



ULNOOWEG

We Believe in Dreams

A JOURNEY OF RESILIENCE

Looking Back 35 Years



CHIEF TERRANCE PAUL CHAIR OF ULNOOWEG'S BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Indigenous economic growth in Atlantic Canada and Ulnooweg's own success as an important catalyst is, in no small way, attributable to the vision and leadership of Chief Terrance Paul and his colleagues who lead the Ulnooweg Board of Directors.

Chief Paul has been Ulnooweg's Board Chair from inception, as well as the longstanding Chief of Membertou, one of Canada's most successful First Nations. The active participation of a thoughtful and dedicated Board comprised of Atlantic Chiefs has been a singularly important dimension of Ulnooweg's notable success over thirty-five years.

Under the visionary leadership of Terrance Paul, Ulnooweg Development group has excelled in designing and supporting an Indigenous approach to economic development.

One aspect of this leadership is the steadfast resolve to do things differently, in supporting Indigenous entrepreneurs, as well as community enterprises throughout Atlantic Canada.

This has resulted in a dramatic increase of own source revenues, while insulating communities from the funding insecurity experienced by so many Indigenous communities trying to adapt mainstream programming designed for non-Indigenous users.

Over the years, this customized and responsive programming has provided enhanced financial capacity for increased economic participation in a wide variety of economic sectors, including in the energy and resource sectors.

Overall, this consistent leadership has been important in providing the stability to support experimentation, risk taking, innovation and good governance.



INTRODUCTION

To address the significant disparities that existed in Indigenous communities, Ulnooweg was created thirty-five years ago, to “promote the social and economic welfare” of Indigenous individuals and communities in Atlantic Canada.

Three main areas of effort were identified:

1. **Supporting employment** through business and economic activity;
2. **Supporting capacity development** through education and research; and
3. **Ensuring broad community benefit and participation** through philanthropic efforts to address access barriers.

Underlying these ambitious objectives was a simple and clear vision, encapsulated in the very choice of our name and enshrined in the following mission: “pursuing economic participation ‘on our terms’, in service of our people, our communities and our culture, and ensuring that ‘no one is left behind’”

The founding of this dynamic and evolving organization was based on a conscious decision to go beyond conventional economic development wisdom, which considers business development and economic integration as ends in themselves. For Indigenous communities, this conventional approach carries the risk of assimilation and the risk of increased inequality within and between communities; a situation that gave rise to the need to do things differently.

It was also by conscious choice that Ulnooweg’s Board of Directors invested in research, exploration, and internal capacity development to expand beyond the delivery of economic support programs designed for non-Indigenous persons and communities.

From the beginning, the goal has always been to offer a holistic response tailored to the needs and aspirations of our people and communities in collaboration with the widest possible array of public and private, charitable and profit-oriented programs, agencies, corporations, and partners.

“pursuing economic participation **‘on our terms’**,
in service of our people, our communities and our culture,
and ensuring that **‘no one is left behind’**.”

This publication highlighting Ulnooweg’s journey up to 2020 resulted from a deep collaboration between Ulnooweg and New Market Funds Society on broadening access to capital for Indigenous financial intermediaries. It was superbly co-authored by Dominique Collin and Ron L’Esperance, working with support from Ulnooweg’s leadership, management and board, including but not limited to, mission critical contributions from Todd Hoskin, Chris Googoo, and Matt Tapper. It was funded by New Market Funds Society with resources received from the Government of Canada’s Investment Readiness Program.



The research, development, and publication of this report was made possible through funding by the Government of Canada’s Investment Readiness Program.

After 35 years, we are proud to report that this was a solid plan and a sound investment on which the return has been both significant and noteworthy. Ulnooweg has now evolved into three dynamic organizations working synergistically in the spirit of the vision that gave us our name.

This achievement is not just measured in jobs created, but by economic sectors occupied and level of excellence achieved as illustrated in:

- The number of businesses funded;
- Their profitability;
- The innovation they reflect; and
- The community impact of the private, collective, and communal businesses that have been established over the years.

This has been a building process, one that goes beyond the value of direct loans made. Moreover, it has resulted in significant improvements in access to capital for Indigenous entrepreneurs and communal enterprises.

Ulnooweg has played a significant role in brokering, assisting and facilitating this community success through the application of our sectoral and financial

expertise. These noteworthy achievements relate only to the first of our three areas of focus – developmental lending and business finance.

A similar impact has been achieved in our second area of focus - financial education, and youth development and engagement.

Our third area of focus, philanthropic activities, is our latest and fastest-growing area of activity. We anticipate that it will catch up to the other two in terms of capital deployed as early as the end of 2021. Its potential for growth and unleashing community resilience is significant.

On reflection, this has been an arduous journey, not without mistakes or dead ends; and not always well understood, even by our friends and supporters. It has involved risks - sometimes deficits - and has required the full trust and support of a dedicated board. The abiding focus has been on the continual reinvention of the organization and its services in response to the rapidly evolving challenges, opportunities, and diverse circumstances of our dynamic communities, our businesses, and our people. What follows is the story of that journey, where it started, where it has led us, and where we are going from here.

“ULNOOWEG”

L’nu – the Mi’kmaw word for ourselves, our autonym.

The Origin Story of Ulnooweg tells of a time of urgency, when the community gathered to create two institutions that would transform our nation out of the depths of inhumanity. To highlight our resilience in a fight against eradication, our nation would rise and create two origins that would support the preservation of the generational transfer of culture and traditions historically oppressed, but most importantly, it would embody the values of L’nuk.

In its literal translation, Ulnooweg means, “L’nu, it acts like”. But, in translation, it loses its deeper meaning of humanizing an institution so that it exemplifies the values of the peoples it represents.

The value of interconnectedness with Kisu’lk (Mother Earth) is a foundational piece of the relationships we strive to build between each other as humanity and beyond. The very nature of this value is expressed in our ways of being and knowing, our culture, our traditions, and our language. To “act like L’nuk”, is to live by these values in every way we do business. To strive to value each other’s humanity and even further, to strive to value all of Kisu’lk’s creations.

EMPOWERMENT HAS BEEN AT THE CORE OF THE UDG MISSION

Ulnooweg's evolution has been decidedly non-traditional.

1. It originated from a proud Mi'kmaq self-determination objective
2. An abiding principle has been to focus on a holistic, multi-layered, systems change effort
3. As a catalytic force, it has aimed to stimulate and enable individual and collective Indigenous "prosperity and well-being" thinking
4. As a force multiplier, the focus has been on providing Mi'kmaq individuals, businesses, and communities with financial instruments and strategic advice to take responsibility for their future



Photos: Top to Bottom

1985, Carol Marie Paul of Eskasoni is hired as Ulnooweg's first Secretary/Bookkeeper

1986, Mary Rose Julian of Eskasoni is hired as Ulnooweg's first Economic Development Officer

2005 Ulnooweg Entrepreneur Award Show Lifetime Achievement recipient late Basil Peters (Millbrook), presented by Board member Chief Everett Martin (Eel River Bar)

2017, All My Relations - In partnership with six other organizations, 45 youth from all provinces and territories, sailed across the Atlantic Ocean



THE STARTING POINT- A CHALLENGING CONTEXT

Notwithstanding the success Atlantic Indigenous communities have been able to achieve, the situation related to Indigenous economic development hasn't always been so promising.

As a society, we are only now coming to fully understand the impact of colonization and the enduring effects of relentless efforts to assimilate Indigenous peoples — the abuse suffered by former students at residential schools and the large-scale apprehension of Indigenous children in the 1960s from their homes, communities, and families of birth — the Sixties Scoop, among others.

To be effective, Indigenous community economic development needs to take these realities into consideration.

Historic Canadian court rulings, over several decades, have been pivotal in defining inherent Indigenous rights and what they mean for Canada's Indigenous peoples in respect to governance, land rights, resources, and culture.

And while progress is being made, for many, it has been much too slow. Economic development is seen as key to addressing these inequities.

But it is not so simple.
Trust has to be built.
Capacity has to be addressed.

Indigenous people view economic development in their own way. Central to our world view is the quest to maintain cultural traditions while also improving the Nation's wealth and wellness for all, animated through the coordinated development of private and communal enterprises.

Indeed, communal enterprises, often built around community resources (fisheries, forestry, and energy) are essential to optimize broad economic distribution of wealth and wellness benefits. Own source revenues (OSRs), generated by communal enterprises, are critically important in two very significant ways - offsetting the scarcity of public sector resources available for Community social services, health care and education, and, of equal importance, giving greater control over local decision making.

OSRs enable investment in people, in community infrastructure, in education, and in healing. OSRs also address notable gaps resulting from inadequate government investments and are key to the ethos that has been a central focus of the Ulnooweg mission from the beginning - the centrality of 'leaving no one behind' as a primary motivating force.

Ulnooweg Development Group was born out of this quest for greater autonomy, self-determination, and self-sufficiency inspired by a vision of social entrepreneurship.

Ulnooweg's evolution is also a story of many rebirths along the way, each of which has resulted in new opportunities and the pursuit of new directions. It is an uplifting story and one which continues to evolve.

THE ORIGIN STORY

In the early 1980's, a Donner Canadian Foundation grant funded Atlantic Indigenous leadership to conduct a pivotal two-year study. The study focused on analyzing the needs and exploring the tools required to support effective Atlantic Indigenous economic development.

This study brought together a unique team of experts with diverse backgrounds, experience, and perspectives. There was a sense of urgency about this work and the need to turn the fortunes of Indigenous communities around. The focus was on developing a concrete strategy to address immediate challenges in Indigenous economic development.

As history will attest, this initiative had a transformational impact. It led to the establishment of Ulnooweg Development Group (UDG) as an Aboriginal Capital Corporation (ACC) through initial and on-going funding support from the Government of Canada.

Ulnooweg's Articles of Incorporation bestowed a broad initial mandate to "promote the social and economic welfare" of Indigenous individuals and communities.

Its original formal purposes identified three ways to achieve this:

- 1. Supporting employment** through business and economic activity;
- 2. Supporting capacity development** through education and research; and
- 3. Ensuring broad community benefit and participation** through philanthropic efforts to address access barriers.

Ulnooweg began as an Aboriginal Capital Corporation (ACC). It now serves all Indigenous communities, with more than 67,000 representatives across Atlantic Canada.

What this mandate means in terms of specific activities and of how this enterprise continues to evolve offers a uniquely nuanced view of Indigenous economic development and insights into leading practices.

Ulnooweg's mission and focus are important differentiators. Its economic participation mission is in service of Indigenous people, their language, culture, and communities, rather than an economic integration mission in support of assimilation.



Photos: Top to Bottom

1982, Liscombe Lodge Conference, late Noel Doucette, President of Union of Nova Scotia Indians, called a conference... to come to grips effectively with social problems on the reserves.

1982, Liscombe Lodge Conference: Fred Wein, Director, Maritime School of Social Work

CONSTANT REINVENTION

The legacy of residential schools, the Sixties Scoop, dispossession of lands, poverty, oppression, and systemic racism meant that the starting point for economic development in Atlantic Indigenous communities was different, more nuanced, and immeasurably more complex.

The evolution of UDG reflects our difficult task of balancing and reconciling the changing and often conflicting pressures from our communities and from our main funding partners.

Indeed, funding programs for Indigenous economic development have, for the most part, been retrofits of mainstream programs, designed for mainstream needs, with minor adjustments to Indigenous circumstances, most often with little or no Indigenous input or understanding of the needs and aspirations of Indigenous businesses and communities. Ulnooweg’s evolution has been based on leveraging, adapting and value-adding available programs and tools, notwithstanding their shortcomings.

This effort was focused on building more resilient and sustainable local Indigenous businesses and economies.

Over the decades, this constant reinvention also meant Ulnooweg opened new doors to broaden and support more responsive economic development activities – charities, engaging philanthropy, building new partnerships, institutions, and social enterprises.

Understanding the constraints and how Ulnooweg was able to adapt and move beyond these is key to understanding the Ulnooweg value proposition, its evolution over the years, and the example it provides for others to emulate.

In its early work, Ulnooweg focused on the provision of business support services and developmental lending to spur Indigenous business development and entrepreneurship.

As Ulnooweg settled into an imposed role of providing ‘developmental lending’, it became a journey of organizational learning and transformation. From the beginning, it became apparent that examining and documenting how the needs and circumstances of Indigenous entrepreneurs (private, corporate, and communal) differ from their mainstream counterparts was of critical importance in charting a new and more respectful approach to community economic development - one more aligned with traditional culture and values.

Table 1: History of Developmental Lending Activity

Lending Activity	1987-1999	2000-2004	2005-2009	2010-2014	2015-2019
Loans (#)	880	490	227	143	169
Loans (\$)	21,357,905	10,496,131	10,697,765	12,953,965	15,600,097
Loans (#) Cumulative	880	1,370	1,597	1,740	1,909
Loans (\$) Cumulative	21,357,905	31,854,036	42,551,801	55,505,766	71,105,863
Avg Loan Size (\$)	21,274	21,421	47,127	90,587	92,308

The following documents the nuanced history of our growth over 35 years:

- Much like other national Aboriginal Financial Institutions (AFIs and ACCs), through its **early mandate phase (1986-2000)** Ulnooweg focused on small scale developmental lending to Indigenous businesses and entrepreneurs. While this was instrumental in launching many new Indigenous businesses, Ulnooweg gradually saw that it was not enough.
- **The second growth phase (2000-2010)** tracks Ulnooweg's evolution to becoming an Atlantic regional Indigenous economic development agency. Characterized by Ulnooweg's efforts to refine and diversify its offerings in response to communities' needs, this phase involved moving away from having funders define the direction while gravitating toward greater responsiveness to addressing these complex community needs in a more holistic and culturally competent manner. To do so effectively required understanding of what was holding them back. It also included the early stages of building out the highly successful Atlantic Indigenous Fishery, following the Marshall Decision. This was a joint management initiative with the Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nation Chiefs (APCFNC).
- **The third phase (2010-2020)** is characterized by Ulnooweg vigorously engaging philanthropy while developing its own philanthropic resources to support community development and enhancement. This third, rapid growth phase, has resulted in an increasingly diverse range of innovative, responsive, and bold initiatives. During this period, Ulnooweg became more involved in supporting community economic development.

This includes supporting the development of social enterprises, as well as collective commercial activities involving multiple Indigenous communities throughout the Atlantic Region.

Through its Chief Operating Officer, Chris Googoo, Ulnooweg was also centrally involved in creating the Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq's "nation building" economic development strategy during this period.

This phase also included vigorous and targeted outreach to philanthropy and the development of Ulnooweg's own charitable initiatives.

This third phase has been transformational for Ulnooweg and pivotal in:

1. Diversifying funding and programming to respond to complex and evolving community needs;
2. Opening new opportunities to support Indigenous youth education and land-based healing; and
3. Supporting Communities in acquiring 'qualified donee' status, thereby opening the door for them to embrace philanthropic initiatives and attract new collaborators.

It was during this period that Ulnooweg also led the development of a new five-year Ulnooweg-Strategic-Plan-2016-21, under which it is presently operating. Soon to be renewed, this Plan embodies many of the strategic directions Ulnooweg has embraced in its progressive and evolving mandate.

AT A GLANCE - ULNOOWEG'S EXPANDING ECONOMIC NATIONS-BUILDING FOCUS

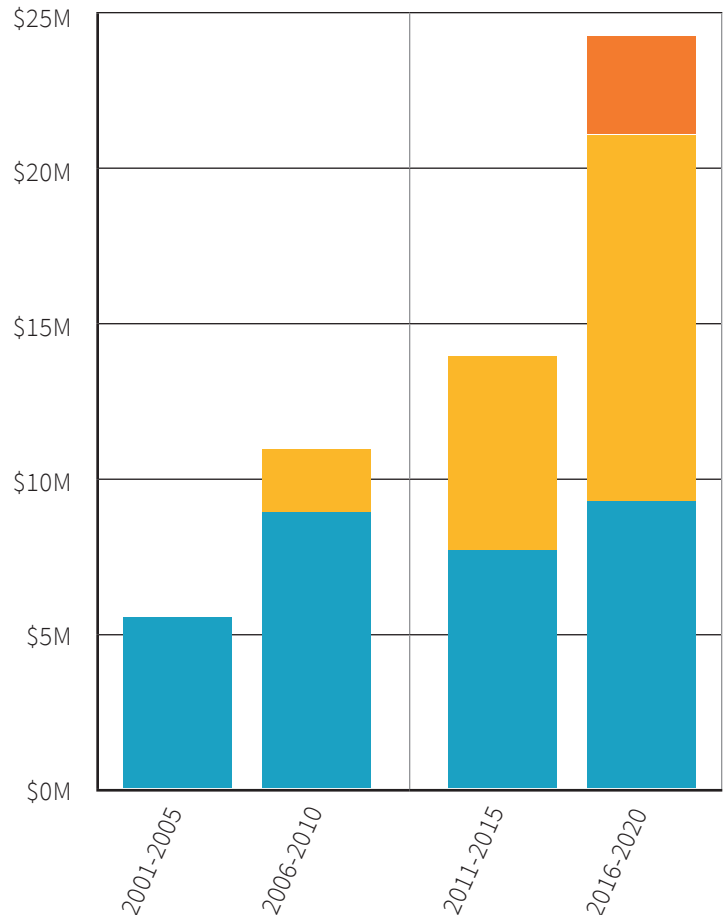
Responding to the needs, aspirations and opportunities of our people and communities, Ulnooweg has been unrelenting in the pursuit of innovative solutions and partnerships to fully address its original mandate “to promote the social and economic welfare of our people and communities”.

1. Initially, Ulnooweg focused on the delivery of government-designed support for Indigenous small and medium enterprise (SME) financing not available through banks.
2. In a second growth phase, driven by specific economic opportunities and with growing capacity within communities, Ulnooweg evolved to offer a full suite of economic development services including planning, opportunity identification, sectoral expertise, fund management, financial intermediation, and support of large-scale collective communal enterprise development.
3. In its third and most recent phase, Ulnooweg aggressively moved to address parts of its original mandate that were not provided for by government support, with a focus on community health and wellness empowerment through youth engagement, education and the development of philanthropic initiatives designed to release the resilience of our people and communities by proactively addressing systemic barriers.

As one of the first Aboriginal Financial Institutions (AFI) to access social impact investment for capital, Ulnooweg Development Group took a leadership role by piloting the first two loans with the Community Forward Fund (CFF) and working towards developing alternative sources of capital.

The adjacent graph illustrates this significant evolution and plots the growth of corporate revenues by focus area over the last 20 years. >

Table 2: Diversification of UDG Activity Measured by Revenue Growth



SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Developmental lending and entrepreneurial capacity support for small businesses; delivery of federal small business support and subsidy programming

REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Participation in regional planning and strategy development including: business opportunity identification; sectoral expertise (e.g. fisheries business development team); mid to large-scale financing solutions, mediation, and facilitation for large-scale collective and communal opportunities (e.g. fisheries, agriculture, and renewable energy); development of financial intermediation solutions and partnerships; and management of communal funds and stewardship of research and support for infrastructure development, health, and wellness

RELEASING COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

Financial literacy for communal economic decision making; youth and educational programming (e.g. Digital Mi'kmaq, Windhorse Farm; Philanthropic support to Communities; Partnership with MasterCard Foundation).

ULNOOWEG OVER THE DECADES - AN EVOLUTION

The Early Years

- A funded program focused on developmental lending to Atlantic Indigenous businesses and entrepreneurs
- Developmental lending is defined as access to loans unavailable from commercial sources for small business start-up and early growth, with maximum loan size policies set by funding agencies

The Middle Years

- Evolving the mandate to respond to the unique challenges Indigenous entrepreneurs, businesses and communal enterprises face, Ulnooweg was re-structured and re-branded with a focus on becoming a regional economic development agency
- Co-leading the development of the Atlantic Indigenous Fishery
- Leading a national effort to enhance access to capital

The Last Decade

- Gathering momentum, diversifying services and engaging philanthropy to create new sources of capital for business development
- Creating new partnerships with conventional lenders and expanding business support services to entrepreneurs and communal enterprises
- Development of a charity and a foundation to respond to the unique needs of Indigenous communities
- Introducing youth to the digital economy and expanding educational mandate

The Future

- Consolidating the gains
- Aggregating results for sustainable and resilient communities
- Finding the financial means to support ongoing growth and development
- Driving energetic responses to emerging issues and challenges to support Indigenous entrepreneurship, innovation and community development



Photos: Top to Bottom

2003, Ulnooweg staff: late Nora Bernard, Chris Googoo, Sacha Labollois, Louis Joe Bernard and late Wayne Abram

2007, Ulnooweg Award Show – Bologna Hunt cast, left to right: Chris Googoo, Todd Hoskin, Chief Misel Joe, late Clara Gloade, Chief Darlene Bernard, Chief Terry Paul, DNR staff.

2010, Anne Hart, formerly with Ulnooweg and current Board member Odelle Pike with Stephenville residents on the opening of Ulnooweg’s new Newfoundland office

2014, Ulnooweg Award Show youth act, “Mi’kmaq Legends” from PEI

2014, Ulnooweg Award Show, Lifetime Achievement Winners; Douglas Denny (Eskasoni), Marilyn John (Miawpukek), Board member late Grand Chief Ben Sylliboy and Sadie Julien for late JJ Julien (Sipikne’katik)

Mekite’tm 2019: I Am Proud, which saw Indigenous youth, all elite athletes, attend Lima 2019 Pan American and Parapan American Games in Peru



BARRIERS AND CHALLENGES

Throughout its history, Ulnooweg has been untiringly focused on reducing barriers and challenges holding Indigenous businesses back.

Along the way there have been notable challenges to be addressed:

- **Effectively addressing these significant issues and challenges often had to be done on the fly.** Without access to enabling policy, program, and funding levers specifically designed to respond to the unique needs of Indigenous businesses, Ulnooweg often had to improvise.
- **From a benign lack of understanding in some cases to policy dissonance in others, there have been institutional and other barriers.** This has made the job of moving this progressive and responsive agenda forward remarkably more difficult.
- **Policy makers have not always understood the nuances and differences between mainstream economic development versus what is required for successful Indigenous community economic development.** Ulnooweg addressed this by making education of its partners and collaborators an important element of its mission.
- **Most destructive have been efforts to form-fit Indigenous interests into standing mainstream economic development programs.** This is an approach that, at best, has been discouraging for Indigenous businesses and communities and, at worst, sometimes led to abject failure.

To surmount the challenges holding back Indigenous communities and enterprises, and without responsive funding mechanisms, Ulnooweg has at times had to take huge leaps of faith, using its own source revenues, resources, and ingenuity to move forward.

This need was the catalyst for Ulnooweg's relentless drive to create new areas of potential support. Through outreach to philanthropy and the creation of its own charity and foundation, these efforts are bearing fruit. The focus has been on bringing new partners to the table and to empower Atlantic Indigenous communities themselves to consider philanthropy as a facility to effectively address these needs.

As a parallel development, the need for capacity building and enhanced support services, specific to First Nation businesses and communal enterprises, was identified as an urgent requirement. Addressing this need and the focus on capacity building are important differentiators in the Ulnooweg mandate.

Photo: Below

The 2018 Ulnooweg Entrepreneur Award Show, Corner Brook, Newfoundland. Honoring Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls.





Photos: Top to Bottom

2010, Ulnooweg Award Show, Lifetime Achievement Award recipient late Caroline Marshall, basket maker, with Honorable Graydon Nicholas.

2018, Digital Mi'kmaq hosted 15 students on a visit to the SNOLAB in Sudbury, Ontario. A world renowned science laboratory

2018, Ulnooweg Award Show Lifetime Achievement Award recipients from left to right: Julia Penney (Port-Hope Simpson, NL), Joe John Sanipass (Elsipogtog, NB) and Connie Nicholas (Tobique, NB)

2019, Supporting healthy living: Ulnooweg's annual Summer Solstice Run

2020, Ulnooweg Award Show and 35 Year Anniversary Celebrations!

FULFILLING THE MANDATE – A SNAPSHOT OF TODAY

Ulnooweg presently operates as three integrated organizations under the umbrella of Ulnooweg Development Group.



Ulnooweg Development Group Inc. is the 35-year-old non-profit organization that focuses on business services, including loans and support services to Indigenous entrepreneurs and community enterprises. This work is focused on creating employment, stronger communities, and brighter futures for Indigenous persons and communities throughout Atlantic Canada. It continues to grow and thrive.



Ulnooweg Education Centre is a charitable organization engaged in innovative research and education work. This includes the Community Financial Reviews, a unique process developed by Ulnooweg staff that transforms the detailed economic data of each community into clear and easily understood infographics conveying each community's past and current financial situation. It is a powerful decision-support tool that leads to more informed and better community economic decision-making. The Education Centre recently broadened its purposes to support engagement in other educational work relevant to social and economic well-being, including a strong focus on Indigenous youth development.



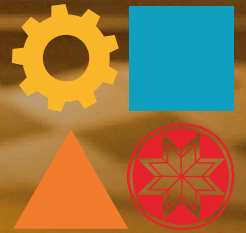
The Ulnooweg Indigenous Communities Foundation is the newest of Ulnooweg's organizations. It is a registered charitable foundation helping bridge the gap between Indigenous communities and the generous and collaborative organizations and individuals at the heart of Canada's dynamic philanthropic sector. The Foundation receives funds from the philanthropic sector and the general public and makes grants to Indigenous communities and to charities serving our communities. The positive response from other foundations has been very encouraging. It is an innovation that is being replicated elsewhere in Canada.

ULNOOWEG TODAY

Over more than three decades, Ulnooweg has been instrumental in opening up new opportunities for Atlantic Indigenous businesses and community enterprises. For many communities, this assistance has been transformative, as evidenced by their progress and dynamism today. From a modest beginning, Ulnooweg presently has 52 staff.

Services have grown and expanded to include:

- Ongoing developmental lending and assistance to Indigenous entrepreneurs and communal enterprises on financing options to support business and economic development initiatives. Ulnooweg's cumulative loan portfolio is presently at \$70 million. Business lending has also been expanded to include partnering with others, including commercial lenders, on a *pari passu* basis.
- A broad range of business support services for Indigenous businesses, entrepreneurs, and communal and social enterprises, contributing to and driving entrepreneurial success.
- A diverse range of community support services that leverage Ulnooweg's expansion into philanthropy. This has been accomplished through the establishment of its own two charities, as well as through outreach, engagement and collaboration with the philanthropic sector broadly. This focus and emphasis leverages the growing awareness among philanthropic organizations in respect to the need to do more with Indigenous communities and organizations and, particularly, to address the complex needs of contemporary Indigenous youth. Ulnooweg has been a nationally recognized leader in this development and has brought new energy, vision and innovation in supporting community development in ways that respect the unique culture and language of Indigenous peoples and their focus on land-based healing. An important aspect of this leadership has been in assisting communities themselves to engage philanthropy by helping them become 'qualified donees'.
- Co-leadership of the Atlantic Indigenous Fishery with the Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nations Chiefs, including development of aquaculture and a growing marine services industry designed to support the fishery.
- The Canadian Space Agency and the Digital Mi'kmaq program collaborated on a robotics program, leading Astronaut David Saint-Jacques, also known by his gifted Mi'kmaq name, Tapit, to make presentations to youth from space, where he took a Mi'kmaq basket and an Eagle Feather he was gifted to the International Space Station, both symbols of inspiration for Indigenous youth to have big dreams and the confidence to achieve them.
- Leadership and stewardship of collective commercial and other joined-up economic development initiatives undertaken by Indigenous communities as a group. This includes initiatives in the fishery, aquaculture, renewable energy, and cannabis industries.
- It is important to note that Indigenous governments do not have at their disposal the same tools for larger project financing and for financing community economic development initiatives as non-Indigenous governments. Ulnooweg has played an important brokerage role in finding creative ways to lead complex financing arrangements for collective commercial projects and communal enterprises.
- Philanthropic endeavours including establishing a Charity – The Ulnooweg Education Centre – broadly focused on education and land-based healing, and a Foundation – Ulnooweg Indigenous Communities Foundation – with a mandate to strengthen the relationships between Canada's philanthropic sector and the Indigenous communities of Atlantic Canada.
- Youth oriented initiatives including Digital Mi'kmaq, a ground-breaking and nationally recognized program initiative designed to build 21st century skills in Indigenous youth by introducing them to the digital economy.



DIGITAL MI'KMAQ

DIGITAL MI'KMAQ

On the theme of inspiration, one example stands out. The Ulnooweg team created an extraordinary new project called Digital Mi'kmaq that is inspiring Indigenous students to explore and pursue studies and careers in STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics); areas typically underfunded in Indigenous communities.

Developed first in Nova Scotia and being rolled out across Atlantic Canada, an important dimension of this innovative project is a partnership with the Canada Space Agency that included astronauts visiting Indigenous schools to share their experiences.

Amazingly, Canadian Astronaut David St. Jacques even made presentations to our youth from space. He adopted the Mi'kmaq name "Tapit" and took a Mi'kmaq basket and a small eagle feather to the International Space Station as symbols of inspiration for Indigenous youth to have big dreams and the confidence to achieve them.

EPILOGUE – LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

This thirty-five-year history of Ulnooweg and the story of how it has unfolded underscores the unique challenges in fostering successful, respectful, and culturally-appropriate Indigenous community economic development.

The value creation resulting from these activities has been cumulative leading to more recognition, interest, and activity for Ulnooweg and driving its diversified and evolving mandate.

As a result, Ulnooweg is increasingly being called upon to become involved in projects, initiatives and activities that extend beyond the economic development mandate. These include infrastructure development addressing chronic Indigenous challenges such as housing and access to high quality drinking water, housing, health care, education, and land-based healing.

For Ulnooweg, it has been a long road. The waypoints along that road include experimentation, collaboration, partnership building, education, pivoting to new approaches when required, and developing models that support Nation-building approaches to economic development policy and execution.

Progress and strong results on this journey have been possible because Ulnooweg is, first and foremost, Indigenous-focused and led.

Historically, economic development program design and small business support programming typically takes for granted that mainstream economic activity drivers, investment climate determinants, and sources of capital operate in Indigenous communities as they do elsewhere. The Ulnooweg story clearly illustrates that this is not the case for Atlantic Indigenous communities.

The Ulnooweg story underscores that Indigenous economic success is ultimately dependent on the unseen and unmeasured activities, services, and initiatives offered by Ulnooweg and others to meet outcome-inspired Nation-building economic participation expectations from Indigenous communities, businesses, and entrepreneurs.

Though there is much to be celebrated, these activities, now largely funded through own- source revenues, social finance, one-time contributions, charitable sources, and a patchwork of other funding sources are complex to manage and continue to fall somewhat short of what is needed to fully engage Atlantic Indigenous economic development potential. And although the success achieved to date compellingly points the way, it also embodies the major challenge of the future - ensuring financial means for ongoing adaptation, growth, and development.

Ultimately, Ulnooweg cannot operate on a regional agency model by continuing to cobble together disparate funding sources and short-term, one-time grants. To do so is to limit its effectiveness in supporting the communities with which it works.

Over the next five years, we anticipate that the shift will be toward continuing growth of community development and empowerment through philanthropic initiatives and engaging new partners in the quest to release the resilience and resourcefulness of Atlantic Indigenous communities.

THE NEXT CHALLENGE

A BUILDING PROCESS IN A RECONCILIATION ERA

Going forward, confidence in mission success, continued growth and adaptation for Ulnooweg is buttressed by the strength of the story thus far and its impact on the positive growth, development and confidence of Atlantic Canada's Indigenous communities.

Ulnooweg has relied on a small number of individuals and its founders – the Board of Directors and its core team - to effectively guide this organizational transformation with vision, zeal, vigour and remarkable stability over its thirty-five year history. As illustrated through this story, it has achieved a great deal in supporting Atlantic Indigenous communities.

But it is also fragile. The challenge going forward is to consolidate this growth and change within the

organization to create a new level of operational sustainability enabling these program initiatives to scale and grow. To do so, Ulnooweg needs sufficient and predictable funding to carry out its proven and ambitious mandate.

Ulnooweg will also need to consider succession, to imbue a growing team with that same sense of purpose, mission, invention, and courage that has been the keystone to its achievements to date.

There is also the need to ensure that its mission is acculturated across a changing and evolving organization, emulating the approach that has brought Ulnooweg to where it is today. Securing resources to advance innovative approaches to Indigenous community economic development has been and will continue to be difficult, requiring ingenuity, creativity, and agility. These factors obviously present new challenges, in a particularly fraught environment arising from the pandemic.

THE ATLANTIC INDIGENOUS FISHERY – A NATIONAL SUCCESS STORY

It has been 20 years since the Supreme Court of Canada delivered the landmark Marshall ruling that required the federal government to respect First Nation treaty rights within the East Coast commercial fishery. Specifically, it recognized the right of Mi'kmaq, Maliseet, and Passamaquoddy fishers in the Maritime provinces to earn a "moderate livelihood" in that industry.

Under the leadership of the Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nations Chiefs (APCFNC) and Ulnooweg, the build out of the Atlantic First Nation fishery is viewed as a national success story. This said, we have seen the fragility of First Nation rights in 2020 as First Nations fishers were challenged, often violently, in their given right to create their own moderate livelihood fisheries, Nation by Nation. Ulnooweg, building on the success of the The Atlantic Indigenous Fishery, will stand alongside First Nations as they further press forward to ensure success in protecting their inherent and Treaty rights, as upheld by the Marshall ruling. The path to reconciliation in Atlantic Canada must include meaningful resolutions that prevent violent acts and criminalizing First Nations fishers working to earn a moderate livelihood, as guided by their Nations.



835 Willow Street • PO Box 1259 • Millbrook, Nova Scotia • B2N 5N2

P (902) 893-7379 F (902) 893-0353 TF 1-888-766-2376 • info@ulnooweg.ca •    @ulnooweg • ulnooweg.ca