

Executive Summary

The Dene and Métis people of the Sahtú Region have always depended on the land for survival. Development of non-renewable resources over the past century has provided people with opportunities to expand their means of survival to include jobs with industry. The special kind of economy that has long sustained families and communities in the Sahtú, combining jobs and traditional activities, has come to be known as a “mixed economy.” Understanding this economy as a whole can be a starting point for finding ways to keep it healthy in times of change. While a lot of information exists about the industrial economy, the role of the traditional economy is not as well understood.

Best of Both Worlds is a two phase project to develop an Action Plan for promoting workforce readiness to support a healthy mixed economy. This discussion document is the outcome of Phase 1, which involved a literature review, workshop, focus group and interviews to learn about the status of the regional mixed economy and develop preliminary recommendations as the basis for the action planning phase. Preliminary terminology research provided insights into Dene concepts related to the mixed economy.

The following five questions related to the mixed economy of the Sahtú Region were explored through Phase 1, with a focus on the traditional sector of the mixed economy:

1. What is the history, nature and status of the contemporary mixed economy?
2. What is the status of the traditional economy?
3. What are program, institutional, and community barriers, opportunities and supports for the mixed economy?
4. What are the strengths and challenges in education and training for the mixed economy?
5. What are some recommended actions in program development, education and training, communication and awareness-building, and research to support workforce readiness in a healthy mixed economy?

This discussion document provides an overview of the concepts of traditional and mixed economies, and the history of the Sahtú mixed economy. A description of factors affecting the Sahtú economy is provided, followed by a discussion of key messages from the workshop, focus group and interviews. A series of 29 recommendations for action compiled on the basis of the engagement activities addresses the areas of program and infrastructure development, education and training, communication and awareness-building, and research.