

Nunatsiaq News 50th Anniversary – Milestones

What was initially a fledgling weekly newsletter created to inform a small population about news and events in Iqaluit, Nunatsiaq News has transformed and reinvented itself many times in 50 years. The following categories highlight numerous achievements over five decades.

Publishing Technology

- Originally named Inukshuk, the first issue was written in 1973 on a typewriter and printed on a Gestetner (remember the black smelly ink?). The Gestetner was eventually replaced by printing on a newsprint press.
- A small non-profit society was formed to start a newsletter called Inukshuk, with Jim Britton (a social worker) as chair. The group also included writer and editor Ann Meekitjuk Hanson, as well as several other members in Iqaluit.
- Frobisher Press Ltd., under publisher Monica Connolly, took over the newsletter in 1976 and renamed it Nunatsiaq News. Nunatsiaq means “beautiful land” in Inuktitut and was also the name of the federal riding for eastern Northwest Territories.
- Nunatext Publishing Corporation was formed in 1985 as a 51%/49% joint venture with Nunasi Corporation, the main Inuit development corporation funded under advances against the Nunavut land claims agreement. This was to be the first step in creating an Inuit-owned publishing operation with equipment, facilities, Inuit training and employment.
- When the Tunngavik Federation pulled out of land claims negotiations over the refusal of the federal government to negotiate a territory of Nunavut, they instructed Nunasi Corporation to pull out of all startups.
- Nortext Publishing Corporation, owned by three brothers, Michael, Steven and David, bought back the shares in 1987 and own the newspaper to this day.
- Nunatext kept the employees of Nunatsiaq News, including the late Jim Bell, who would become an icon of northern publishing and a longtime editor, and the late Bill McConkey, a legendary ad salesperson who would remain with the company for 40 years.
- Nunatsiaq News at that time was housed in a “matchbox” house or shack, one of the first prefabricated residences built by the federal government in the Arctic. It was 512 square feet and had a honey-bucket toilet separated from the tiny office by a shower curtain.
- A Compugraphic typesetting system with multiple terminals and film output was flown to Iqaluit in 1986 and installed in a rental trailer next to the shack. This allowed the newspaper artwork to be typeset in English and Inuktitut, laid out by

hand in Iqaluit, and then flown south for printing on newsprint. The newspaper was then flown back air freight and distributed mostly in Iqaluit.

- The newspaper moved to modern large offices in Iqaluit and employment in Iqaluit peaked at 17 staff in the early 1990s, including publisher Steven Roberts, an editor, ad salespeople, typesetters, translators and production artists.
- From 1985 until 2020, Nunatsiaq News was printed in the south. It was then flown to Iqaluit and distributed.
- Distribution was gradually expanded to other Baffin communities, then to the Keewatin region (now Kivalliq) and finally to the Kitikmeot. Lastly, the print distribution and editorial coverage was expanded to Nunavik (northern Quebec).
- Nunatsiaq News went online in 1993, which complemented the print run.
- In 1999, Nunavut became an official territory of Canada. Nunatsiaq News published a special commemorative edition and a glossy publication co-published with Nunavut Tunngavik Inc., with many prominent Inuit and non-Inuit authors and leaders.
- Nunatsiaq News introduced political cartoons in the 1980s, with many created by well-known Inuk illustrator, the late Alooook Ipellie.
- In the late 1980s, Nunatsiaq News got its first fax machine, which obviated the need for remote stories to be phoned in and transcribed.
- By the early 1990s, most of the Arctic had internet service, albeit unreliable and slow – which helped to unite people in remote communities.
- The online visits to Nunatsiaq News have grown exponentially over the years- from a handful of visits to roughly 50,000 weekly visits today.
- Over the past five years, the website has received between two million and three million visits each year. And the paper's Facebook page has 33,000 followers.
- During the COVID-19 pandemic, the print version of Nunatsiaq News was suspended and the online platform was updated to improve functionality and efficiency. The production cycle for printed copies in the Arctic meant that news was at least three or four days old by the time papers reached their destination. Online news is instant with most communities connected through broadband internet.
- Since its move online, Nunatsiaq News now publishes roughly six stories daily with weekly updates.
- The Nunatsiaq News website has received numerous awards including best community newspaper website in Canada in its distribution category, and Quebec Community Newspapers Association awards for best website for three years running.
- The journalism in Nunatsiaq News wins many awards annually for its news, investigative journalism, features, editorials and so on.
- Since 2020, Nunatsiaq News has published digitally with 3,000 people receiving its PDF and e-editions compared to a pre-pandemic print circulation of 4,000.

News Stories/Breaking News

- Nunatsiaq News supported the concept of Nunavut long before it was accepted as a realistic option, in editorials and news coverage of land claims negotiations.

- Nunatsiaq News chronicled the complete story of Nunavut becoming an official territory in 1999, starting with the pie-in-the-sky idea of an Inuit territory that was panned by the politicians. While many Nunavummiut liked the idea, many believed it just wasn't possible.
- Nunatsiaq News' most read article had over 24,000 views.

Editorial Staff

The first editor of Inukshuk was Ann Meekitjuk Hanson, who spoke both English and Inuktitut. She served as editor for several years and went on to become a highly respected journalist, broadcaster, writer and one of the contributors to the book, *The Nunavut Handbook*, and a commissioner of Nunavut. Here are other editors:

- Monica Connolly
- Jim Bell
- Kelly Curwin
- Matt Spence
- Todd Phillips
- Greg Coleman
- Jim Bell (back from Arctic College)
- Lisa Gregoire
- Patricia Lightfoot
- Corey Larocque

Web and region editors

- Randi Beers
- John Thompson
- Emma Tranter
- Gord Howard

Most well-known reporters

- Jane George
- Sarah Rogers
- Lisa Gregoire

Most well-known columnists

- John Amagoalik (My Little Corner of Canada)
- Rachel Qitsualik-Tinsley
- Kenn Harper (Taissumani)

In 2023, there are 10 people on staff to produce news for the website daily.

Accessibility

- Nunatsiaq News is published in English and Inuktitut – two of four official languages in Nunavut.
- The revenue model is based entirely on advertising revenue, which allows the news content to be free of charge to all readers, ensuring Nunavummiut and Nunavimmiut (people of Nunavut and Nunavik) who have access to a computer can stay up to date in their community at no cost.
- To encourage the use of Indigenous languages in the paper, Nunatsiaq News offers a discount of 35 per cent for Indigenous language ads and includes the cost of ad translation. Inuit translators are hired to translate ads from English to Inuktitut.
- Nunatsiaq News also accepts ads in Nunavut's two other official languages (Inuinnaqtun and French).
- To ensure inclusive coverage, Nunatsiaq News offers specific regional coverage of Nunavut, Iqaluit (the territorial capital), Nunavik, the Arctic and southern Canada (with a significant population of Inuit and Indigenous organizations).
- In addition to delivering news, Nunatsiaq News also serves as a hub for job postings, community announcements, public notices and advertising.
- In 2018, Nunatsiaq News began offering two \$5,000-a-year Indspire bursaries to encourage Inuit youth to study journalism, media, or communications. They are now called the Nunatsiaq News Jim Bell Bursaries in memory of Nunatsiaq News' longest serving editor.

Indigenous Engagement

- The Nunatsiaq News website has a vibrant moderated commentary section which serves as a community discussion forum on numerous topics. Commentators are Inuit and non-Inuit with most comments in English and some in Inuktitut.
- While historically Inuit have not had access to opportunities to become journalists, Nunatsiaq News offers bursaries to Inuit youth to help build a more inclusive team of journalists.
- Over the years, Inuit have contributed to Nunatsiaq News including columnists John Amagoalik (called the Father of Nunavut); Ann Meekitjuk Hanson; Rachel Qitsualik-Tinsley; political cartoonist, Alooook Ipellie (a first for Nunavut); and technical support from Kirt Egesiak.
- The newspaper has a strong network of community contributors, particularly Inuit photographers who provide photos of news, community events and the beautiful Arctic scenery.
- Inuk Ann Meekitjuk Hanson was the first editor of Inukshuk. In addition to her roles as a journalist and broadcaster, she was a community development worker, councillor, deputy commissioner of Northwest Territories and commissioner of Nunavut.
- As the voice of record in the north, Nunatsiaq News dedicates a large portion of its news coverage to the Inuit population. Political and business stories, activism, traditional and contemporary culture, as well as human interest stories – are all covered on an ongoing basis.

Geography

- Nunatsiaq News serves 39 eastern Arctic communities:
 - In Nunavut, there are 25 communities and 38,000 residents covering two million square kilometres (800,000 square miles) – roughly the size of western Europe!
 - In Nunavik (northern Quebec), Nunatsiaq News serves 14 communities and 12,000 Inuit in a region of 443,684.71 square kilometres (171,307.62 square miles) north of the 55th parallel.

Circulation and Readers

- The first printed issue of Inukshuk included approximately a few hundred copies growing to roughly 800 copies distributed by Frobisher Press Ltd. Largely in Iqaluit and on Nordair airline.
- The print version reached a peak circulation of 10,000 copies in the early 2000s.
- Since the suspension of the print version in 2020, the online readership is approximately 50,000 visits each week and between two million and three million visits annually.
- Approximately 3,000 readers subscribe to the free e-editions published in a tabloid format.
- About half the readership is in Nunavut and Nunavik, with the remainder in southern Canada particularly in cities like Ottawa, Montreal, Edmonton, Calgary and Winnipeg with strong northern connections. There are small pockets of readers in Europe and the United States.

Environmental Sustainability

While suspending the print version of Nunatsiaq News was initially a cost-saving measure and logistical decision in response to COVID-19, there were numerous other environmental benefits. Visits to the online version grew by 30 per cent which resulted in the following environmental improvements:

- The elimination of using ink and printing on paper.
- The carbon footprint of printing Nunatsiaq News in Ottawa and air shipping weekly newspapers to 39 communities throughout the North.
- Cost and physical space saved by archiving Nunatsiaq News digitally instead of storing newspapers (Library and Archives Canada).
- With a robust search function on the Nunatsiaq News website, researchers and readers can access historic stories, articles, photos and cartoons quickly and efficiently at no expense.