

## Tradition and tempest ignite first night of conference

After a warm meet and greet with food, friends, and an amazing ice carving spectacle, the crowd at the inaugural Northern Lights Trade Show and Conference filed into Salon E for welcoming remarks and entertainment.

It started with tradition—two Inuit elders lit a *qulliq*, a traditional oil lamp, using only flints, to mark the beginning of the conference.

Among the speakers who addressed the crowd was Chuck Strahl, Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, who announced \$54,000 in new funding for seniors' programs in Nunavut. He said that this money, as well as other initiatives to improve living conditions in the north, comes as a reflection of what he hears from Canadians from coast to coast.

"They want us to protect our sovereignty, they want us to protect the environment, they want us to work with the people," Strahl said.

The north is hot. It may not feel warm right now—and it certainly feels cold to those of us accustomed to shivering in Ottawa—but all over the news, people are talking about the importance of



*Insolita on stage at the opening ceremonies of the 2008 Northern Lights Trade Show and Conference.*

the north. From holding onto our arctic land, to finding new sources of energy, to protecting polar bears and keeping tabs on climate change, it seems all eyes are on the north.

So, while it seems very topical to bring northern communities to the national capital, the Northern Lights Conference and Trade Show is hardly a follower. Rather, the event shows the work and vision of many people, over many years.

The Northern Lights Trade Show and Conference was first conceived in

the spring of 2006, when delegates from the Labrador North and Baffin Regional Chambers of Commerce and the Government of Nunavut attended *Meet the North* in Edmonton. Impressed and enthusiastic, the leaders set about making Northern Lights happen.

Looking back, Conference Co-chair Colin O'Brien says he has to give credit to those guys. He describes the Northern Lights Conference and Trade Show as the "brainchild" of his

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# Forging partnerships and Focusing on opportunities

While delegates registered and organizers ironed out last minute details in the lobby, inside the trade show area Ernie McLean wandered through the empty booths and pondered what will come of the sold-out exhibition.

First off, the former politician and Trade Show Co-Chair said the Northern Lights trade show will help develop important bonds between Nunavut, Nunavik, Labrador and the government of Nunatsiavut. McLean said he thinks that if the three regions work together on industry, environmental and energy projects, “we will attract a lot of capital from outside of the region that will be of a huge, huge, positive in terms of how we develop.”

“The other thing is, I think we want to show, especially to the big companies that want to do business in our area, that we’re prepared to do business but it has to be on our terms. It has to be in partnership with the people of the region. And I think that’s critical in order to be successful.”

Speaking of success, Northern Lights is proud to announce that all the trade show booths have been sold, with over 120 exhibitors attending—incredible for an inaugural event. The range of products and services is testimony to the growing diversification of the regions.

From economy powerhouses like Aurora Energy, to artist networks like the Nunavut Arts and Crafts Association, the trade show represents a microcosm of what Labrador,

Nunavut and Nunavik have to offer.

And though the trade show’s location in downtown Ottawa will allow people from outside of these regions to learn about business opportunities, McLean said that the time is ripe to showcase these growing economies to locals—especially young locals who might be considering heading south.

Speaking about his native province of Labrador, McLean said that “for the last few years there was very little opportunity,” adding “there was opportunity for a few, like hydro and a few other sectors.” However, the song remained the same: go to school, maybe even post-secondary, then leave home for greener pastures.

“But I think what we’re starting to see now is that mining is creating opportunity for more young people. I see lots of changes, I see lots of opportunity—especially for our young people.”

McLean also pointed to a new trend he’s seeing in Labrador, saying “young people are taking it on themselves by forming companies, and becoming owners, not only just stakeholders. That’s a great challenge for a young person.”

These young entrepreneurs are taking the initiative and filling in niches



*Ernie McLean, forging partnerships with his new friend from Nunavik.*

of the economy by servicing the mining industry in various ways.

“It’s great to see because it’s very meaningful work for young people. It’s not just the menial jobs... though these are still an important part.”

*“... I see lots of changes, I see lots of opportunity—especially for our young people.”*

So, in order to keep this trend on the upswing—and possibly keep more sons and daughters around the family home—McLean had a simple message for delegates, exhibitors, and anyone passing by:

“Really, really take an interest in what is here. Take an interest so you can really learn. What we have to offer is very important to Canada.”





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former employer, LNCC, and their affiliates in Nunavut and Nunavik.

“They had the foresight to stop talking about it as a possibility and actually see if it’s feasible,” O’Brien said. “And the numbers so far show that we’ve exceeded expectations with delegates, with over 500 registered participants.”

From today’s in-depth discussion on how cultural industries will impact northern regions, to presentations that aim to raise awareness about issues like sovereignty and seal hunting, the line-up represents the vast array of products and talents coming out of the north. There is even a more technical presentation on Friday about a new computer program designed to improve employment.

In fact, computers and the Internet represent a growing sector of

economies of the north. With distance education and online shopping becoming more widespread, it is becoming easier and easier to form bonds—and business partnerships—with people from afar.

But sometimes it’s nice to meet that person in Nunavut who keeps suggesting you share client lists, or that businessman in Labrador who

wants to post a link to his website on yours. Maybe have a coffee, shake hands on it. That’s where the Northern Lights come in.

O’Brien says he sees the conference objective as two-fold. On the one hand, Northern Lights provides both an opportunity for the north to meet the north, and make face-to-face contact with people usually separated by thousands of miles.

Sometimes these are new connections, based on mutual interests or acquaintances, other times they are a matter of putting a face to the name (or e-mail address).

In addition, this weekend will serve as a meeting ground for companies, organizations and individuals to meet their counterparts from the south.

For people like O’Brien, who spent years working to help his special part of the world with LNCC and is now heavily invested in the region as a businessman in Happy Valley-Goose Bay, this weekend marks an exciting stepping stone.

“I’m looking forward to seeing how it’s going to unfold,” O’Brien said, as signs went up and delegates trickled in. “I’m pretty excited to see it happen. Let’s set it up and get’er done!”



Rideau Canal Skateway



Canadian Museum of Civilization

If you’re attending the Northern Lights Conference and Trade Show in Ottawa this winter, come the weekend before or stay a few days after and enjoy all that Canada’s impressive yet intimate capital has to offer. Check online for great getaway packages

and the full line-up of what’s happening while you’re here, including *Joe Fafard* at the National Gallery of Canada, *Secret Riches: Ancient Peru Unearthed* at the Canadian Museum of Civilization, and North America’s greatest winter celebration, Winterlude!



# Shaping an arts industry in the north

Stealing a moment away from an ice carving during last night's meet and greet, artist Mathew Nuqingaq spoke about his passion for art, his interest in the Northern Lights Trade Show and Conference, and making a living as an artist.

*"It's difficult but, you know, I love it. I totally love it. So there's no other choice."*

Whatever comes of this conference, the artist says, a few of his good friends, who are also artists, are here. So it's a good reunion.

And things are looking up. Last year, Nuqingaq bought a building, named it Aayuuraa, and invited some of his friends to use it as a studio. It's a way for Nuqingaq to work more closely with other artists in the region—a trend in Nunavut.

Nuqingaq is one of many artists who will be presenting their talent over the next three days. He flew in from Iqaluit on Tuesday, and though he says he is not sure of what will come from this event, "it's a good opportunity to make contacts."

To make ends meet, and assist in the development in the arts in his homeland, Nuqingaq works two days a week at the Nunavut Arts and Crafts Association (NACA). He's also a drum dancer, and a jewelry maker, "and that about keeps me out of trouble," he says with a grin. Though he's a teacher by trade, Nuqingaq says working as an artist is "way more satisfying."

The artists will exhibit their work in a variety of forums, including the daily

arts and cultural demonstrations in the trade show area.

Dinah Anderson, an artist from Happy Valley-Goose Bay, was planning on displaying her carving skills here at Northern Lights, but a back problem got in the way. The multi-media artist, who has exhibited nationally at various arts and cultural shows, will instead demonstrate traditional grass weaving. Anderson also paints, and is currently working on a contract from the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to produce soapstone pendants.

*"It's difficult but, you know, I love it. I totally love it. So there's no other choice."*

Tired from the trip but excited about the event, Anderson said, "it looks like it's going to be great."

The Northern Lights Conference and Trade Show is providing artists with a new way to connect with potential buyers. But it is not the only emerging arena for such partnerships.

Organizations like the Nunavut Arts and Crafts Association are working at a grassroots level to connect artists and customers, with simple initiatives that will help visitors to the region find the art they are looking for.

It's part of what's being labeled "arts tourism" or "creative tourism." Today's forums, featuring Judith



*Mathew Nuqingaq creating an ice masterpiece at the meet and greet for the 2008 Northern Lights Trade Show.*

Varney Burch and the Hon. Ben Ponniuk, will speak in detail about how cultural industries such as these will affect northern regions.

For example, one project the NACA has developed is a signage system that points out homes used as studios; if a passerby is interested in checking out some art, they can drop in for an impromptu tour. Initiatives like this will help bring the artist and buyer together in a way that does not currently exist.

Web sales are also a new way of reaching out to potential buyers, and with the increasing broadband coverage in northern regions and the growing role of the Internet in many aspects of northern life, this seems a natural avenue for future growth.



# General information

The Northern Lights Trade Show and Conference will be open from 7:30 am to 5:30 pm on Thursday and Friday and from 7:30 am to 4:30 pm on Saturday. The trade show floor will open at 1:30 pm on Thursday and Friday and at 10:00 am on Saturday.

Breakfasts and lunches will be held in the Colonel By Salon on the Congress Hall level of the Ottawa Congress Centre. All conferences and workshops will be held in Hall E of the Congress Hall, beside the trade show floor.

The Theatre, VIP Room and Press Room are located on the Capital Hall level. There is also a storage room for empty display cases and other excess material. Please note that there is no security for this room and items are left at your own risk.

Please wear your delegate/exhibitor badges at all times to access all events. Should you misplace your ID badge, or in case of a printing error, please see the registration desk to get a new badge issued. Security personnel will be checking badges.

Delegates enjoy access to all areas of the trade show and conference, except the VIP room, and including both the conference and trade show health breaks. Exhibitors have full access to the trade show floor and daily health breaks in the Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro Hospitality Tent.

Visitors to the trade show on Thursday and Friday can gain access to the trade show floor by presenting a business card and paying \$20 for a day pass, good for both days. Saturday, all visitors will have access to the trade show floor at no cost.



## Mikupishan Moktech 2000 Business Centre

Thanks to Mikupishan Moktech 2000 of Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Labrador, there is a full-service business centre on the trade show floor, available to all delegates and exhibitors. In addition to printing the daily newsletter, the Mikupishan Moktech 2000 Business Centre will have individual workstations, full copying and fax service, and more.



## Nunavut Tourism Internet Café

When you need to check your emails and surf the web, drop by the Nunavut Tourism Internet Café. The 4 individual workstations are located in the business centre. While online, don't forget to visit Nunavut Tourism's new website at [www.nunavuttourism.com](http://www.nunavuttourism.com).

## Thursday, January 31

Please note the following changes and additions to today's schedule:

The **Honourable Ben Ponniuk** will be speaking on tourism in Nunatsiavut during the Cultural Industries and Tourism conference session instead of the afternoon workshop session.

**Zacharias Kunuk** is snowbound in Iqaluit and unfortunately will not be able to speak during the Cultural Industries and Tourism conference session. At press time, we are hoping that Norman Cohn, partner at Igloodik Isuma, is speaking in his place.

## Labrador Hospitality Night

Todd Russell, MP and Nunatsiavut Government are pleased to present **Labrador Hospitality Night**, featuring several renowned Labrador performing artists, including:

- The Sundogs
- The Nain Drum Dancers
- Shirley Montague
- The Flummies

Confederation Ballroom No. 2  
Fourth Floor, Westin Hotel  
(connected to the Rideau Centre)

Thursday, January 31, 2008  
Beginning at 7:30 pm  
Free admission



