



Inuit Women in Business Network: Pilot Project

Needs Assessment Results

Pauktuutit recently conducted a preliminary needs assessment study to better understand the support needed for Inuit women micro-entrepreneurs. The needs-assessment involved a literature review and a series of interviews with key informants to identify the gaps in the current support available to Inuit women micro-entrepreneurs. It also identified the specific needs of Inuit businesswomen and the challenges they face.

The study found that businesses owned by Inuit women tend to be micro-enterprises that focus on activities related to the arts and crafts sector. However, Inuit women are increasingly involved in a broader range of businesses such as taxis, hotels, interpreting/translating services and catering. Inuit women in business also tend to have had some link or support from a key partner, relative or friend who had some experience in business. Women without this kind of support tend to not be as active in business and encounter more difficulties establishing or operating their own business. The results point to the need for an Inuit Women in Business Network (IWBN) that can provide peer-support and mentorship opportunities to any Inuit woman who is interested in starting or growing her own business.

The report also identified a range of challenges that are faced by Inuit women as they consider starting up micro-enterprises. These challenges include the following limiting factors:

- high costs of utilities, transportation, communication, marketing in the north
- shortage of business space, high rents and lack of infrastructure
- language barriers
- low financial literacy levels
- housing policies prohibiting running a business from one's home
- a lack of peer/mentorship support systems (either formal or informal)
- difficulty in accessing information about available support programs and services

Our needs assessment has confirmed that the strongest form of support available is found in the form of peer mentorship by other, more experienced Inuit women. Through the creation of the IWBN, we will offer women a unique opportunity to support one another in launching successful businesses.

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Support for the Inuit Women in Business Network

Thus far, there has been near unanimous support for the establishment of an *IWBN* among both Inuit businesswomen and service agencies alike. The offers of support have included:

- Providing peer/mentorship network models and best practices
- Developing specialized tools and resources to help increase financial literacy
- Offering insight on how to bridge the gap between the initial inception of a business idea to the successful establishment of that business
- Linking women to regional stakeholder agencies' existing programs and services to help them benefit from these resources

Contact Us

To find out how you may be able to help or to offer your ideas as we move forward, please contact us. We appreciate your ongoing interest and support in our pilot project. Having you on board will help us make it a success.

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*We are open to your ideas.
Contact us to show your
support, offer advice or
guidance or suggest
women in your networks
that might like to be a
part of the IWBN.*