



For Immediate Release

## **Community-based Economic Development is Key to the Future of Northern Ontario's Economy**

**May 24, 2018** – A new commentary from Northern Policy Institute (NPI) highlights best practices from Northern Ontario communities to demonstrate the importance of regional economic development in Ontario's northern regions.

The Commentary, *Places to Grow: Best Practices for Community-based Regional Economic Development in Ontario's North* by Jamie McIntyre is based on a series of 72 interviews with economic development professionals in First Nations and non-First Nations communities.

The research compiled provides readers a glimpse into how northern communities are managing economic development, and encourages conversation on the topic of best practices.

"Identifying development strategies that have worked for Northern Ontario communities and First Nations is imperative to the advancement of Ontario's northern regions," states McIntyre. To do so, local government, organizations, and individuals will need to:

- Gather an understanding of the community's needs, market, and assets;
- Acknowledge and make use of existing community capital;
- Use knowledge and connections;
- Measure and communicate impacts;
- Be prepared for change.

As McIntyre states in the report, "Communities and their economic development professionals who are open to building relationships with ministers, government agencies, neighbouring municipalities, First Nations communities, local businesses, and community members tend to have higher success rates."

McIntyre points to several examples of such cooperation between communities, including the Sioux Lookout Friendship Accord, and the Business Resource Showcase in Espanola and Manitoulin Island.

McIntyre also points to best practices of economic diversification in Northern Ontario, such as White River Forest Products Ltd. and the agriculture sector in Temiskaming Shores. "Communities that prioritized diversification within their core industries and local economy were more likely to be protected from, and adaptable to, the cycles of the natural resource economy."



Key findings of the commentary are organized by NPI's key focus areas:

**Indigenous peoples:** First Nations who worked around existing restrictive legislation, and partnered with outside organizations, saw a greater return on capital investments.

**Communities:** Communities that forged partnerships with adjacent communities and organizations had more resources to draw upon in building capacity.

**Demographics:** Northern Ontario's population is aging, and communities that are adapting to the changes through strategic alignment are faring better in the long run.

**Economy:** A well-diversified economy does not always spell growth, but it does protect communities from the booms and busts of resource-based economic shifts.

**Environment:** The future of Ontario's forests has turned a new leaf by including Indigenous peoples' perspectives in the new forest tenure model. The intent is for equitable use of resources, but the program has not worked for all.

**Infrastructure:** Infrastructure is often inadequate, but through creative cost-sharing agreements or partnerships, communities can upgrade for the 21st century.

To view the full commentary and explore comments and feedback from participants, visit [www.northernpolicy.ca/ecdev](http://www.northernpolicy.ca/ecdev)

**Media Interviews:** Author Jamie McIntyre, and NPI President & CEO, Charles Cirtwill are both available for comment.

To arrange an interview, please contact:

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### **About Northern Policy Institute:**

*Northern Policy Institute is Northern Ontario's independent think tank. We perform research, collect and disseminate evidence, and identify policy opportunities to support the growth of sustainable Northern communities. Our operations are located in Thunder Bay, Sault Ste. Marie and Sudbury. This year we are excited to have summer offices in Fort Frances, North Bay and Timmins. We seek to enhance Northern Ontario's capacity to take the lead position on socio-economic policy that impacts Northern Ontario, Ontario, and Canada as a whole.*

### **About the Author:**

**Jamie McIntyre's** given name is Mashkiki Kwe, and she belongs to makwa doodem (bear clan). She has a mixed background, of settler Scottish and Anishinaabe from Batchewana First Nation.



*She holds a Bachelor's degree in Community Economic and Social Development at Algoma University, and was most recently the Resource and Partnership Developer at NORDIK Institute based in Sault Ste. Marie. She has also received an Ec.d and Council for Advancement of Native Development Officers TAED certification through Algoma University. Her interests include cross-cultural relationship building and knowledge sharing, as well as sustainable development practices.*