate and the jurisdiction to initiate change. The GNWT’s Department of ITI is also critical, as they would have to relinquish some of their licensing authority. It is unlikely that much effort will come from

the established outfitters, as evidenced by a general lack of progress over the last ten years, and no public signaling via websites of a renewed interest in developing relationships or engaging more closely with Sahtúot'ine partners.

For the most part, there have been few regulatory changes over the ten years since research was conducted for this project. While the certification and licensing process for tour operators has become more rigorous, it remains under the control of the territorial government, as opposed to regional Indigenous governments (Sahtu Land Use Plan, 2023, 74). The consultation requirements are not particularly detailed—companies seeking a tourism license must present their business plan by email to various stakeholders and land use organizations, for acceptance. No public presentations are required and, as such, there is not much opportunity for public involvement, critique, or collaboration in business plan design or implementation.

In terms of the second concern, around Indigenous employment and participation in tourism, I received some glimmers of hope in the form of email correspondence and a phone call this past winter. After a brief email exchange, I had a phone call with Joel Hibbard of Nahanni River Adventures and inquired as to whether his company actively engaged with the Indigenous communities closest to his canoe routes, and whether Nahanni River Adventures employed anyone from these communities. Joel explained that NRA was interested in empowering Indigenous youth through a direct ownership model, instead of simply through low-paying seasonal work. As such, he co-founded

Dinjii Zhuh Adventures with river guide and Tetlit Gwi'chin, Bobbi Rose Koe. The blog page for this program can be found at <https://nahanni.com/blog/dinjii-zhuh-adventures/>, and states that “Joel Hibbard and Bobbi Rose Koe unite heritage and ecology through Dinjii Zhuh Adventures. This venture revives ancestral Gwich'in routes with their Indigenous Youth River Guide Training Program, promising a transformative expedition along the Wind River” (Nahanni River Adventures, 2024). This is an extremely exciting development and aligns totally with my own hopes for how the industry expertise of established tour companies could come together with the historical and cultural knowledge of local people, for whom the land holds such power and meaning.

I also received some very positive feedback from Ken MacDiarmid, owner and director at Blackfeather, who detailed the efforts Blackfeather makes to connect and collaborate with local communities. In a personal email to me, he wrote:

I am in constant communication with area co-management committees, Hunting and Trapping Organizations, local land managers and politicians, partner businesses that are indigenous owned and our local employees. Our successful navigation of the permitting and licensing process in many areas of Nunavut and the NWT requires substantial demonstrations of local engagement and community benefit. I believe we had around 15 indigenous guides/interpreters directly on the Black Feather payroll last season. Some were for shorter stints so are not on our guide page on the website, but their employment at Black Feather is an important part of our evolution as an organization that is trying to work towards indigenous participation, storytelling, and culture as an important aspect of our adventure tourism business. We also partner with many Indigenous organizations to offer our guests Interpretive programs in Fort Simpson, Norman Wells, Tulita, Pond Inlet, Kimmirut and other communities. We also have an indigenous relations

coordinator, and her activities are frequently shared with our community through our monthly newsletter.⁶⁷

While there remains substantial work to be done to achieve equitable representation in the adventure tourism sector, the correspondence included above should provide a measure of optimism. This, coupled with a general shift in public interest toward Indigenous cultural experiences, and the mainstreaming of calls for Indigenous-Settler reconciliation, makes me confident that the tourism sector is actually on far better footing in 2024 than it was in 2014, despite the extraordinary challenges introduced by the global pandemic, and unprecedented wildfire seasons in the Northwest.

It should go without saying that there is ample opportunity here for further research into these and related topics. As the region continues to evolve, it is abundantly clear that tourism remains an indelible vehicle for the exchange of ideas, cultures, and experience in the Northwest Territories, having much to teach Canada about Indigenous-Settler relationship-building, grounded in human connection. With the support and buy-in of the Sahtu communities, and some luck, I hope one day to return to this work in service of the Sahtúot'íne, and in furtherance of a more dynamic, and culturally-sustainable adventure tourism sector in the Sahtu.

⁶⁷ Personal email between Ken MacDiarmid and author, dated December 30, 2023.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX A: Copy of Trent Research Ethics Board Approval Letter



Toban Leckie

Canadian Studies & Indigenous Studies

June 19, 2014

File #: 23376

Title: Collaborative adventure tourism in Sahtu, NT: A model for culturally sustainable economic development

Dear Mr. Leckie,

The Research Ethics Board (REB) has given approval to your proposal entitled "Collaborative adventure tourism in Sahtu, NT: A model for culturally sustainable economic development".

The committee strongly suggests and encourages you to encrypt any data that is being collected that contains any personal or identifying information. Please add a statement to your consent form concerning this. For help with encryption services, please contact Trent's IT Department.

Please add a running footer to your consent form, with the date of Trent REB approval and consent revisions number (e.g., 01-Jan-12, Version 2), so that the consent form used can be easily identified in future.

When a project is approved by the REB, it is an Institutional approval. It does not undermine or replace any other community ethics process. Full approval depends upon the approval of all other bodies who are named as stakeholders in this research.

In accordance with the Tri-Council Guidelines (article D.1.6) your project has been approved for one year. If this research is ongoing past that time, submit a Research Ethics Annual Update form available online under the Research Office website. If the project is completed on or before that time, please email Karen Mauro in the Research office so the project can be recorded as completed.

Please note that you are reminded of your obligation to advise the REB before implementing any amendments or changes to the procedures of your study that might affect the human participants. You are also advised that any adverse events must be reported to the REB.

On behalf of the Trent Research Ethics Board, I wish you success with your research.

With best wishes,

Dr. Chris Furgal

REB Chair

Phone: (705) 748-1011 ext. 7953, Fax: (705) 748-1587

Email: chrisfurgal@trentu.ca

c.c.: Karen Mauro

Compliance Officer

APPENDIX B: Copy of Aurora Research License

Licence No. 15476 File No. 12 410 987 July 07, 2014



Aurora Research Institute - Aurora College

PO Box 1450 Inuvik NT X0E 0T0

Phone: 867-777-3298 **Fax:** 867-777-4264 **E-mail:** licence@nwtresearch.com

July 07, 2014

Notification of Research

I would like to inform you that Scientific Research Licence No. 15476 has been issued to:

Mr. Toban M Leckie Trent University 590 Indian Rd. Toronto, ON

M6P 2C2 Canada

Phone: (416) 937-9287 Email: tobanleckie@trentu.ca

to conduct the following study:

Collaborative Adventure Tourism in Sahtu, NT: A Model for Culturally Sustainable Economic Development (Application No. 2705)

Please contact the researcher if you would like more information.

SUMMARY OF RESEARCH

This licence has been issued for the scientific research application No.2705.

The Principal Investigator intends to conduct interviews with Deline community members, community leaders, industry officials, and adventure tour operators. Through these interviews the Principal Investigator will determine the extent of consultation between the adventure tourism industry and the Deline community, what the barriers are to participation in the industry for Indigenous members of the community, and whether collaborative adventure tourism projects in Sahtu can provide a model for socially and culturally sustainable economic development in Northwest Territories. While there is a growing body of academic literature relating to Indigenous/corporate partnership in Canada, little has been written on the potential economic and social benefits afforded by Indigenous/corporate adventure tourism partnerships. This research will focus on questions such as: How might effective partnerships between Deline and the adventure tourism industry be developed and nurtured? Are these the sorts of relationships the community and the tour operators are interested in developing? If they are, how can they be productively and sustainably nurtured?

This research project will consist entirely of one-on-one interviews in the communities in which research participants live and/or work. Interview questions will address four distinct categories of research participants: Indigenous community members from Deline, NT who are interested in the employment/consultation opportunities afforded by the adventure tourism industry in the Sahtu region of NT; community leaders from Deline (eg. the ekwahtide [chief] of Deline, the economic development coordinator for the Charter Community of Deline (CCD), the tourism coordinator for CCD, and Deline Elders interested in embedding cultural traditions in tourism practices and products); tourism industry and Government of Northwest Territories (GNWT) officials; and, tourism providers and operators licensed to operate in Sahtu, NT (eg. Plummer's Fishing Lodges, Canoe North Adventures, Blackfeather, and Camp Wanapitei). Interviews will be conducted in person with research participants and recorded with a digital audio recorder. While the interview questions attached to this application will serve as points of entry into the interview conversation, the intention is that these interviews will evolve into more open-ended conversations as research participants see fit.

Research participants will have their opinions and perspectives included in the thesis project, a project that the Principal Investigator hopes will be of use to Deline as it moves forward in its economic development objectives, specifically with regards to the development of tourism products offered by the community. This study will potentially benefit the five Sahtu Dene communities of Deline, Tulita, Colville Lake, Fort Good Hope and Norman Wells by encouraging increased employment/consultation opportunities for Indigenous community members, and by highlighting the need for economic development models that reflect the needs and values of Dene communities. It will potentially benefit the adventure tourism industry by providing information critical to developing tourism products that are culturally and socially

responsible, and arguably more rich and fulfilling for clientele. The research project will also contribute to the literature relating to effective Indigenous/corporate partnerships.

After the interviews have been conducted the audio recording of each interview will be transcribed, and the transcription for each research participant will be sent to them for review. Research participants will have the opportunity to edit the content, make recommendations regarding additional information they'd like to see included, determine whether their names or identifying content should be omitted or anonymized, and given the opportunity to withdraw completely from the research project. Once the final draft of the thesis is complete the document will be sent to the

Charter Community of Deline band council for review, allowing them to make general recommendations for accuracy before submission and defense of the dissertation. Once defended the thesis will also be made available to research participants from the tourism industry, the GNWT, and tourism operators. Final copies of the thesis will be sent to each of the tour operators, the GNWT Department of Tourism, and to the CCD Band Council. The Principal Investigator is hoping that circumstances will allow me to return to Yellowknife, and Sahtu, to give presentations to communities interested in learning more about the findings of this research project, and the adventure tourism industry generally.

The fieldwork for this study will be conducted from July 27, 2014 to September 5, 2014.
Sincerely,

_____ Jonathon Michel,
Manager, Scientific Services

DISTRIBUTION

Akaitcho Territory Government
Aurora College - Yellowknife/North Slave Campus Charter Community of Deline
City of Yellowknife
Deline First Nation
Deline Land Corporation
Norman Wells Land Corporation
North Slave Métis Alliance
Northwest Territory Métis Nation
Sahtu Secretariat Incorporated
Town of Norman Wells
Wek'èezhìi Renewable Resources Board
Yellowknives Dene First Nation - Lands & Environment

APPENDIX C: Copy of Email Recruitment Letter



Subject: Invitation to Participate in a Research Study on Adventure Tourism

Dear *(Insert Name)*,

My name is Toban Leckie, and I'm a Master's student at Trent University, in Peterborough, ON. I'd like to invite you to participate in a research project I am conducting this summer, entitled "Collaborative Adventure Tourism in Sahtu, NT: A Model for Culturally Sustainable Economic Development." The purpose of this project is to enhance the understanding of the relationship between the Sahtu Dene community of Deline and the adventure tourism industry in the Sahtu region of Northwest Territories. This project will focus on: the degree of consultation between the adventure tourism industry and the Deline community; what the barriers are to participation in the industry for Indigenous members of the community; and, whether collaborative adventure tourism projects in Sahtu can provide a model for socially and culturally sustainable economic development in Northwest Territories. I'd like to add here that I am interested in gaining a better understanding of the adventure tourism picture as it currently exists in Sahtu, and the Northwest Territories generally. I am not hoping for any particular results, and am not attempting to push a particular ideology around collaborative partnership. I am interested in a diversity of opinions, and will respect your perspective throughout the research and dissemination process.

This research project will consist of approximately 20-30 interviews with research participants from five demographic categories: members of the Deline community, Deline Elders, Deline elected leaders, tourism and GNWT officials, and adventure tour operators. Each interview will consist of a 30-120 minute discussion with the principal investigator (myself), and though I will work from an interview question guide, I welcome and encourage all interview participants to take the conversation in a direction that they feel is most appropriate, given their knowledge, expertise, and interest. Interviews will take place in a location of interview participants' choosing (including their home, office, or an appropriate community space), in Yellowknife, Norman Wells, or Deline, as is most convenient. Participants will have an opportunity to review their interview transcripts before results are disseminated, at which point they may edit or omit content from their interview data, or request to withdraw from the study altogether, without any repercussions. Interview participants may choose to have their name omitted or anonymized in the dissemination of research results, unless that is impossible due to their position as public officials. Interview data will be encrypted and stored in a locked case in my possession throughout the research process in order to ensure it remains confidential and secure.

I have contacted you because as *(insert position within organization)* of *(insert organization name)*, I believe that you may be able to offer important insights into some of these questions. This is a really exciting time for Northwest Territories, and I feel very lucky to be able to work and live in your community, even if it's only for a short time.

If you have any questions or concerns, or if there's any information you'd like to provide me with as I move forward in this research project please don't hesitate to contact me by email at tobanleckie@trentu.ca, or by telephone at (416) 937.9287.

Thanks for your time, and I look forward to your response.

Take care, Toban Leckie

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please contact:
Toban Leckie
590 Indian Rd.
Toronto, ON
416.937.9287
tobanleckie@trentu.ca

This study has been reviewed and approved by the Trent University Research Ethics Board, the Trent University Aboriginal Education Council, and the Aurora Research Institute. For questions regarding participants rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Trent University Research Ethics Board (Karen Mauro, Compliance Officer, 705.748.1011 ext. 7896, or kmauro@trentu.ca), or the Aurora Research Institute (Nicole Hammer, Licensing Co-ordinator, 867.777.3298, or niccole.hammer@auroracollege.nt.ca).

19-June-2014, Version II

APPENDIX E: Copy of Research Participant Informed Consent Form



Collaborative Adventure Tourism in Sahtu, NT: A Model for Culturally-Sustainable Economic Development

Primary Contact/Principal Investigator: Toban Leckie **Telephone number:** (416) 937-9287 **E-mail address:** tobanleckie@trentu.ca

Student Faculty Supervisor: Julia Harrison **Telephone number:** (705) 761-6034 **E-mail address:** jharrison@trentu.ca

The purpose of this project is to enhance the understanding of the relationship between the Sahtu Dene community of Deline and the adventure tourism industry in the Sahtu region of Northwest Territories. This project will focus on: the degree of consultation between the adventure tourism industry and the Deline community; what the barriers are to participation in the industry for Indigenous members of the community; and, whether collaborative adventure tourism projects in Sahtu can provide a model for socially and culturally sustainable economic development in Northwest Territories.

I understand that my participation in this study will consist of agreeing to be interviewed by Toban Leckie, a student in the MA in Canadian Studies and Indigenous Studies program at Trent University. The interview will last from 30 to 120 minutes. Information from this interview will be collected and recorded either on a digital audio recorder or through written notes. The interview content will be transcribed and sent to me once the field component of the research project is complete. At that point I will have the opportunity to review, edit and discuss the transcript content with the researcher by telephone, email or in person as circumstance allows.

I understand that the contents of this interview will be used in a Master's thesis project and potentially in other publications that stem from this research, as well as in a report to the Charter Community of Deline, and the Government of Northwest Territories. It is possible that media releases relating to the report may occur, but the information is not intended for any commercial use.

I understand that my confidentiality will be respected. Personal identifiers, such as my name and direct quotes from my interview may be included in the final thesis project and other publications stemming from this research, unless I indicate otherwise. If I indicate that they cannot be used, personal identifiers will be anonymized or omitted from all final, published documents. *Please note, the option for anonymous participation on the part of Charter Community of Deline leadership, GNWT officials, and Tourism Industry officials may not be possible if they are speaking in an official capacity.*

Please check one:

I give permission for my real name and direct quotes from this interview to be included in published documents stemming from this research:

I would prefer to be attributed by a generic (false) name (e.g. Deline community member), in published documents stemming from this research:

Please Note: Interview participants will retain the right to alter their choice after reviewing interview transcripts, and before

publication of findings.

The principal investigator, Toban Leckie, will be responsible for the storage and security of the information obtained from the interviews and observations. All data from this interview will be digitally encrypted, protected through the use of digital passwords, and stored in a locked, hard-shell ('Pelican') case in the principal investigator's private room throughout the research process. When this is not possible, such as on occasions when the principal investigator is out on the land overnight, he will retain possession of the case at all times, to ensure its security. After research has been completed, data will be stored on a single, encrypted USB data storage device to be stored in a locked 'Pelican' case at the principal researcher's private residence, for five years. After such time, all materials will be destroyed.

I understand that my participation in this project is entirely voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without judgment or prejudice. If I decide to withdraw from the project any information I have given will be sent to me (in transcript form) and original copies of the audio recording and transcript will be promptly destroyed and will not be included in the project in any way. Any compensation in-kind previously agreed upon (eg. helping with household chores, home economies, preparation of meals, etc.) will be delivered regardless of withdrawal.

There are two copies of this consent form, one of which I may keep for my records. If I have any questions about the conduct of the research project, I may contact either of the research team members. I may also directly contact the Trent University Research Ethics Board (Karen Mauro, Compliance Officer, 705.748.1011, ext. 7896, or kmauro@trentu.ca), or the Aurora Research Institute (Niccole Hammer, Licensing Co-ordinator, 867.777.3298, or niccole.hammer@auroracollege.nt.ca).

By signing below, I agree that I have been fully informed and understand the nature of the project, and agree to participate. Furthermore, I understand that this project entitled "Collaborative Adventure Tourism in Sahtu, NT: A Model for Culturally-Sustainable Economic Development" has been approved by the Aurora College Research Ethics Board and the Trent University Research Ethics Board.

Name of Research Participant (Please Print):

Signature of Research Participant:

Date:

Signature of Researcher – Witness:

Date:

For Review of Interview Transcript

Address:

Phone:

Email:

19-June-2014, Version II

APPENDIX F: Semi-Directive Interview Guide – CCD Leaders

Semi-Directive Interview Guide for Charter Community of Deline (CCD) Leaders
Personal and Professional Experiences with the Adventure Tourism Industry in Sabtu, NWT

1. How do you see adventure tourism operations on Great Bear Lake, Great Bear River, and on the land around Deline impacting the community?
 - a. Do you see it as positive, generally? Or negative?
2. How would you characterize the relationships the community has to tour operators who bring groups into the Deline vicinity?
 - a. Have there been particularly positive, or particularly negative interactions with tour operators or tourists that you would like to highlight?
3. To what degree do tour operators consult with CCD leadership, in the development and implementation of their tourism products?
 - a. In your opinion, is there sufficient consultation between tour operators and CCD leadership, or community organizations?
 - b. What sorts of consultation practices would you like to see implemented, either initiated by individual tourism operators, or legislated through tourism policy?
4. In your experience, what employment opportunities exist in the tourism industry for members of the Deline community?
 - a. Are the employment opportunities sufficient, or would you like to see more employment opportunities for members of the community?
 - b. What steps has the CCD government taken to enhance employment opportunities in the tourism industry for members of the community?
 - c. What steps has the GNWT or the tourism department of NWT taken to enhance employment opportunities in the tourism industry for members of the Deline community?
 - d. What steps have tour operators taken to enhance employment opportunities in the tourism industry for members of the Deline community?
5. How heavily does tourism factor into CCD economic development policy?
6. Can you talk about what tourism industry decisions/initiatives (e.g. *Tourism 2015: New Directions for Spectacular Future*) you've been a part of?
 - a. What was your involvement/role?
 - b. Can you describe the experience to me; what your thoughts were about the outcome of the policy implementation process?
7. Can you tell me about the process that was used to develop the tourism policy or come to the decision you were involved in; how was it done, who was involved, who decided who was involved, etc.?
8. From your experience, using this example you mention above, or others you know of, can you tell me what knowledge or information is typically used to make decisions about tourism policy in Deline?
 - a. What are the sources of this knowledge/information (Community consultation? Economic Development reports? Consultation with tourism experts?)
9. In your opinion, are there certain forms of knowledge or information that are seen as more credible for the development of tourism policy? If yes, which ones? Why do you think that is?
10. Could you tell me about how the GNWT's *Tourism 2015: New Directions for a Spectacular Future* is being implemented in Deline?
 - a. To the best of your knowledge, to what extent was the CCD

- government or the Sahtu secretariat consulted in the GNWT's implementation of *Tourism 2015*?
- b. Do you think there should be more consultation with Indigenous communities in the development of tourism policy?
11. How would you characterize the relationship between Sahtu Dene and Metis and Denendeh, or the land and waters of the Dene Nation?
 12. What is the importance of Denendeh to you?
 - a. What is the role of the land and water in people's lives in Sahtu?
 13. In Sahtu Dene cultural and traditional Knowledge and practice are there ways that the land and water are supposed to be treated? Can you please explain, or give me an example?
 - a. To the best of your knowledge is this practiced by everyone in Deline?
 14. Are there ways in which the land and water are not supposed to be treated? Can you please explain, or give me an example?
 - a. Is this an issue today? Do you have concerns about how the land and water are treated by people from outside or inside Deline?
 15. Do you think adventure tourism in Sahtu can, should, or does work in harmony with this relationship between the people and the land?
 - a. If not, please explain why not.
 - b. If so, in what ways? Please expand.
 16. Do you think that Sahtu Dene cultural and traditional Knowledge, practice and belief should be embedded in adventure tourism products offered in Sahtu?
 - a. If not, please explain why not.
 - b. If so, how do you think this can be best accomplished?
 17. Do you think that these elements of Dene culture and society can be transferred to non-Dene tour operators through appropriate consultation, training and policy initiatives?
 - a. If not, please explain why not.
 - b. If so, in your opinion what is the best way to transmit this information to non-Dene tour operators (e.g. Meetings, training programs, collaboration with Dene guides, businesses, etc.)
 18. To the best of your knowledge, to what extent do concerns surrounding Dene cultural and social sustainability factor into the development of tourism in Sahtu?
 19. Do you think Dene/Traditional Knowledge has significant influence on tourism development policy?
 - a. Do you think Dene/Traditional Knowledge should have greater influence on tourism policy in Sahtu?
 20. Were there any aspects of the tourism policy development process that challenged or made the incorporation of Dene/Traditional Knowledge difficult? What were they? How did they challenge or make incorporation of this Knowledge difficult? Were they overcome? If so, how?
 21. Were there any aspects of the process that helped or facilitated the incorporation or use of Indigenous/Traditional Knowledge in the policy process? Please explain.
 22. From your experience, were there aspects or issues in the tourism policy development process where the needs and desires of the communities and the needs and desires of tour operators strongly agreed?
 - a. Strongly disagreed?
 - b. What effect did these similarities/differences in opinions/goals have on the tourism policy development process?
 23. In your opinion, were the expressed needs of the community and the expressed needs of tour operators weighed equally in the development of tourism policy?

- a. Why? or, Why not?
24. Do you think the GNWT and the Department of Tourism should go further in addressing the concerns of communities in Sahtu, in terms of the ways that tourism policy and funding strategies are developed?
- a. If so, do you have any suggestions as to how this might be done?
25. In reviewing *Tourism 2015* I noticed the emphasis on Indigenous inclusion in NWT tourism was on the manufacture, sale and presentation of cultural products (i.e. artisanal crafts, and traditional performances). What opportunities do you see for Indigenous-owned tourism companies? What about adventure tourism, specifically?
26. Do you see ways in which partnerships, or collaborations between Deline and tour operators in the area might benefit Deline, and its members?
- a. If so, how? If not, why not?
- b. Can you provide examples of successful partnerships of this kind that you know of?
- c. What challenges do you see hindering the development of community/corporate partnerships in the tourism sector?
- d. What opportunities do you see encouraging the development of community/corporate partnerships in the tourism sector?
27. If I am trying to learn more about the CCD government's role in the tourism development process is there anything else you would like to add that we haven't talked about?
28. If I am trying to learn more about the CCD government's role in the tourism development process is there anyone you suggest I talk to?

Thank you very much for your time and energy. Mahsi Cho. In the next few months I will send you the transcripts from this interview, for your review. I intend on returning to Deline before the end of January to discuss the details of including this material. Remember that at any point between now and the publication of these findings in my Masters thesis, you may withdraw from this research project without prejudice. If you have any questions or concerns before I am next in contact with you, please don't hesitate to contact me directly, and should you have concerns with the research process you can contact coordinators from either the Trent University Research Ethics Board, or the Aurora Institute Research Ethics Board – all contact information is provided on the consent form.

APPENDIX G: Semi-Directive Interview Guide – CCD Community Members

Semi-Directive Interview Guide for Members of the Deline Community

Personal and Professional Experiences with the Adventure Tourism Industry in Sahtu, NWT

1. In your opinion, what is the most important issue facing Deline and the people of Deline at this point in Deline's history?
2. Can you describe any personal or professional experiences you've had that would constitute employment within the Adventure tourism industry, in Sahtu (e.g. Guiding canoe, raft or kayak trips, hunting or fishing trips, or tours of Great Bear Lake, or Great Bear River, etc.)
 - a. How would you characterize your employment experiences?
 - b. Can you highlight any particularly positive or particularly negative interactions you've had with tour operators, or tourists?
 - c. Can you highlight any particularly positive or particularly negative interactions between the Deline community at large, and the adventure tourism industry, or tourists?
3. Would you like to see increased training and employment opportunities for members of the Deline community in the adventure tourism industry? Please explain.
4. How do you view the relationship between Deline and the tourism industry, generally?
5. Do you think that tourism plays an important role in the economic development strategies of Deline?
 - a. If so, please explain how tourism plays an important role in the economic development strategies of Deline.
 - b. If not, do you think that it should play an increasingly important role in the economic development strategies of Deline?
6. What do you think the adventure tourism industry offers, or can offer, to you and to other community members?
7. How would you characterize the relationship between Sahtu Dene and Metis and Denendeh, or the land and waters of the Dene Nation?
8. What is the importance of Denendeh to you?
 - a. What is the role of the land and water in people's lives in Sahtu?
9. In Sahtu Dene cultural and traditional Knowledge and practice are there ways that the land and water are supposed to be treated? Can you please explain, or give me an example?
 - a. To the best of your knowledge is this practiced by everyone in Deline?
10. Are there ways in which the land and water are not supposed to be treated? Can you please explain, or give me an example?
 - b. Is this an issue today? Do you have concerns about how the land and water are treated by people from outside or inside Deline?
11. Do you think that adventure tourism in Sahtu can, should, or does work in harmony with this relationship between the people and the land?
 - c. If not, please explain why not.
 - d. If so, in what ways? Please expand.
12. Do you think that Sahtu Dene cultural and traditional Knowledge, practice and belief should be embedded in adventure tourism products offered in Sahtu?
 - c. If not, please explain why not.
 - d. If so, how do you think this can be best accomplished?

13. Do you think that these elements of Dene culture and society can be transferred to non-Dene tour operators through appropriate consultation, training and policy initiatives?
 - c. If not, please explain why not.
 - d. If so, in your opinion what is the best way to transmit this information to non-Dene tour operators (e.g. Meetings, training programs, collaboration with Dene guides, businesses, etc.)
14. Do you think a collaborative adventure tourism program involving Deline community organizations/businesses and pre-existing adventure tour operators would be a good thing for Deline?
15. What would the ideal collaborative partnership look like?
 - a. How would responsibilities (e.g. Guiding, administration, insurance, programming, training, etc.) be divided between the community and the tour operators?
 - b. If such a program were to be initiated, would you be interested in participating in it? Please explain.
16. Do you think the GNWT Department of Tourism should be incorporating Dene Knowledge into laws, policies and decision about the way the land and water is used?
 - a. If not, please explain why not.
 - b. If so, how do you think this might be accomplished?
17. If I am trying to learn more about how members of the Deline community participate in and view the adventure tourism industry in Sahtu, is there anything else you would like to add that we haven't talked about?
18. If I am trying to learn more about how members of the Deline community participate in and view the adventure tourism industry in Sahtu, is there anyone you suggest I talk to?

Thank you very much for your time and energy. Mahsi Cho. In the next few months I will send you the transcripts from this interview, for your review. I intend on returning to Deline before the end of December to discuss the details of including this material. Remember that at any point between now and the publication of these findings in my Masters thesis, you may withdraw from this research project without prejudice. If you have any questions or concerns before I am next in contact with you, please don't hesitate to contact me directly, and should you have concerns with the research process you can contact coordinators from either the Trent University Research Ethics Board, or the Aurora Institute Research Ethics Board – all contact information is provided on the consent form.

APPENDIX H: Semi-Directive Interview Guide – Tourism Industry Officials

Semi-Directive Interview Guide for GNWT and Tourism Industry Officials *Professional and Political Experiences with the Tourism Industry in NWT*

1. Can you talk about what tourism industry decisions/initiatives (e.g. *Tourism 2015: New Directions for Spectacular Future*) you've been a part of?
 - b. What was your involvement/role?
 - c. Can you describe the experience to me; what your thoughts were about the outcome of the policy implementation process?
2. Can you tell me about the process that was used to develop the tourism policy or come to the decision you were involved in; how was it done, who was involved, who decided who was involved, etc.?
3. From your experience, using this example you mention above, or others you know of, can you tell me what knowledge or information is typically used to make decisions about tourism policy and development in Sahtu (or Northwest Territories, generally)?
 - b. What are the sources of this knowledge/information (Community consultation? Economic Development reports? Consultation with tourism providers? Expert consultation?)
 - c. How was this knowledge/information gathered? (Focus Groups, Committee meetings, interviews, etc.)
4. In your opinion, are there certain forms of knowledge or information that are seen as more credible for the development of tourism policy? If yes, which ones? Why do you think that is?
5. Could you tell me about how *Tourism 2015* is being implemented in the Sahtu?
6. To what extent do concerns surrounding Indigenous cultural and social sustainability factor into tourism policy development?
 - a. Do you think there should be more consultation with Indigenous communities in the development of tourism policy?
7. To the best of your knowledge, has Indigenous (Dene)/Traditional Knowledge and practice (meaning Knowledge and practices held and maintained by leaders in Dene and Metis communities relating to the interconnectedness of people and the land, and as passed down through generations) been involved, or is it being involved in the development of tourism policy in Sahtu?
 - a. If so, how is it being used in the development process?
8. Do you believe Indigenous/Traditional Knowledge has significant influence on tourism development policy?
9. Were there any aspects of the tourism policy development process that challenged or made the incorporation of Indigenous/Traditional Knowledge difficult? What were they? How did they challenge or make incorporation of this Knowledge difficult? Were they overcome? If so, how?
10. Were there any aspects of the process that helped or facilitated the incorporation or use of Indigenous/Traditional Knowledge in the policy process? Please explain.
11. From your experience, were there aspects or issues in the tourism policy development process where the needs and desires of the communities and the needs and desires of tour operators strongly agreed?
 - a. Disagreed?
 - b. What effect did these similarities/differences in opinions/goals have on the tourism policy development process?
12. In your opinion, were the expressed needs of the communities and the expressed needs of tour operators weighed equally in the development of tourism policy?

- a. Why? or, Why not?
13. Do you think the GNWT and the Department of Tourism should go further in addressing the concerns of communities in Sahtu, in terms of the ways that tourism policy and funding strategies are developed?
- a. If so, do you have any suggestions as to how this might be done?
14. In reviewing *Tourism 2015* I noticed the emphasis on Indigenous inclusion in NWT tourism was on the manufacture, sale and presentation of cultural products (i.e. artisanal crafts, and traditional performances). What opportunities do you see for Indigenous-owned tourism companies? What about adventure tourism, specifically?
15. Do you see ways in which partnerships, or collaborations between communities and tour operators might benefit the tourism industry, and communities in NWT?
- a. If so, how? If not, why not?
- b. Can you provide examples of successful partnerships of this kind that you know of?
- c. What challenges do you see hindering the development of community/corporate partnerships in the tourism sector?
- d. What opportunities do you see encouraging the development of community/corporate partnerships in the tourism sector?
16. If I am trying to learn more about the community consultation process in the development of tourism policy is there anything else you would like to add that we haven't talked about?
17. If I am trying to learn more about the community consultation process in the development of tourism policy is there anyone you suggest I talk to?

Thank you very much for your time and energy. In the next few months I will send you the transcripts from this interview, for your review. I intend on returning to Yellowknife before the end of December to discuss the details of including this material. Remember that at any point between now and the publication of these findings in my Masters thesis, you may withdraw from this research project without prejudice. If you have any questions or concerns before I am next in contact with you, please don't hesitate to contact me directly, and should you have concerns with the research process you can contact coordinators from either the Trent University Research Ethics Board, or the Aurora Institute Research Ethics Board – all contact information is provided on the consent form.

APPENDIX I: Semi-Directive Interview Guide – Tourism Outfitters/Employees

Semi-Directive Interview Guide for Tourism Outfitters

Professional Experiences Operating an Adventure Tourism Business in Sahtu, NT

1. What is the name of your business, and what is the nature of the tourism products your business offers?
 - a. How long has the business been operating in the Sahtu?
 - b. What is your role in the development and implementation of your tourism products, and how long have you held this role?
2. To the best of your knowledge, how many businesses offer similar products in the Sahtu?
3. How would you characterize the relationship between your business and the Sahtu Dene and Metis communities proximal to your operations in the Sahtu?
 - a. Can you identify any particularly positive, or particularly negative interactions you've had with these communities, or with members of the communities in the operation of your business?
 - b. What steps have you, or others in your business taken to develop and nurture relationships with communities proximal to your operations in Sahtu?
 - c. Can you identify challenges which have made the development of these sorts of relationships difficult?
 - d. Can you identify any mutually-held concerns or beliefs about tourism or the environment which has encouraged these sorts of relationships?
4. Do you currently employ, or have you employed Indigenous members of the communities proximal to your tourism operations? Non-Indigenous members of the communities proximal to your tourism operations?
 - a. If so, how was the hiring practice different from hiring practices used to hire employees not local to the Sahtu region?
 - b. If not, what steps have you or others in your business taken to extend hiring practices to include community members from Sahtu?
 - c. In your opinion, what challenges exist in hiring community members from Sahtu?
 - d. In your opinion, what benefits might come from hiring community members from Sahtu, either for your clients, for your business, for communities, or for the adventure tourism industry generally?
5. Do you think that Sahtu Dene cultural and traditional Knowledge, practice and belief should be embedded in adventure tourism products offered in Sahtu?
 - e. If not, please explain why not.
 - f. If so, how do you think this can be best accomplished?
6. In your opinion, to what extent do concerns surrounding Dene cultural and social sustainability factor into the development of tourism in Sahtu?
7. Do you believe Dene/Traditional Knowledge has significant influence on tourism development policy?
 - a. Do you believe Dene/Traditional Knowledge should have greater influence on tourism policy in Sahtu?
8. What is the extent to which your business consults with Sahtu Charter Community governments, or local tourism departments in the overall planning and implementation

- of your tourism products? And, in the day to day operation of your business?
- a. Can you highlight any particular examples when your business consulted directly with a Charter Community government, or local tourism departments? What was that consultation experience like? Who was involved, and how did consultation take place (e.g. Interview, committee meeting, phone or email correspondence)?
 - b. What steps have you taken to enhance the consultation process between your business and community organizations?
 - c. What challenges exist in regular consultation between your business and community organizations?
 - d. What benefits do you see emerging from increased consultation? What hindrances or limitations to the operation of your business do you see emerging from increased consultation with community organizations?
 - e. What suggestions would you make to enhance the consultation process?
9. Has your business ever entered into a collaborative relationship with an Indigenous-owned business or organization?
 - a. If so, what was the nature of that relationship? Please explain the results of that partnership.
 - c. If not, do you think that collaboration between Indigenous-owned businesses and your own could enhance your tourism product(s)? Please elaborate.
 10. To the best of your knowledge, are there any collaborative partnerships between Indigenous communities and adventure tourism operators in the Sahtu? In NWT?
 11. Would you be interested in forming such a collaborative partnership with one or more of the communities proximal to your operations?
 - a. If so, what would the partnership look like to best serve the interests of your business? How would operational responsibilities (e.g. administration, guiding, outfitting, insurance, training, etc.) be best divided between your business and community organizations or businesses?
 - b. If not, what challenges exist that would make a partnership of this sort unappealing to your business?
 12. I'm not sure if you've had the opportunity to review the GNWT's new policy directive *Tourism 2015: New Directions for a Spectacular Future*, but in order to better include Indigenous communities and individuals in the tourism industry in NWT there is an emphasis on encouraging the manufacturing, sale and presentation of cultural products (e.g. artisanal crafts, and traditional demonstrations). How do you see these sorts of products enhancing your business?
 13. Do you think this emphasis adequately addresses the desire and need for increased Indigenous participation in the tourism industry? Please explain.
 14. If I am trying to learn more about the relationship between adventure tour operators in Sahtu and the communities they interact with is there anything else you would like to add that we haven't talked about?
 15. If I am trying to learn more about the relationship between adventure tour operators in Sahtu and the communities they interact with is there anyone you suggest I talk to?

Thank you very much for your time and energy. In the next few months I will send you the transcripts from this interview, for your review. Remember that at any point between now and the publication of these findings in my Masters thesis, you may withdraw from this research project without prejudice. If you have any

questions or concerns before I am next in contact with you, please don't hesitate to contact me directly, and should you have concerns with the research process you can contact coordinators from either the Trent University Research Ethics Board, or the Aurora Institute Research Ethics Board – all contact information is provided on the consent form.