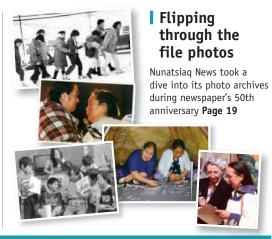






I The long journey to publish Nunatsiag News

A personal recollection from the publisher of Nunatsiag News **Pages 6-9**





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Former Inukshuk newsletter editor Ann Hanson sits at a desk in her Apex home. The newsletter she started in 1973 is the forerunner of Nunatsiaq News, which is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year. (Photo by David Venn) \$\Delta_0^b / \Gamma_0^b / \Gamma_0^b \Gamma_0^b / \Gamma_0^b \Gamma_0^b \Gamma_0^b / \Gamma_0^b \Gamma_0^b \Gamma_0^b / \Gamma_0^b \Gamma_0^b / \Gamma_0^b /

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How a community newsletter launched a newspaper tradition in Iqaluit

Inukshuk, started 50 years ago, was forerunner to Nunatsiaq News

Corey Larocque

When the first Inukshuk newsletter rolled off a Gestetner copy machine in 1973, it ushered in a new era of Inuit and other northerners getting to know each other, its first editor Ann Hanson says.

"That period was a very exciting time for all—for Inuit and non-Inuit—because we were learning so much about each other," Hanson said in an interview from her home in Apex.

In the 1960s and '70s, Inuit, who had been living on the land, started to move into settlements such as Frobisher Bay. Southerners were also starting to move to what would eventually become Iqaluit because of the growth in federal government jobs.

It's why a group of volunteers launched Inukshuk, which they described as a "community experiment" to share their stories.

"It was one of the greatest things for people to have something to say," Hanson recalled. Inukshuk published its first edition on Feb. 9,

Inukshuk published its first edition on Feb. 9, 1973, starting a three-year run that ended in 1976 when its volunteer board sold it to a private company, Frobisher Press Ltd., which changed the newsletter's name.

That connection to Inukshuk is the reason Nunatsiaq News is celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2023

It was important for Frobisher Bay to have a news source to bring people together so they could learn about each other, Hanson said.

Living in a community was different from living on the land, where everyone knew everyone else and where everyone was related to each other.

"People had to get used to each other and getting to know strangers for the first time in your life. We had to learn to live with each other," she said. "Plus, southerners. We had to teach them our ways to survive."

Hanson had grown up an orphan in Kimmirut, raised by aunts and uncles, living on the land. In 1957, they moved to Frobisher Bay as part of what she calls a "mini-exodus" from Kimmirut.



Ann Hanson, former Inukshuk newsletter editor, reads syllabics on old copies of her paper from the 1970s. (Photo by David Venn) $\dot{\Box}^{\alpha}$ H $\dot{\Box}^{\alpha}$, Δ_{Δ}^{b} / \dot{b} $\dot{\Box}^{c}$ Λ $\dot{\Box}^{c}$ $\dot{\Box}^{c}$

In 1960, an aunt took her to Baker Lake, then to Toronto, where she lived with a foster family for about four years.

Her foster parents made her read the newspaper to help her learn to read and write in English, setting the stage for the work she would later do back in the North, not only as an editor but in the federal government's secretarial pool as a typist and



Nunatsiaq News traces its origins to the Inukshuk newsletter, whose first issue was published on Feb. 9, 1973. (Image courtesy of Library and Archives Canada) Δοζ/456 ΛΘζ-C4ζ-C Δοδ-1,650ς Δοδ-16-ΛΘζ-C4ζ-Θ, /95-C56ζ-Γ Λ56ρ-C56-1/456 ΔΘΛ-Γ 9-10Γ-J, 1973-Γ (Φ)λο-1/456 ΔΘΛ-Γ J56ΔΔΛ-Γ ΔοΔ-Γ ΔοΔ-Γ

translator, and with the CBC.

When she was about 13 years old, her foster parents weren't sure what to do with her — send her back to Frobisher Bay or keep her in Toronto to continue going to school.

"I chose to go to school," Hanson said. One of Inukshuk's early goals was to give Inuit

one of Inuksnuk's early goals was to give inuit some variety in reading material. At the time, the only printed documents available in Inuktitut syllabics were translations of the Bible and some federal government publications.

"Hardly anything was printed in Inuktitut, so I thought this would be a good way for our people to have something to read other than the Bible," Hanson said. "It was very new to our way of living because we never had any kind of newspaper written in our language."

Stories were usually written in Inuktitut and translated into English, then published in both languages. (Today, Nunatsiaq News continues that tradition of publishing in both languages, though articles are now written in English and translated.)

"This was a way to have something original, a story from our people," Hanson said.

She put Inukshuk together at what was then the Gordon Robertson Education Centre, an adult education centre where people went "to learn anything that was going on."

The centre gave Inukshuk free rent in a corner of its office, free paper and use of its Gestetner, a primitive photocopying machine notorious for the noxious smell of the chemicals it used in its duplicating process.

Hanson worked on her own, often bringing her first daughter, Kathleen, to work. Kathleen would lie

on top of her amauti while the paper's editor went about the business of putting out the newsletter.

Over the years, she and her husband, Bob, had three more children. In the 1970s, Bob was a purchasing officer for the government of the Northwest Territories (before the creation of Nunavut as a territory) before he formed a construction company in the 1980s.

Hanson had an old manual typewriter on which she recalled, "You almost needed a hammer to punch the keys down."

Syllabics for stories in Inuktitut were painstakingly handwritten on the special paper used by the Gestetner copier.

"I had to make sure I didn't make a mistake. One little mistake would take an hour or two to correct on the old Gestetner."

Hanson calls Inukshuk a "newsletter" instead of a newspaper because its articles were based on community stories that people would tell her. Hunting stories were a big part of Inukshuk's weekly content.

"There wasn't too much news. By the time we printed, it was old news. It was more like a letter," she said.

During its three-year run, Inukshuk published every week and was frequently more than 20 pages. Pages were stapled together instead of folded like most newspapers. It carried a price tag of 25 cents and was distributed in Frobisher Bay by a team of children — often Hanson's relatives — who were paid with "a chocolate bar or two" or "a few candies."

"That's quite a bit for a little community newsletter. Half the time, there wasn't much going on. People like to tell their stories. And I would translate all of them."

Yet Inukshuk covered the basics of community news — the goings-on at Frobisher Bay council, freight rate hikes by Nordair airline, liquor plebiscites, and breaking news like the January 1974 headline, "policeman shot."

On Nov. 20, 1974, the newsletter's main headline was "James Bay Natives Settle for \$150 million and Hunting Rights — ITC not impressed." It ran over a story about a fire that destroyed the Frobisher Curling Club.

"Anything that was printable," Hanson said about what went into Inukshuk.

But by June 1976, Inukshuk's volunteer board had decided it was time to sell.

It turned the keys over to Frobisher Press Ltd., a company led by Monica Connolly, a southerner from Oshawa, Ont., who had worked as a reporter for Inukshuk. Connolly organized a group of shareholders who wanted to take the paper private.

Inukshuk's board had one condition — that the new owners give it a new name and retire the Inukshuk name. On June 16, 1976, Inukshuk reported both its own sale and the paper's name change that were to take effect that July.

And with that, Nunatsiaq News was born. Frobisher Press would publish that paper for nine years until 1985 when it was bought by Nunatext, a partnership between Nunasi Corp. and Nortext Publishing Corp., which was owned by the Roberts family, three brothers from Ottawa with a long history of their own in business in Canada's North.

Nunatsiaq News is currently owned by Nortext.



Premier congratulates Nunatsiaq News on half-century of news coverage



Nunavut Premier P.J. Akeeagok, centre, congratulates Nunatsiaq News publisher Michael Roberts, left, and managing editor Corey Larocque at the Northern Lights conference and trade show in Ottawa on Feb. 10. Nunatsiaq News is celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2023. The first Inukshuk newsletter, which later became Nunatsiaq News, was published on Feb. 9, 1973.

(Photo by Emma Tranter)

It all starts with Inukshuk

Take a peek at the first front page of the newsletter that became Nunatsiaq News

Corey Larocque

The chronicling of Nunavut began at a parent-teacher open house in Frobisher Bay — which had not yet been renamed Iqaluit — in 1973.

It was the first front-page story in the very first issue of Inukshuk, a newspaper that debuted Feb. 9, 1973. It would eventually become Nunatsiaq News.

As Nunatsiaq News celebrated its 50th anniversary, we published images of front pages from the past five decades on our website. A few of them are reproduced at the back of this special section.

"School open house" was Inukshuk's very first front-page headline. There had been a recent open house at the Sir Martin Frobisher Elementary School on Jan. 24, attended by 273 families "representing 51% of the students."

"Such a gathering is bound to benefit the students as well as interest and inform the adults," the paper reported in an un-bylined article that appeared beside a picture of Mosesie and Florence Lewis and Doris Lidstone in Aileen Burak's Grade 1

Inukshuk was published by a non-profit organization that described its new venture as "a community experiment" aimed at being "a link to a new feeling of community in Frobisher Bay."

"Inukshuk plans to report the news in Frobisher and Baffin on a regular basis," the paper's introductory editorial explained to readers.

"We also plan to have a special section on things of interest and we welcome your suggestions for new columns and new topics."

Ann Hanson, who would later become a commissioner of Nunavut, was its first editor. The society published the paper for nearly three and a half years.

The very first edition was published on Feb. 9,

By March, Inukshuk was being printed on legalsize paper. English articles were written on a typewriter instead of using typeset letters commonly used by newspapers that were produced on a printing press. Articles in Inuktitut used handwritten syllabics.

Then in June 1976, the Inukshuk staff broke the news that its name was changing. The non-profit society had sold the paper to Frobisher Press, Ltd., a private company whose "major shareholders" were already working for Inukshuk.

One of the conditions of the sale, however, was that the new owners "retire" the Inukshuk name.

They picked the new name by holding a contest. Alootook Ipellie, a writer and artist who lived in Ottawa and worked with Inuit Today magazine, suggested the name. For christening the new publication, he won \$50 and a lifetime subscription to Nunatsiaq News.

Nunatsiaq won out because "it was feared that the use of the still unofficial 'Nunavut' could cause confusion in some readers' minds."

On June 16, Inukshuk's editor explained the new name meant "Beautiful Land" and was used to describe "the area of the Northwest Territories above the tree-line." ("News from above the tree-line" became the new paper's slogan — similar to the New York Times' "All the news that's fit to print.")

The new owners "seriously considered" incorporating "Nunavut" into the new name.

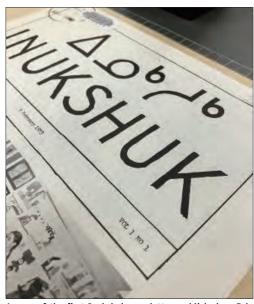
They noted it was the name suggested for the area by the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada, the organization that led a study that formed the basis for the Nunavut territory, and that "it seems likely the term will increase in popular usage."

Inukshuk had also supported ITC's land claims proposals in its editorials in the early 1970s.

In the following two editions, the new name and new logo were introduced on the front page in anticipation of the name change.

It's hard to find copies of those early editions of Inukshuk. Library and Archives Canada, however, has preserved a full run of them.

Frobisher Press continued to publish Nunatsiaq



A copy of the first Inukshuk newsletter, published on Feb. 9, 1973, is part of the Library and Archives Canada collection. The newsletter is the forerunner to Nunatisaq News, which is celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2023. (Photo by Corey Larocque/Library and Archives Canda)

News until 1985. In that year, in a partnership between Nunasi Corp., the Roberts family from Ottawa bought the paper from Frobisher Press.

The Roberts family — publisher Michael and brothers David and Steven — is still the majority shareholder. Each of the brothers has one of their children involved in the family business.

When the Nunatsiaq News 50th anniversary celebration began in February, Michael Roberts wrote a two-part series about his family's history in the North and how they came to own Nunatsiaq News.

It appears in the front pages of this special section.



'Go private:' How a friend's advice led to creation of Nunatsiaq News

Privately owned newspaper emerged after Monica Connolly bought Inukshuk newsletter in 1976

Corey Larocque

A good friend's advice to "take it private" led Monica Connolly to found Nunatsiaq News in

Connolly, who was editor-publisher of the Inukshuk newsletter at the time, got that recommendation after a dispute with the non-profit, community-led board running it.

She had been working as editor-publisher for Inukshuk for about a year when the board suddenly demanded to have a financial statement in time for its next meeting — the following Wednesday.

"I said, 'You've got a choice. You can have a statement or you can have a newspaper for next Wednesday. But you're not getting both. It's not possible," Connolly said in a phone interview from her home in Oshawa, Ont., an hour east of Toronto.

Connolly's company Frobisher Press Ltd. became the first owner of Nunatsiaq News after buying the Inukshuk newsletter, which is considered the precursor to this newspaper.

Inukshuk was created in February 1973 — 50 years ago — by Ann Hanson and a non-profit organization in Frobisher Bay who wanted the paper to help people in the growing community to get to know each other.

When the board asked Connolly for the financial statements on short notice, she was "furious," she recalled

After learning about the demand for financial statements, she went to cover a government hearing. There, she bumped into a friend, Jim Tooley, then the CEO of Nordair airline.

"Jim and I had been becoming friends over the last while," Connolly recalled.

He asked her what was wrong.

"He says, 'You should go private,'" Connolly said, recalling the advice that launched her into the newspaper ownership business.

"Ĥe suggested I go private and he told me how to do it, what I had to do."

Connolly created Frobisher Press Ltd. and asked Inukshuk's board to sell its three-year-old paper to her.

"We convinced the board to sell to us. I had to raise money. 'Us' being me and anybody I could sell shares to," she said.

One of the conditions of the sale was that the new privately owned paper would not use the same Inukshuk name the non-profit board had used.



The June 30, 1976, issue of the Inukshuk newsletter, held by Library and Archives Canada, announces the transition to Nunatsiaq News. (Photo by Corey Larocque)

Nunatsiaq News was born.

Connolly, now 78, grew up in Oshawa in the same house where she lives today. But she never felt the city, then famous for its General Motors plant, was home.

Her father, a Scot and an outdoorsman, introduced her to northern Ontario's "Shield Country." He admired the First Nations people he met there, so Connolly grew up oriented toward the north and with a respect for Indigenous peoples.

After becoming a teacher, she moved to Frobisher Bay (now Iqaluit) to take a government job at an experimental residence for young women. But the job, she said, "just wasn't working out for anyone."

After the residence closed, she spent three months doing social services research for the government. In the meantime, someone asked her to be Inukshuk's court reporter under then-editor Nerda Greenway, who had replaced founding editor Hanson.

"I enjoyed it. They enjoyed me," she

In time, Connolly took over as Inukshuk's editor-publisher. Not long after that, she was running the newspaper herself.

Operating a newspaper in Frobisher Bay in the mid-1970s was "crazy but it was fun," Connolly said, comparing it to the image portrayed in western movies of the guy in a one-horse town who churned out the paper.

Nunatsiaq upgraded from the Gestether copy machine Inukshuk had used and began using an offset printing press. There was no technician in the North, so Connolly had to troubleshoot mechanical breakdowns over the phone with a repairman in Montreal.

"When you were a publisher, you were a publisher," she said.

The paper was fiercely independent, Connolly said — "capable of taking on a fight with just about anybody."

But working in the North came with compromises, such as taking a ride "with anyone who was flying a plane" without risking the perception they were "being corrupted" into being "an arm of the government," she said.

Nunatsiaq News had about seven full-time staff plus "independent" translators. They worked in a building near the legion. The mostly white news staff tended to socialize with the community's Inuit population more than other southerners.

One of the people who worked for Connolly was Jim Bell, who would become the paper's longtime, highly regarded editor. He worked for Nunatsiaq News for more than 30 years until his death in 2021.

Bell was first hired to work the printing press. He got his start as a writer by filling in when another writer had to leave.

"We didn't agree all the time about the politics and that was OK," Connolly said of Bell. "He enjoyed the job more than he was interested in getting paid."

Connolly recalled her time running Nunatsiaq as "a really exciting time" to be covering the news.

"There were so many problems — which you've



Nunatsiaq News was born in 1976 after Frobisher Press Ltd., a company owned by Monica Connolly, bought the Inukshuk newsletter that had been published by a non-profit organization in Frobisher Bay since 1973. (File photo)

still got," she said, citing the territory's housing shortage and persistent tuberculosis problems.

It was the period when discussions about land claims for Inuit had begun and Nunatsiaq staff were regularly in touch with newsmakers like Paul Quassa, Tagak Curley, Piita Irniq and John Amagoalik.

It came with challenges, too, in holding on to staff, especially Inuit. As soon as Nunatsiaq News trained bright, young Inuit workers, they left the paper for a government job that offered housing.

Connolly started backing away from Nunatsiaq News in the early 1980s because she suffered what was eventually diagnosed as depression and a fear of flying.

She described having what she called a "nervous breakdown" in the early 1980s. At the time, few people knew about depression and how to treat it.

"It looked like laziness because you lost your energy. I was accomplishing less and less by the early '80s," she said.

By 1985, Frobisher Press sold Nunatsiaq News to Nunatext Publishing, a partnership involving Nunasi Corp., and the Roberts brothers — Michael, David and Steven. The Roberts family has owned the paper since then.

"They were quite successful at business, I understand," Connolly said.



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The long journey to publish Nunatsiaq News

A personal recollection – part 1

Michael Roberts, Publisher

In late 1961, we left Ottawa for Sugluk (now Salluit) after my father, A. Barry Roberts, had completed six months training as a northern administrator. The journey, mostly by Austin Airways DC-3, would take three weeks. Before instrument flying, weather meant you stayed put.

On the flight from Povungnituk to Ivujivik, the Inuk woman beside me offered me an apple. I didn't know it at the time, but it was a very generous gift. Fresh fruit was rarely seen for the next three years.

I was nine years old.

My father was an adventurer. He was a young reporter in England for the Cannock Advertiser shortly after the Second World War. After meeting my mom Pat on Victory in Europe Day in 1945 they married, had me and then quickly decided to move to Canada.

He got a job with De Havilland. As chief technical writer, he created the operations manuals for the Beaver and Otter bush planes. Then he saw an ad for "Northern Service Officer in Canada's Arctic."

So the family, with my younger brothers Steven and David, came north. In Povungnituk, we stayed for a week. A helpful teacher, Mick Mallon, planned out correspondence courses for me, as the highest grade in Salluit at that time was Grade 2.

Overnighting in Ivujivik, we saw a movie. We sat at the back and, as the

place filled, chairs were turned away from the screen and towards us. I asked the person beside me why. She replied, "they didn't know that white people came in small sizes."

Our three years in Salluit is another story. But I met great friends like Noah Koperqualuk, Adamie Kalingo, and the late Putilik Papigatuk. As a child, I had numerous adventures from falling in the water while floe-jumping way out in the bay to a solo encounter with a polar bear. He wasn't hungry that day.



Arctic travel is always an adventure. This Austin Airways DC-3 crash-landed on the Salluit ice strip, crushing the landing gear and ruining a propeller. (Photo by A. Barry Roberts) PPP^{\$6}C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}T <P⁶C^{\$6}T <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}T <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C^{\$6}DT <P⁶C



While in Salluit, my father supervised building the first road and constructing the first "matchbox" houses.

Three years later we moved to Fort Chimo (now Kuujjuaq) before we moved south for school. There, my best friend was Mark Gordon, who would tragically die in his 20s after being chief negotiator for the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement. My friends in the Koneak, May, Watt and Gordon families would go on to become leaders: mayors, presidents, senator and even Governor General.

After leaving the North and being nicknamed "Nanook" in high school, not kindly, I did a stint at Queen's University in Kingston, Ont. I needed to escape some poor 1970s lifestyle choices and my father offered me a job as an enrolment fieldworker for the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement. I'd get to go back to Salluit and Kuujjuaq.

In Salluit, the kids followed me down the street, calling "Mikualuk!" which I was named after a growth spurt in earlier years.

I had an appointment with town council in the same building my father presided over as administrator. The whole council looked out the window as I arrived on a borrowed snowmobile. Unfortunately, I forgot to turn if off on dismounting so they got to watch me chase it down the street.

In 1978, my father decided to quit his contracting business, and Steven and I formed a fledgling company called Nortext. David joined shortly after.

We had no money but got a contract from the Department of Northern Affairs to publish an English/Inuktitut newspaper called Igalaaq about training and education.

We had several journalism trainees of whom the most successful was Rita Novalinga, who became editor. She then went on to head the co-ops, Kativik School Board, and was elected secretary-treasurer of Makivvik. On that election night, I got a text, "not bad for your old trainee!"

At Nortext, we were an early adopter of computers, as publishing with the IBM Selectric typewriter with its "syllabic ball" was not ideal. We invested in Compugraphic typesetting terminals and adapted a syllabic font created by the N.W.T. government to finally get a working typesetting system for syllabics.

A few years later we decided to develop our own font. We partnered with the Baffin Divisional Board of Education. We drew the characters on foot square boards and then had them digitized in Boston.

During the design process, we made many decisions. One of the most important was to establish a middle line in the syllabic characters, as in Roman text, to

make reading faster and easier.

Our font was then converted into the first syllabic desktop publishing font and then to the first Internet font, nunacom. This work has influenced syllabic typography to this day in Inuktitut, Cree and other syllabic writing systems.

In 1983, I attended the Inuit Circumpolar Council conference in Iqaluit. I got a call from Tagak Curley. He said, "I've got someone I want you to meet." It was John Hickes, recently appointed head of Nunasi Corporation. We had lunch at the Frobisher Inn.

We ordered our lunch and waited almost two hours to be served. After small talk and going over business plans, we started talking about the future. The land claim agreement was to be signed shortly. There would be a need for communications. Inuit needed to play a role.

We came up with the idea of a majority Inuitowned publishing company, based in Iqaluit and serving the Arctic. It would hire and train Inuit in publishing and communications.

Six months later we formed Nunatext Publishing Corporation, 51 per cent owned by Nunasi and 49 per cent owned by Nortext, which was still owned by the Roberts family.

A few months later, I got a phone call. Nunatsiaq News was for sale.

(This is the first of a two-part series about the history of Nunatsiaq News, which is marking its 50th anniversary in 2023. To be continued in Part 2.)

Michael Roberts is the publisher of Nunatsiaq News.



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The long journey to publish Nunatsiaq News

A personal recollection – part 2

Michael Roberts, Publisher

Nunatsiaq News was for sale in 1985. Monica Connolly, the owner and publisher, had decided to move from Iqaluit. We met her broker in Montreal and were served an elegant lunch of smoked char and a glass of Chardonnay. We shook hands on a

We then dealt with Nunasi Corporation, which would become 51 per cent owner. The board resolved to never interfere with editorial decisions. We published a full-page ad committing to that decision.

I flew to Iqaluit to find that the operation was quite a bit less elegant than lunch.

Nunatsiaq News was housed in an old "matchbox" house, 512 square feet. Half the office was filled with a Gestetner printer, which emitted foul fumes of ink and oil. A space heater added to the atmosphere. The air was blue with cigarette smoke. In the corner, the toilet was a honey bucket closed off with a shower curtain.

I met Jim Bell and Bill McConkey. Both would work for the paper for nearly four decades. I mapped out my vision for the future. They weren't impressed. Many years later, I learned that they named the new owners after Star Wars characters. My name was Luke Skywalker, after my grandiose ideas. When we finally got a phone system, Bill would transfer my calls to Jim with, "Luke on line one."

The local Iqaluit newspaper printed 800 copies each week with typewritten English and handwritten syllabics on legal-sized paper.

Financed by a grant and loans, we moved typesetting equipment to Iqaluit and housed it in a trailer, with extension cords from our office shack. That was fine until spring, when the melted snow on the roof flooded the trailer and equipment.

We converted the paper to a tabloid with typeset English and Inuktitut, and started printing on newsprint in the south. First Air started flying and airfares, temporarily, dropped to \$99 one way. Many was the time that airplanes were held on the tarmac waiting for the newspaper artwork.

We soon had our first financial crisis. The Tunngavik Federation walked away from land claims negotiations as the feds wouldn't negotiate a territory of Nunavut. Nunasi was backed by future land claims funds. They were instructed to divest all startups. We bought back their shares, laid off staff, and cut back plans.

This was by no means the last financial crisis. They followed a familiar pattern of expense cuts, loans from shareholders, and pledging personal assets to allow the company to survive. Publishing is not for the faint of heart.

We moved into expansive modern offices overlooking the bay in what was then called the Royal Bank building. We had a darkroom, equipment, phone lines, a fax machine and all the modern conveniences.

In 1988, my brother Steven and his wife, Roberta, moved to Iqaluit. He took on the role of publisher and supervised a staff which peaked at 17: editors, ad sales, reporters, translators, typesetters and production artists. He lived in

Iqaluit for 14 years with his family.

Those years included numerous milestone events. Steven was a founder of the Baffin (now Nunavut) Trade Show, a member of the Iqaluit for Capital Committee, and publisher of special publications to mark the creation of Nunavut. Roberta did groundbreaking work in educational publishing.

We published Arctic Circle magazine, created the Nunavut Handbook, expanded our educational



—Wayne Cuddington, Clitical
Michael Roberts: color photos and computerized typesetting will change weekly

inuit newspaper to get a new look

By Karen Benzing
Ciscon staff writes

An Ottawa-based typesetting and graphics firm specializing in native language publications has joined forces with an Inuit-owned company to publish a slick weekly newspaper in the Eastern Arctic.

Nortext Information Design Ltd., formed in 1978, and Nunasi Corp., the Ottawa-based Inuit development company for the Central and Eastern Arctic, have purchased the Nunatsian News, a bilingual community paper printed in English and Inuktituk, the Inuit language. The newspaper is based in Frobisher Bay.

The two firms have formed Nunatext Publishing Corp., a joint-venture company with Nunasi owning 51 per cent and Nortext 49 per cent.

Nunatext will be based in Frobisher Bay.

Michael Roberts, president of Nortext and Nunatext, said Friday that with a new look, color pictures and computerized typsetting equipment capable of producing Inuktituk characters, "we hope to turn Nunatsian News, into the major publication in the Northwest Terrifories."

Roberts sepects to double the newspaper's circulation of 2,500 into the first year.

Nunatext also plans to open a publishing division of the Northwest Terrifories."

Roberts sexpects to double the newspaper's circulation of 2,500 into the first year.

Nunatext also plans to open a publishing division of the Postschilary of the Control of the Contro

Nunatext's purchase of Nunatsiaq News got lots of coverage in other media, such as this 1985 article in the Ottawa

publishing across Canada, and formed Ayaya Communications & Marketing with Inuit shareholders in 2002.

In Ottawa, my youngest brother David married the late Vera Panaktak from Cambridge Bay. They had two boys, Jason and Chris, both of whom are Ayaya shareholders. Jason moved to Iqaluit after Ayaya was formed and worked there for 12 years. He moved back in 2023 with his family and is now managing director director of Ayaya.

Steven's son, Taylor Roberts, is now Nunatsiaq News' advertising sales manager. My daughter, Julia, works for the companies today and was named assistant publisher of Nunatsiaq News earlier this year.

Nunatsiaq News gradually expanded its circulation and editorial coverage, first to the other Baffin communities, then to the Kivalliq and Kitikmeot regions, and finally to Nunavik.

Our journalism improved, mostly under Jim Bell, but also under a succession of other editors including Kelly Curwin, Matthew Spence, Todd Phillips and Greg Coleman. In more recent years, until his death in 2021, Jim worked as a contributing editor with Lisa Gregoire, Patricia Lightfoot and Corey Larocque.

We have had many stellar reporters, such as Sarah Rogers, Jane George and many others. Dozens of young journalists have made their mark at Nunatsiaq News. They are often poached by government, lured by higher salaries and pensions. At one point, I wanted to post a "CBC Human Resources Dept." sign outside our office.

We've played a strong role in publishing Inuktitut, with many talented translators and Inuktitut experts, like long-term translator Basil Kiblakoot, and Inuktitut editors Rebecca Awa, Itee Akavak, and Clara Kolit.

And we've had amazing columnists, like John Amagoalik (My Little Corner of Canada), Kenn Harper (Taissumani), and Rachel Qitsualik-Tinsley. And of course, the first Inuk cartoonist Alootook Ipellie, and Ayla Kreelak following in his steps today.

Jim learned HTML—a machine language that runs websites — on his own and launched our first website in 1993. Today, it's an award-winning website filled with outstanding journalism that routinely cleans up at awards ceremonies. Between two and three million people visit our website each year.

Over the years, the community gradually got used to our role. With no official Opposition, we stated opposing views. We held leaders responsible. Ministers and leaders have resigned. We've had requests to airlift reporters out of town due to threats of physical violence. Legal letters were routine. I've had government ministers call me to threaten financial ruin.

But over the years I believe most, except the most regressive, understand that journalism is a foundation of democracy and good

government. Even in Nunavut. Even in Nunavik. During the COVID-19 pandemic, we stopped printing. The rollout of decent internet across the North means we can deliver the news instantly. The appetite for week-old news on paper, given the time it takes for production, printing and air freight, is disappearing.

We resumed publishing a print edition in March. What will the future bring? Facebook and Google are luring advertising dollars away from community newspapers. The other northern newspapers, facing failure, have been absorbed by newspaper chains. Independent newspapers are disappearing across Canada.

I have to be optimistic. We have published for 50 years — a remarkable milestone.

Nunavut and Nunavik can't afford to be without Nunatsiaq News. With support from the community, perhaps we'll see another 50 years.

This is the second of a two-part story about the history of Nunatsiaq News, which is marking its 50th anniversary in 2023.

Michael Roberts is the publisher of Nunatsiaq News.



Former editor's work preserved in GN archives

Archivist says Jim Bell's materials range from news stories, photos to poetry



The archived documents of Jim Bell, pictured here in a file photo, include material that covers the history of the eastern Arctic and Nunavut, such as the early land claims process and High Arctic relocation, territorial archivist Edward Atkinson told Nunatsiaq News. Bell was a longtime editor and reporter for Nunatsiaq News. (File photo by Sarah Rogers) bnCp&-c-d<* \cdot \cd

David Lochead

Overnment of Nunavut archivist Edward
Atkinson says he could not leave any of the 10 boxes of material on the North from Jim Bell out of the territorial archives.

"From box one to 10, it's all very rich," Atkinson said.

Last November, 35 years' worth of work and personal material from Bell, the longtime Nunatsiaq News editor and reporter, was donated to the Government of Nunavut archives.

That includes published stories, photos, copies of news bulletins, and even poems.

Bell died from cancer in August 2021 at the age of 69.

In an interview, Atkinson said Bell represents Nunavut not only as an editor and reporter but also "just as a writer and composer of material."

Bell's writing and other items that were archived encompass four decades of eastern Arctic area history, with themes such as Inuit social justice and political development.

Specific documents or events covered in Bell's archives include material on the early land-claims process, as well as the Government of Canada's relocation of Inuit to the High Arctic in the 1950s.

Some of the stories Bell appeared to take a special interest in included the design of the Nunavut Court of Justice and Nunavut's education system, Atkinson said.

Bell's archived work also includes photos of important figures, including Peter Ittinuar, the first Inuk member of Parliament; Jose Kusugak, a teacher and broadcaster who played a role in the creation of Nunavut; and John Amagoalik, who was among the

first politicians to call for the creation of Nunavut.

A popular figure among Bell's photos was Bryan Pearson, the first mayor of Iqaluit, then known as Frobisher Bay.

"Pearson was a larger-than-life character," Atkinson said.

Other photos show important political events, such as elections for Inuit birthright corporations.

There were also photos of Turquetil Hall, the residential school Inuit attended in Chesterfield Inlet, as well as photos from a reunion of students from that school, which was held in 2009.

Atkinson said a specific piece of Bell's work that struck him was a large report on housing from 1991 titled Assignment to Nortext, which is the parent company of Nunatsiaq News.

Atkinson said the report traced how, before housing programs, Inuit used to own their homes, whether they were tents, qarmaqs or igloos.

It covered housing programs up until 1991, such as rent-to-own settlement-era programs and the founding of the Northwest Territories Housing Corp.

That report is important, Atkinson said, because it documents the gradual evolution of housing administration in the land that became Nunavut.

The work archived from Bell not only includes reporting, there's poetry as well. Bell also taught journalism at Nunavut Arctic College. Notes from his classes are included too.

Some of the archived works, such as his photos, are prints and are in the process of being digitized, Atkinson said.

He said Bell's private collection of documents complement the historical files available from the Government of Nunavut.





Congratulations on a half-century of Nunatsiaq News

Former editor Patricia Lightfoot reminisces about her time at the paper

Patricia Lightfoot Special to Nunatsiaq News

Congratulations to the publisher and staff of Nunatsiaq News on this impressive anniversary. It's the result of many years of hard work by a dedicated team. And I know that, from my tenure a few years ago as managing editor of the paper.

When I started, I was struck by the seemingly chaotic waterfall of emails early each day in which the reporters and editors said what they were working on, might work on, or did not want to work on

The emails all seemed to arrive at once and discussions happened very quickly, sometimes when I was busy with another task. It was like trying to direct an elaborate folk dance that was unfamiliar to me, or a team game with bats and balls and people running in all directions at once.

In time, things got better. I learned more about our reporting area — Nunavut, Nunavik and the southern-based Inuit communities in Ottawa and Montreal — and I gained an understanding of the team's dynamics. The introduction of weekly team meetings by teleconference, twice-daily check-ins through the Slack app and regularly picking up the phone to chat also helped.

I wrote some stories, I did a lot of editing and setting the direction for the paper, I worked with former web editor John Thompson to train and develop new reporters, and I prepared the weekly print edition, which, when COVID-19 hit, became the e-edition for a time.

I worked on projects such as the much-needed upgrade to the paper's website, which as well as being more attractive to readers was more usable for staff. This was a big win for the news team; no more finding that a story had been edited by two people at the same time.

Î did myriad administrative tasks: hurrying down to the vehicle licensing office in Iqaluit more than once to buy stickers for the Nunatsiaq vehicles; buying furniture for the staff apartment; and trying, unsuccessfully, to find more staff housing.



Iqaluit residents work together to help butcher a bowhead whale in August 2018. (File photo)

I appreciated the work my colleagues did. We all need access to news that isn't just sound bites or conjecture, and Nunatsiaq News provides that.

One example is the paper's weekly reporting on city council in Iqaluit. It may seem less glamorous than, say, reporting on a meeting of the Arctic Council in Reykjavik, but decisions made at the municipal level, wherever we live, tend to have a much greater effect on our lives.

In addition to the day-to-day reporting of the



A raven flies by as former Nunatsiaq News editor Patricia Lightfoot walks to work in March 2018. The Nunatsiaq News office is in the blue building. (Photo by Patricia Lightfoot)

news, my colleagues were willing to wade through massive reports to pull out the relevant information that often did not appear in a convenient executive summary.

To my mind, this is really useful information to readers, who will not have the time, energy or background knowledge to do these things. The late Jim Bell was certainly a master at these activities. I imagine few people knew more about the telecom business in Nunavut or the phases of the expansion, both accomplished and desired, of Baffinland's Mary River iron mine.

Looking back, I recall my colleagues' excitement when the Nunavut legislature was in session, the sense that now we could really get down to work after the news doldrums of January or summer, and my surprise at how intimate the legislature is; you can sit just a few feet behind the MLAs.

In contrast, I recall being impressed by the imposing size of a polar bear hide stretched on a frame outside a house near to the office; it really gave me a chilling sense of what it might be like to encounter such a beast.

Also, less gloriously on my first visit to Iqaluit, I got locked out of my homestay after an evening at the Legion and had to call one of the reporters, whom I had only recently met, to help me with a keypad that was barely functioning in the cold.

I remember news gathering in action by former reporter Beth Brown in August 2018. She called saying she was running down to the beach, wearing rubber boots and with a handful of cash to pay someone with a boat to take her to see the bowhead whale that had just been harvested in Iqaluit, the first in seven years.

I enjoyed coffee and baked goods at the Black Heart Café many times, and certainly after the time when I put one of the Nortext cars into the ditch in the parking lot at Sylvia Grinnell Territorial Park one spring.

That same day, I recall attending the first Floechella, listening to Riit on the sea ice during Nunavut Music Week in 2019 with newly arrived reporter Emma Tranter.

A related event, which I particularly enjoyed writing about, was CBC radio q's recording of a show at Inuksuk High School in Iqaluit, featuring the talents of Riit, the Jerry Cans and Josh Q among others. There is such a depth of artistic talent in the North.

We took the opportunity at the paper to highlight the talents of Nunavummiut in various fields in our special issue in 2019 to mark Nunavut's 20th anniversary.

I'm still proud of this project, which I feel was very much a celebration of the territory. The issue featured a stellar array of contributors who shared their thoughts and knowledge about such diverse topics as the need for self-determination, the economy, the education system and the arts.

Nunavut is blessed with both natural beauty and great photographers, some of whose work illustrated the issue, prominent among which was the cover photo by David Kilabuk of children taking selfies on Mount Duval in Pangnirtung with the fiord and Auyuittuq National Park behind them. Our in-house design team of Andrea Gray and Krista Klassen wrapped all the elements together in a beautiful layout.

I thank the publisher, Michael Roberts, for an extraordinary opportunity that turned my world upside down in the best possible way, and I thank my colleagues for their kindness and their support of an editor new to the Arctic.

I wish Nunatsiaq News many more busy and productive years!

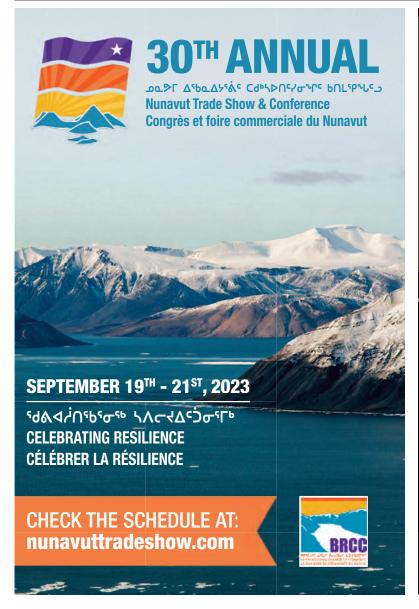


Makivvik president congratulates Nunatsiaq News on 50 years



Makivvik Corp. president Pita Aatami, right, stops by the Nunatsiaq News booth at the Northern Lights conference and trade show Feb. 11 in Ottawa to offer publisher Michael Roberts congratulations on the newspaper's 50th anniversary. Nunatsiaq News began in 1973 as a newsletter called Inukshuk.

(Photo by Julia Roberts)





le 10e anniversaire de sa création

EN JUILLET 2013, en collaboration avec l'Administration

EN JUILLET 2013, en collaboration avec l'Administration régionale Kativik, Umiujaq, Inukjuak, Kuujjuaraapik et Whapmagoostui, le gouvernement du Québec a officiellement créé le parc national Tursujuq.

Pour marquer la création du parc national Tursujuq, des célébrations seront organisées dans le parc et dans les collectivités hôtes d'Umiujaq, de Kuujjuaraapik et de Whapmagoostui au cours de la saison estivale.



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www.nunavikparks.ca



A new owner, a contest, and Nunatsiaq News was born

Originally a newsletter called Inukshuk, newspaper marks 50 years covering the North in 2023

Gord Howard

It all started with Alootook Ipellie's idea. It was Ipellie who, back in July 1976, won 50 bucks and a lifetime subscription to this newspaper by submitting the winning entry in a contest to rename Inukshuk, the newsletter that had been started three years earlier to report the news from what is now Nunavut territory.

You've probably guessed that Ipellie's winning suggestion, selected from more than 40 entries, was to rename the paper Nunatsiaq News.

The name stuck, and so did the newspaper: Nunatsiaq News has grown a lot from its days as a newsletter that was printed on a photocopier out of a tiny office in Frobisher Bay, now Iqaluit.

This year, the paper is celebrating 50 years in business.

The contest judges made a wise choice back then: As they noted on June 30, 1976, in a front page story announcing the new title would come into effect a week later, on July 7: "Nunatsiaq (pronounced Noo-nat-see-ak) means 'Beautiful Land' and is used to describe the area of the Northwest Territories above the tree-line."

"Nunatsiaq was what the North was called. It means beautiful land. It sure is," said Monica Connolly, who was the first editor of the newly named Nunatsiaq News.

Connolly worked as a reporter for the original Inukshuk newsletter, which was formed in 1973. She



led the formation of a private company, Frobisher Press Ltd., that bought the newsletter in 1976.

However, the outgoing volunteer community board that operated Inukshuk wanted a clean break between it and the new owners, so Frobisher Press agreed to rename it.

And through the contest, it became Nunatsiaq News.

Back then, the dream of creating a new territory from the eastern side of Northwest Territories was still just that, a dream, however the name Nunavut was catching on in the 1970s, Connolly remembers.

"Nunatsiaq was less political and very attractive," she said, plus it was "highly complimentary"

to the land, which the Oshawa, Ont., woman had grown to love.

"It indicated we were in favour of the split, but we weren't a paper that was tied to the split," she said.

Frobisher Press Ltd. held onto the paper for another nine years before selling it to what's now Nortext Publishing Corp., which continues to operate Nunatsiaq News today.

"By the time we acquired Nunatsiaq News in 1985, the name had been used for almost a decade," said publisher Michael Roberts.

"And we didn't consider naming it after Nunavut as we were already considering expanding coverage and distribution into Nunavik."

Do a Google search of the word "Nunatsiaq" and pretty much all that comes up is a link to the Nunatsiaq News website and social media pages. Roberts said, "it has become a household brand in the North, where the paper is usually called Nunatsiaq, not Nunatsiaq News."

In Inuktitut, the word Nunatsiaq was also used to describe the land even before Nunavut was officially created in 1999.

"Yes, Nunatsiaq used to be used as Inuktut for then-N.W.T.," said Paul Quassa, a member of Iqaluit city council. "The word actually means the beautiful land, or a beautiful place to camp.

"As Inuit, we still use the term nunatsiaq when referring to a place where it is good for camping."

— With files from Corey Larocque

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Former Nunatsiaq editor reminisces on paper's 50th

Matthew Spence moved to Iqaluit as a reporter in 1988; saw Nunavut become a territory

Matt Spence Special to Nunatsiaq News

Iwas happy to receive a call from the current editor of Nunatsiaq News to notify me that this is the 50th anniversary of the newspaper with an offer to provide a bit of a retrospective from my time when I had the honour to be the editor.

I had the privilege of both serving and then trying to fill the shoes of another editor, Kelly Curwin, who not only helped teach me to become a journalist but also took me into her house and contributed to the life-changing experience which was Iqaluit.

There are so many things that I would talk about, but today life is very fleeting — we are bombarded with so much information each day. Life in 1990 was quite different: Everybody looked forward to the weekly paper.

My greatest compliment was when someone remarked on a story I had written. Whether they liked the story or not, they generally wanted to have a rational discussion. Something that seems lacking today.

I grew up in Yellowknife but I came from Kingston, Ont., in May 1988 after graduating from university. I had applied to Nunatsiaq News to become a local reporter. I was excited about the opportunity — there was lots going on. I used to say you could smell the potential in the air.... My mother had called me in Kingston to let me know about the job.

That potential is still there. Nunavut weathered COVID-19 and there are enough jobs for everyone who wants to work. Mining is making a significant contribution, and the Government of Nunavut is focusing on important priorities like education and housing.

Nunavut has significant social issues, but I am very hopeful that the investments that have been made will pay off in the future.

When I showed up in May 1988, there were still signs of a society that had come North and ultimately dominated and changed the traditional lifestyle of the Inuit. For instance, there were signs in the local bar called the "Zoo" where a wall had divided the community along ethnic lines. The wall had been recently taken down, but prior to that it

relegated the Inuit to one side while the non-Indigenous residents had access to both sides.

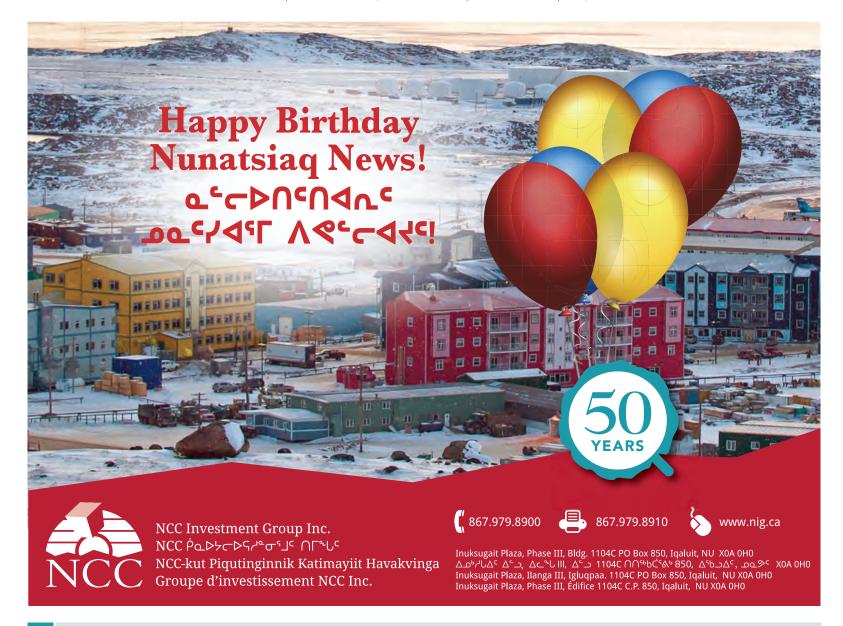
When I arrived to cover the news of the day in what was still N.W.T., things were beginning to change for the better. Negotiations for the Nunavut Agreement were going on and I remember interviewing Paul Quassa, who was the chief negotiator at the time.

It was a very formative discussion because his vision included not only the Nunavut Agreement but the creation of the Nunavut territory.

That reality happened in April 1999 and I had the honour of running in the inaugural election for the Nunavut Assembly. I had declared early, hoping to scare off any significant opposition. It didn't work, and Paul Okalik went on to be the first premier of Nunavut.

Today, the territory under the leadership of Premier P.J. Akeeagok is growing stronger. There are still problems, but we know these can be overcome if we all work together.

Congratulations, Nunatsiaq News — you have been an important part of the solution for the past 50 years.





Shining a light to keep democracy alive

As Nunatsiaq News celebrates 50 years, its managing editor says newspapers are essential to prevent readers from being left in the dark

Corey Larocque

Nunatsiaq News should be the "Washington Post of Canada's North," I told a group of journalism students in 2021, about a year after becoming the managing editor of this paper.

Many journalists have favourite news sources they admire and want to emulate. Our publisher Michael Roberts, for example, is a fan of the Guardian news site, something that influences the look of our website.

I have long admired the Washington Post's legacy — the paper whose reporting brought down former U.S. president Richard Nixon. Watergate was a watershed moment in journalism and helped define the role modern news media play.

In 2017, the Post adopted the motto "Democracy dies in darkness." It's a tribute to the adage that "sunshine is the best disinfectant."

There is a lot of darkness in Canada's North. It's no secret there are social issues that devastate Nunavut and Nunavik.

Suicide, sexual abuse, alcoholism and drug addictions. Housing, poverty and hunger. Lower high school graduation rates.

They all hit differently in the North from the way they do in the south. The solutions need to be different. The discussion needs to be different.

But if people in Nunavut and Nunavik — both Inuit and non-Inuit — are going to fix these problems, they need to talk about them, openly and honestly.

Giving people the information they need in order to have that discussion is Nunatsiaq News' job.

But just about everywhere you turn, there's silence from government, Inuit associations and

other institutions. That silence is a barrier to the discussion that needs to take place.

The Government of Nunavut keeps its staff on a short leash. The GN, which employs about 15 per cent of the territory's adult population, prevents its employees from speaking publicly, even about matters that aren't related to their jobs.



Nunatsiaq News managing editor Corey Larocque looks through the paper's history at the National Archives in Ottawa in February. As the paper celebrates its 50th anniversary, Larocque says a strong newspaper has an important role to play in addressing challenges in the North. (File photo)

The GN needs an "attitude change," according to information and privacy commissioner Graham Steele, whose most recent annual report says the government doesn't disclose information in accordance with the territory's access to information law.

Nunavut Tunngavik Inc., Nunavut's regional Inuit associations and Nunavik's Makivvik Corp., lack the transparency their beneficiaries deserve.

Yes, they're accountable through public

meetings, annual reports and elections. But very few people pay attention to meetings and reports, and voter turnout is dismal. Being more responsive to the news media would help their members understand the important business the organizations do.

And neither the RCMP in Nunavut nor the Nunavik Police Service are as forthcoming as their counterparts elsewhere in Canada.

There's an unofficial silence that can impede the discussion, too.

Inuit are often more reserved than southern, non-Inuit. People in both Nunavut and Nunavik are sometimes reluctant to stick their necks out and talk to reporters — on the record — about the problems in their communities and the solutions they'd like to see.

During this paper's 50th anniversary, previous editors Ann Hanson, Patricia Lightfoot and Matthew Spence shared their memories of working for Nunatsiaq News. We paid tribute to long-serving editor Jim Bell, who died in 2021 after decades guiding the paper. Former owner Monica Connolly and current publisher Michael Roberts recounted the paper's history.

However, sitting in the editor's chair on the paper's golden anniversary made me imagine the future.

People need to be well-informed about the issues that affect them. That's where Nunatsiaq News comes in. For 50 years, this paper has played the news media's traditional role as public watchdog.

My hope is that Nunatsiaq News will keep cutting through the silence and continue to shine a light into the darkness.

1970s



1980s



1990s





Nunatsiaq News wins 7 QCNA journalism awards

Wins reflect range of coverage of reporting, photography and website excellence

Nunatsiaq News

 Γ rom Rankin Inlet to Paris, France, Nunatsiaq News told the stories that were important to northern readers in 2022.

The newspaper's journalism earned seven awards at the Quebec Community Newspapers Association's annual awards ceremony June 16 in Gatineau, Que.

It was the association's first in-person awards dinner since 2019 as events went virtual that year due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"It was a rewarding showing for the Nunatsiaq team because it reflects the high quality of journalism Nunatsiaq News is providing every day on a wide range of subjects," managing editor Corey Larocque said.

Former reporter Meral Jamal won an award for Best Feature Story, which describes how Nunavummiut outside of Iqaluit reacted to Pope Francis's historic visit to the territorial capital last summer.

"This story grabs your interest immediately with a powerful lead that makes you want to read on, and it keeps you interested with strong quotes," the category's judge wrote.

Web editor Gord Howard's story about Nunavut wrestler Eekeeluak Avalak's gold-medal win at the Canada Summer Games last year won for Best Sports Story. The judge complimented Howard's "strong writing" in a "powerful story about the gold medal win that outlines why it means so much."

Freelance photographer Denis Cahill, recruited to shoot the Canada Summer Games, which were held in Ontario's Niagara region, won the Best Photo Essay category. Cahill entered five pictures of the event's opening ceremony, which the judge called "a wonderful variety of images which come together to bring the viewer into the event."

David Venn earned the award for Best Business Column or Feature for an article he wrote about Rankin Inlet cake-maker Rebecca Osborn.

"I felt like I was in the kitchen!" the category's judge wrote.



Nunatsiaq News' staff pose for a group photo after the Quebec Community Newspapers Association's annual awards ceremony June 16 in Gatineau, Que. The paper won seven awards out of 20 nominations. Pictured here are (back row): Randi Beers, Julia Roberts, Andrea Sakiyama Kennedy, David Venn, Gord Howard, Denis Cahill; (front row): Meral Jamal, Madalyn Howitt, Corey Larocque. Missing from photo are finalists Emma Tranter and Mélanie Ritchot. (Submitted photo)

Emma Tranter's coverage of the delegation Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. led to France last September to pressure French officials to extradite Father Johannes Rivoire, won the Best Feature Series category.

Nunatsiaq News sent Tranter to France to follow the delegation's progress because Nunavut readers have been interested for 25 years in seeing Rivoire face criminal charges in Canada.

"There is plenty of detail, offered while

respecting the lived experience of the victims," the judge wrote. "The articles balance the particular and local of the story with the larger context."

Andrea Sakiyama Kennedy's story about research into the loss of sea ice won the Best Environmental Story. Her strong lead sentence caught the judge's attention.

"What came through was the sense of wonder experienced by scientists and locals alike," he wrote.

The judge noted "stories about difficult topics don't have to be severe or preachy to be impactful."

Jamal, Tranter, Venn and Sakiyama Kennedy left Nunatsiaq News in 2023 for other journalism jobs, but were recognized for the work they did in 2022.

Nunatsiaq News won the Best Website category for the third year in a row, with the judge recognizing "excellence in both content and presentation."

Larocque called the website award "especially satisfying because it reflects the great work our entire team does on a daily basis."

The paper also earned a second-place finish in the Best Front Page category for its Oct. 21 e-edition. The judge called the stories "compelling and well written," noting the page's "great use of colour to draw in the reader."

Nunatsiaq News had been nominated for 20 awards in 14 different categories — including investigative reporting, sports writing, feature writing, editorial writing, as well as reporting on municipal affairs, health, business, education, the environment and agriculture. The paper was a finalist in three photography categories as well.

Reporter Madalyn Howitt was a finalist in five categories, former reporter Mélanie Ritchot was nominated in three, and web editor Randi Beers and managing editor Corey Larocque each received nominations in a single category.

2000s

2010s









Nunavut has changed a lot over the past 50 years and Nunatsiaq News changed with it.

As this paper marked 50 years of service to the eastern Arctic, we used our website to show readers how its look changed over the years.

Our series of Yesterday's News articles revisited how Nunatsiaq News reported some of the biggest stories of the past half-century.

Here's a sampling of some front pages that show how the paper's look changed as well as how it covered some big events.

Inukshuk newsletter is renamed Nunatsiaq News

Nunatsiag News

The times, they were a changing back in June 1976. They certainly were for this newspaper.

As was announced on our front page from June 16, 1976, the final edition using the original name, Inukshuk, would be published on June 30 that year.

Starting July 7, the paper would be known as Nunatsiaq News.

The first edition of the paper rolled off the presses — a Gestetner photocopier, in reality — in 1973 as Inukshuk, a community newsletter

Arctic Ventures sold...
....Kenn Harper takes over

published in Frobisher Bay.

On June 16, 1976, the front-page story explained not only the reason for the name change, it also noted the meaning of Nunatsiaq as "beautiful land," to describe the area of the Northwest Territories above the tree line.

Nunatsiaq was also the name of the new eastern Arctic federal electoral riding.

A spokesman for Frobisher Press Ltd., the new owner, said the name was selected in a contest and is fitting "because the North is indeed a beautiful land, partly because the paper hopes to expand to serve that whole area, as well as Northern Quebec."

Some things have changed since then — Frobisher Bay is called Iqaluit now, Nunavut was granted territorial status in 1999, and Nunatsiaq News is now owned by Nortext.

Some things haven't changed — Nunatsiaq News still publishes some of its articles in Inuktitut, one of the few news organizations to do so.

Also making news in our June 16, 1976, edition was a planning conference that was being held by the Frobisher Bay village council. According to the story, organizers said it "did not expect to make decisions, just to get ideas on all aspects of planning."



The front page of the June 16, 1976, Inukshuk newsletter. (File photo)

Arctic Ventures store changes hands

Nunatsiaq News

When Kenn Harper went shopping in July 1985, he bought the whole store.

The big news in the July 5, 1985, edition of Nunatsiaq News was the sale of Iqaluit's Arctic Ventures store to High Arctic Enterprises, owned solely by Harper, a businessman, linguist and historian.

Harper would later also be well known to readers of Nunatsiaq News for his popular Taissumani history column.

The sale of one of the big shopping stores is big news in any community, especially in a small one like Iqaluit (which back then was still called Frobisher Bay).

In discussing the sale with Nunatsiaq News back in July 1985, former owner Bryan Pearson — himself an iconic figure in the city's history called it the "end of an era for me."

"There's no rush ... I have no big plans. I'm just gathering my wits about me and trying to slow down and find time to do other more interesting things with less pressure, less stress," he said.

Pearson, who died in 2016, is known for being Iqaluit's first mayor and founder of the Toonik Tyme festival. He also started the city's first taxi service, at one time was its only undertaker and he owned its only movie theatre, the Astro Theatre. Pearson started Arctic Ventures in Apex in 1957 for marine work and expanded into general contracting. At that time, the U.S. military was still based in Frobisher Bay and Bell Canada wouldn't offer a telephone exchange service there for another year.

The Arctic Ventures store opened in 1968 and remains one of the city's shopping hubs to this day.

On a lighter note, the July 5, 1985, front page includes a cute photo of some Iqaluit children getting ready to join in a tire-jump race during Canada Day celebrations.

Unfortunately, none of the kids' names were included in the caption but possibly readers might recognize one of them.

Historic land claim agreement signed in Igloolik

Nunatsiaq News

1985. (File photo)

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Fourteen years in the making and nine years before Nunavut would attain territory status, the signing of the first-even land claim agreement between Inuit and the federal government was big news 33 years ago.

The front page of Nunatsiaq News from July 5,

The little implait fresholme day give turner as the process differs taking a take as the live days rank, one of second activities put on the being during fact dealing? Chemic Day published the process on many sections.

The deal, signed April 30, 1990, gave Inuit title to about 350,000 square kilometres of land — roughly one-third the size of Nunavut now — as well as support for "social and political development," the article notes, and rights to renewable resources.

Among its other provisions, it also gave Inuit the right to harvest wildlife on land and water throughout the settlement area.

Talks went on for a long time prior to the signing, beginning in 1976 led by

the Tunngavik Federation of Nunavut (the predecessor to Nunavut Tunngavik Inc.), the government of the Northwest Territories and the federal government.

The agreement wouldn't actually be ratified until 1993, capping the 17-year process. It was the largest Indigenous land claim agreement in Canadian history, supporting the division of Northwest Territories and providing for a plebiscite on boundaries.

The front-page photo from May 4, 1990, shows the signing of the agreement, done in Igloolik over a weekend of festivities that marked the event.

Signatories included Dennis Patterson, who at the time was Territorial Government Leader and is currently the senator for Nunavut and who will retire from that role at the end of this year, and Tunngavik federation president Paul Quassa, who would go on to serve as a Nunavut premier, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly and MLA and is currently a member of Iqaluit city council.

The third person pictured signing is Tom Siddon, a member of then-prime minister Brian Mulroney's cabinet responsible for what at the time was known as the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

As an aside, Siddon was the man Mulroney turned to in 1985 to take over the Department of Fisheries and Oceans to clean up the so-called tunagate scandal, where large quantities of tuna deemed unfit for human consumption were somehow approved for sale.

Other noteworthy events that happened in May 1990: The Hubble space telescope sends its first photographs from space, and the Leafs do not win the Cup.



The front page of Nunatsiaq News, from May 4, 1990. (File photo)



Mulroney comes to Iqaluit to sign Nunavut Agreement

Nunatsiaq News

Tungasugitti Nunavummi! Welcome Nunavut!

That's how Nunatsiaq News reported the official signing of the Nunavut Agreement on land claims, in a headline from May 28, 1993. It was an important step toward territory status for Nunavut, and a big day in Iqaluit.

Brian Mulroney, who was prime minister at the time, even managed to please the crowd of about 700 spectators by speaking a few words in Inuktitut: "Quviasuktunga tikigama nunavumut" ("I'm happy that I've arrived in Nunavut.")

Jim Bell, the revered long-time reporter and editor for Nunatsiaq News, described the May 25, 1993, event at Inuksuk High School this way:

"Five men and one woman sat down together in Iqaluit one day this week to write their names on a piece of paper.

"And when they had finished, the people of Nunavut had all but joined the Canadian family."

The largest Indigenous land claim settlement in Canadian history, it gave Inuit of the central and eastern parts of the Northwest Territory their own territory.

In addition to Mulroney, others who signed the agreement were Paul Quassa and James Eetoolook

from Tunngavik Federation of Nunavut (now known as Nunavut Tunngavik Inc.), Nellie Cournoyea and Titus Allooloo representing the government of the Northwest Territories, and federal Northern Affairs minister Tom Siddon.

As the front page notes, Iqaluit elder Leah Atagoyuk lit the qulliq to open the ceremony.

Later in 1993, both the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement and the Nunavut Act were enacted by the House of Commons.

As a side note, 22 years later, in 2019, NTI was able to acquire federal cabinet documents from 1990 that it alleged showed Mulroney's government blocked the use of Inuktitut in the territory's government services.

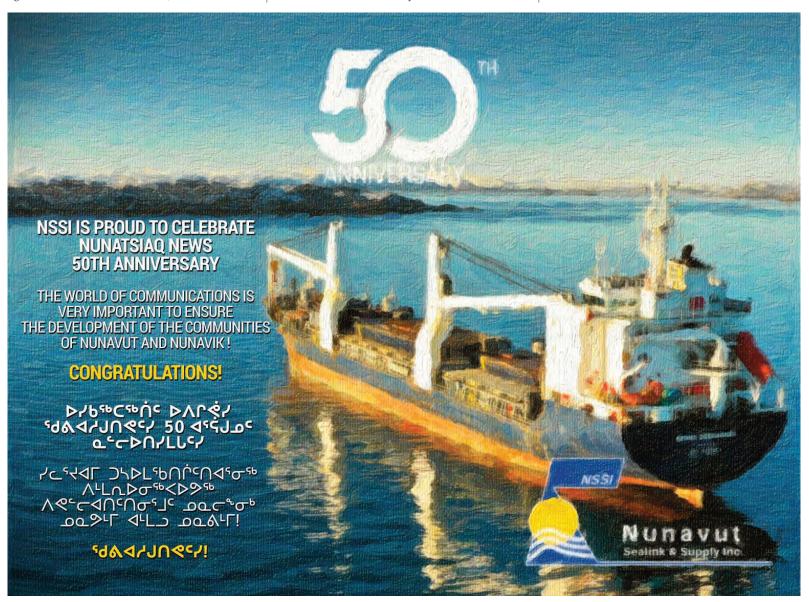
NTI pointed to a paragraph in the cabinet document that said the final land claims agreement must not "provide general linguistic guarantees for use of Inuktitut in government and the legal and education system in the claims area."

In a news release at the time, NTI said "Canada's objective was successful: schooling, courts, corrections and policing all operate in English across Nunavut"

The signing of the Nunavut Agreement was a bit of a last hurrah for Mulroney. Exactly one month later, on June 25, 1993, he resigned as prime minister after close to nine years in office.



The front page of Nunatsiaq News from May 28, 1993. (File photo)







A woman speaks to a group of boys inside a room wallpapered with newspaper pages, in this undated file photo. Readers said the woman in the picture is elder Malaya Papatsie, and the boys, from left to right, are David Fox, Cason Soucie and Qajaaq Ellsworth. (File photo)

During Nunatsiaq News' 50th anniversary, we took a dive into the archives to look at some of the thousands of file photos the paper took or collected over the years. Readers helped identify some of the people in loose photographs that had little information attached to them. Here's a sample of some of them.



A woman pins a corsage on a man at what appears to be a ceremony in this undated image. Readers identified the couple on the right as Harry and Martha Kilabuk and the couple on the left as Malaya and Josie Papatsie. (File photo)



A reader helped identify this elder lighting a qulliq in this undated picture as Leah Atagoyuk. (File photo)



A clown wearing the colours of the Nunavut flag and a Pang hat with the territory's name speaks to children along the route of a parade. (File photo)



An unidentified man presents an award to a woman at a Toonik Tyme ceremony in this undated photo. (File photo)



A group of boys poses with ribbons in what appears to be a Toonik Tyme event in this undated photo. (File photo)



Readers identified this man sporting a Nunatsiaq News baseball cap while holding what appears to be a newspaper in this undated file photo as Inuit leader and one-time member of Parliament Jack Anawak. (File photo)



A group of unidentified people hold onto each other while crossing a snow-covered street in this undated photo. (File photo)



Two men sit atop a qamutik in this undated photo. (File photo)



Children line up their bikes at what appears to be a starting line for a race in this undated picture. (File photo)



Snowmobilers line up in front of Nakasuk Elementary School in Iqaluit in this undated picture. A reader added that the event was part of Toonik Tyme. (File photo)

Get in touch





Get in touch with Nunavut's Inuit-owned marketing and communications agency. Contact Managing Director **Jason Roberts** in Iqaluit to bring your project to life. Leverage our decades of experience to captivate your audience and enhance your brand!

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