

16 **REVERSE ENGLISH** Strategies of the Keewatin Career Development Corporation in Discourse Surrounding the Knowledge-Based Economy and Society

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Ensuring that rural and remote areas in Canada have access to reasonably affordable telecommunications has been a long-standing governmental objective that can be traced back to policies regarding universal access policies for telephony. The early 2000s saw a burst of federal and provincial programs aimed at extending affordable Internet service to such areas. In January 2001, Brian Tobin, the federal minister of Industry at the time, established the National Broadband Task Force (NBTF), the principal mission of which was “to map out a strategy for achieving the Government of Canada’s goal of ensuring that broadband services are available to businesses and residents in every Canadian community by 2004” (National Broadband Task Force 2001, 1).

The NBTF’s report, *The New National Dream: Networking the Nation for Broadband Access*, opened with lofty promises of the sweeping social transformations that would follow in the wake of broadband. The following passage, from the report’s executive summary, is typical of the rhetoric employed throughout:

The Task Force is convinced that, over the next 10 or 20 years, the development of broadband networks, services and applications will have a profound effect on all aspects of Canadian life. Broadband will transform the way we learn, the way we work, the way we use our leisure, the way we govern ourselves,

the way we communicate, the way we express ourselves and the way we care for each other.

It is no exaggeration to say that over time, the impact of broadband communications on Canadian life will be at least as great as the impact of railways, highways, airlines, traditional telecommunications and broadcasting. (National Broadband Task Force 2001, 3)

Although this upbeat rhetoric was widely supported at the time, there were specific challenges from some quarters with respect to who would underwrite the costs of this ambitious vision.¹ Questions also arose concerning representation on the task force. As in the case of the earlier Information Highway Advisory Council, there had been limited opportunity for public input into the work of the task force, and NBTF membership was heavily weighted toward executives from telecommunications companies. Despite the report's recommendation that priority be given to First Nations, Inuit, and rural and remote communities, groups representing specific communities, including Aboriginal groups, wondered how far the report's recommendations would, in practice, address their interests and concerns. (See, for example, Assembly of First Nations 2001b.) There were worries that other considerations—such as the goal of universal access, the need to address the sustainability of proposed programs, humanistic objectives (for example, the need for people to be connected to a community in order to feel a sense of belonging), and concerns about civic participation (that is, the need to ensure that citizens in an online world will be able to fully exercise their civic rights)—had been subordinated to the government's overarching agenda, which was fundamentally an economic one. These concerns were articulated through briefs and presentations to government policy groups such as the NBTF, in newsletters and on websites, and in academic research. But these expressions of concern were largely overlooked in national media outlets, and they had little impact on the NBTF report itself.

In 2002, a pilot program, Broadband for Rural and Northern Development (BRAND), was set up, albeit on a more modest scale than that proposed by Tobin and the NBTF. The goal of BRAND was to assist rural, Northern, and First Nations communities in improving access to broadband telecommunications in support of educational, health, and economic opportunities.² A call for applications to the program was then issued.

Among the successful applicants was the Northern Broadband Network (NBN), a non-profit Saskatchewan corporation consisting of three partners: the Meadow Lake Tribal Council, the Prince Albert Grand Council, and New North, an umbrella organization of communities in northern Saskatchewan. Each had submitted unsuccessful applications to the first round of the BRAND

competition but had been encouraged to resubmit as a combined group. The Keewatin Career Development Corporation—a community-based organization (CBO) located in La Ronge—provided technical advice regarding both rounds of applications, as well as management services later on, while the NBN project was being implemented.³ The NBN chose SaskTel, the crown corporation responsible for telecommunications in the province, to do the actual work of installing cables and equipment. The plan called for the NBN to be dissolved when the project was complete, following which SaskTel would operate the new network as part of its provincial network, CommunityNet.

This chapter describes how the Keewatin Career Development Corporation (KCDC) came to be so involved in telecommunications. I examine how far the KCDC was able to ensure that programs such as BRAND met the needs of its community and to what extent it was forced to abide by rules established by more powerful actors that worked to the detriment of the community. Are there lessons to be learned from the KCDC's experiences, both in their own right and in comparison with the experience of other organizations, such as K-Net, the Western Valley Development Agency (WVDA), and SmartLabrador (see chapters 14 and 15), that likewise participated in Industry Canada programs? The stakes for the KCDC were high. Surviving on short-term fees from government programs, it struggled to deliver skills training and network support for specific geographic areas and local communities. At the same time, its circumstances prevented it from becoming as fully embedded in its local community as, for example, K-Net was (and still is). Unlike K-Net, the KCDC is not formally affiliated with a First Nations tribal council (although it serves a primarily Aboriginal population), nor is it involved in the delivery of health care services, again in contrast to K-Net, which receives significant funding from Health Canada. Without successful project applications and/or the development of another source of sustaining revenue, the KCDC would not be able to support itself. In such precarious circumstances, the KCDC might ultimately have been reduced to a shadow organization, as in the case of SmartLabrador. Or, as was the case with WVDA, it might simply have ceased to exist. Either outcome would have been a setback for its community.

THE KEEWATIN CAREER DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

The KCDC was founded in 1996, with the goal of delivering networked and multimedia career services to career counsellors and teachers in northern Saskatchewan. The organization is a partnership of fourteen career and educational service-providing agencies, variously associated with schools (K-12 and post-secondary), Métis training organizations, First Nations tribal councils, and the provincial government. Its broad mission was, and remains, to

use information and communication technologies (ICTs) for the social and economic benefit of the residents of northern Saskatchewan, including First Nations, Métis, rural, and remote communities. During the period covered in this study, the KCDC's website slogan was "Bringing technology to the north." A non-profit organization, still based in La Ronge, the KCDC funds its operations through grants and service fees. Each member agency appoints one individual to the board of directors, which provides corporate direction. The KCDC also has ex officio board members, representing government departments such as Industry Canada, with whom it interacts in connection with various public programs in which it is involved. Its operations are overseen by a general manager and carried out by paid staff.

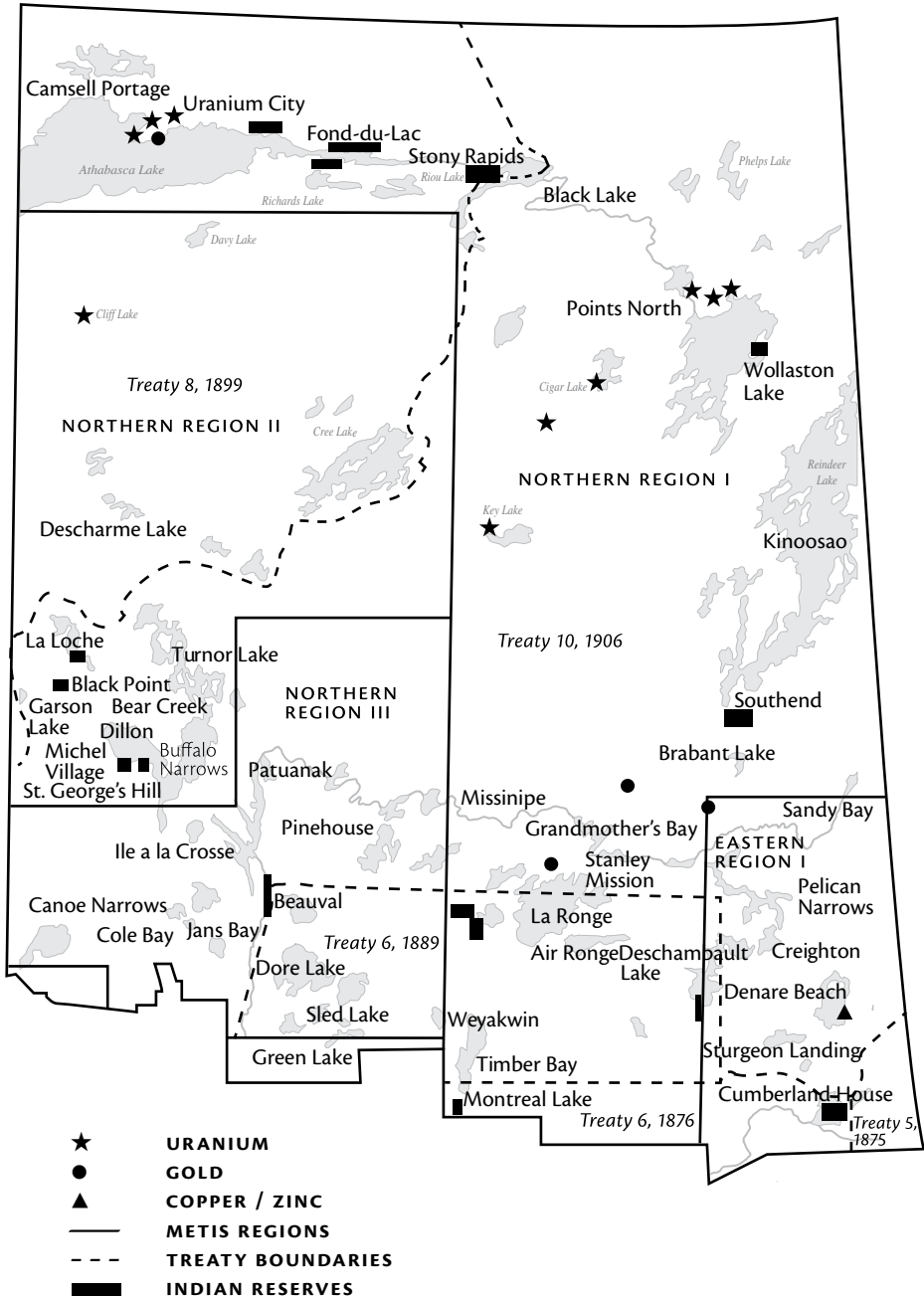
As one of six First Nations SchoolNet regional management organizations (RMOS) in Canada, the KCDC also develops and maintains Internet and video conferencing services for eighty-three First Nations schools in Saskatchewan and, until 2009, did the same for seventy-three First Nations schools in Alberta. Northern Saskatchewan is, however, the KCDC's primary service area. Although Saskatchewan's Northern Administration District (see figure 16.1) encompasses approximately half of the province's land area, it has only about 37,000 residents. About 80 percent of those residents are Aboriginal (Cree, Dene, and Métis), and two-thirds are under the age of 35.⁴ The region's chief economic driver is mining.

The KCDC's history can be divided into four phases. During its initial period of growth, from 1996 to 2001, the KCDC participated in a number of federal and provincial programs. It proposed and implemented a project for the development and support of networked career services in northern Saskatchewan. In a hotly competitive contest, it also bid successfully to become the Saskatchewan demonstration site for Industry Canada's Smart Communities initiative. The KCDC was justifiably proud of being a small Northern group that won a very large and prestigious competition. Its Smart Communities project, called Headwaters, ran from 2000 to 2004 and had several components, including an online technology training program delivered to over five hundred teachers. Headwaterstech, a for-profit vendor of hardware and software products for individuals, businesses, and First Nations schools in northern Saskatchewan, was established in a storefront in La Ronge's business district. In addition, a youth IT training program was set up.

At the peak of its activities, from 2002 to 2006, the KCDC successfully competed to become the First Nations SchoolNet RMO for Saskatchewan and Alberta, while also implementing its Headwaters project and participating in the BRAND, Saskatchewan CommunityNet, and Alberta SuperNet projects.⁵ The youth IT training program grew significantly both in size and formality through its partnership with the Cisco Networking Academy. Drawing

FIGURE 16.1 Northern Administration District, Saskatchewan (2010).

Courtesy of Saskatchewan Ministry of First Nations and Métis Relations.



on funds from several federal government sources, this program gave Aboriginal youth practical and accredited experience and training in computer repair and networking. In addition, in 2005 the KCDC submitted a proposal to the Workplace Skills Initiative of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC), which would build upon the KCDC's skills training and video conferencing expertise to provide training support for various enterprises (both public and private sector) in northern Saskatchewan and northern Alberta (see Keewatin Career Development Corporation 2005). During this period, the KCDC had approximately twenty paid employees and about twenty youth IT trainees each year.

The third period—the year 2006—was one of struggle. During this time, the Headwaters and BRAND projects came to an end, as planned. As First Nations SchoolNet RMO, the KCDC was partnering with Saskatchewan CommunityNet, but there was concern that SaskTel would lose interest in CommunityNet once the subsidies from the provincial government had been used up. Moreover, the First Nations SchoolNet RMOs went through a period of great uncertainty that was only somewhat resolved by the transfer of the SchoolNet program from Industry Canada to Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC). In addition, the KCDC's application to the Workplace Skills Initiative was unsuccessful. Half of the KCDC's staff members were laid off.

Most recently, the KCDC has managed to recover to a considerable extent, although there is a constant struggle for revenue. After the First Nations SchoolNet program moved to INAC, the RMOs were guaranteed funding for only two more years. Funding was extended in 2009 for an additional three years, albeit at a significantly reduced level (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada 2009). Other activities continued, however, and even grew. An innovative online video career counselling program, Breaking Barriers, was a success. The program evolved, in part, out of the unsuccessful Workplace Skills Initiative proposal, but in the case of Breaking Barriers the KCDC instead turned to the private sector for funding and was able to attract significant sponsorship from Cameco, a major mining company. The KCDC's expertise in multicast video conferencing has gained the organization considerable recognition, and the KCDC has also established a lucrative working relationship with SaskTel. The KCDC is now a very successful SaskTel Authorized High-Speed Internet Dealer, repeatedly winning SaskTel's Rural Dealer of the Year award. The income from this commercial enterprise has become a very important part of the KCDC's budget, as public funding from community development initiatives has declined.

The theme of training and skills development runs through all of the KCDC's activities over the years, reflecting its origins and mission. In particular, the creation of a local workforce skilled in ICTs was critical not only to the

success of the initial NBN project but also to the KCDC's evolution from a CBO into an organization tied more closely to the private sector.

CANADA AS A KNOWLEDGE-BASED ECONOMY AND SOCIETY

In the course of its involvement in federal programs, the KCDC inevitably had to interact with the government's own agenda regarding "connectivity" and telecommunications. In promoting this agenda, the government has relied heavily on the concept of a knowledge-based economy and society (KBES), a concept frequently invoked in a wide variety of publications and presentations. Rooney et al. (2003) define a "knowledge economy" as one that creates value primarily through intellectual activity. A "knowledge-based economy" is, accordingly, an economy in which knowledge is the most important productive factor (see, for example, Jessop 2005). The concept of a "knowledge-based society" encompasses a broader range of socio-cultural activities, extending beyond economic, commercial, or industrial interests. In any KBES, technology—especially ICTs—necessarily plays a central role, as the means by which knowledge is created and disseminated.

In the discourse surrounding Canada as a KBES, the digital divide—defined most simply as the divide between those individuals who have Internet access and those who don't—is presented as a problem that must be corrected so that all individual Canadians can participate fully in the economic and social affairs of the country.⁶ The reasons that make it important for individuals to be able to participate are, however, rooted firmly in the government's desire to ensure that Canada will be able to compete effectively in the global KBES—an ability on which Canada's future economic prosperity is said to depend. Little weight is given to other possible objectives, such as supporting and expanding citizens' opportunities to participate meaningfully in the democratic governance of their country or fostering individual growth in terms of human capabilities and interests.

The actual changes implemented under the rubric of Canada as a KBES, notably increased privatization and cutbacks in funding for a broad array of social programs, have had far-reaching impacts in all areas of activity that are characterized by a high degree of government involvement, such as education (Moll 1997; Taylor 1997), (un)employment programs and job training (McBride 2000; Russell 2000), and welfare (Ilcan and Basok, 2004), as well as on basic telecommunication services. Many of these changes have in turn affected other areas, including the policy options that the federal government has pursued in an effort to address the digital divide (Rideout and Reddick 2005).

CBOs have been expected to fill the gap left when the government withdraws from the direct provision of community services, but typically they

lack the resources necessary to do a good job. Rideout and her colleagues, using data gathered in a large-scale survey of Canadian CBOs, present a general picture of overworked, underpaid—if paid at all—and burnt-out staff members struggling to deliver the services that various government agencies now rely on them to provide (Gibson, O'Donnell, and Rideout 2007; Rideout 2007; Rideout et al. 2006; see also chapter 19 in this volume). Staff members are far too busy applying for project money and keeping up with the administrative and reporting requirements of the various programs for which they are responsible to have time to function as community advocates.

COMPETING DISCOURSES

In what follows, I will seek to describe how specific local actors—the Province of Saskatchewan, First Nations groups, and the KCDC—sought at once to engage with and to resist the dominant federal discourse, with its vision of Canada as a KBES, by developing their own modes of discourse. In so doing, I will draw in part on the methods of critical discourse analysis (see, especially, Fairclough 1995; Hardy and Phillips 2004). This approach enables a researcher to identify key texts that suggest competing discourses and to identify discourses that may have been forced into position of subordination by the dominant discourse, as well as to identify strategies that those who participate in alternative discourses employ in an effort to modify the dominant discourse so as to better represent their own interests.

The evidence employed in this analysis has been culled from a large corpus of texts, including publicly available official documents (speeches, presentations, reports, press releases, and the like), internal working documents, and other texts such as newspaper articles. The written corpus has been enriched by visits to the KCDC's headquarters in La Ronge and interviews with individuals from Industry Canada, the Province of Saskatchewan, SaskTel, and the KCDC. I will begin by examining the texts produced by each of the four primary actors separately, in order to identify their respective discursive positions. These discursive positions will then be analyzed in the context of the NBN application to the BRAND program.

The Federal Discourse: A Connected Canada

At least with respect to BRAND, it is the vision of the KBES manifested in texts produced by Industry Canada that constitutes the dominant discourse. For the purposes of this analysis, four PowerPoint slides taken from presentations delivered by senior Industry Canada personnel (Lynch 1999; Hull 2000; Binder 2003, 2005) can serve to illustrate the chief features of this discourse.

FIGURE 16.2a The federal discourse of the KBES. A graph taken from a presentation by Kevin Lynch, 1999.

Why should we focus on an Information Economy/Society agenda?

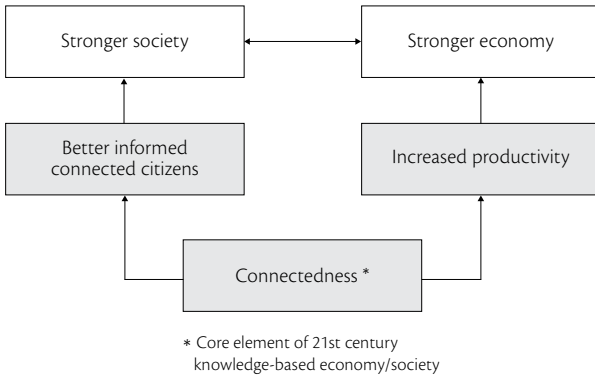


FIGURE 16.2b The federal discourse of the KBES. A graph taken from a presentation by Douglas Hall, 2000.

Why connect Canadians?

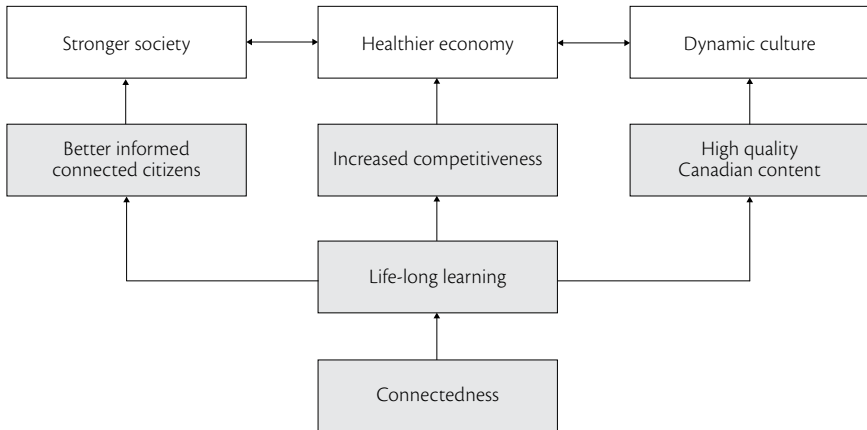


FIGURE 16.2c The federal discourse of the KBES. A graph taken from a presentation by Michael Binder, 2003.

Broadband is the Platform

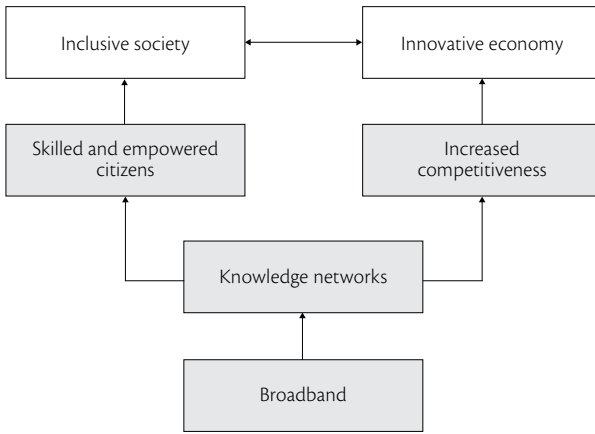
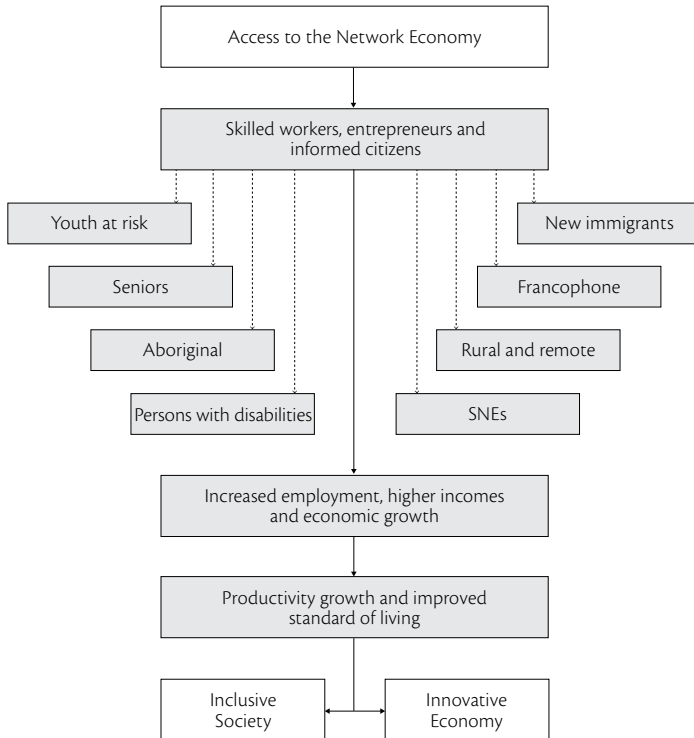


FIGURE 16.2d The federal discourse of the KBES. A graph taken from a presentation by Michael Binder, 2005.



For several reasons, these slides can be viewed as offering a definitive summary of the government's agenda. Each of the presenters held a senior position in Industry Canada. The first presentation was made by Kevin Lynch, at the time the deputy minister of Industry Canada. Doug Hull was the director general of the Information Highway Applications Branch, and Michael Binder was the assistant deputy minister of the Spectrum, Information Technology, and Telecommunications Sector. All three thus had significant authority in the areas of management and telecommunications policy development. In addition, all four presentations took place before large and politically important audiences. Lynch's 1999 presentation was directed to members of the SchoolNet Advisory Board, and Hull's presentation in 2000 formed part of a "North American Day" conference on e-government, which included representatives from the United States and Mexico. The talk that Binder gave at the Information Highway Conference in 2003 was delivered, with only minor variations, more than twenty times in 2003 and 2004 to a wide variety of industry, governmental, and public audiences worldwide. His second presentation, in 2005, took place at the Wireless Communications Association's Global Harmonization and Regulatory Summit, an international conference held in Washington DC. All four presentations thus constituted explicit public statements regarding Canada's perspective on telecommunications.⁷

The federal government's economic agenda is most clearly visible in the slides used by Lynch and Binder (figures 16.2a and b). There is an assumed causality in Lynch's presentation, which begins with "connectedness," described as a "core element" of the twenty-first century KBES. Connectedness leads, on the one hand, to "better informed, connected citizens" and thus to a "stronger society" and, on the other, to "increased productivity" and thus to a "stronger economy." The same basic linkage is visible in Binder's 2003 slide, albeit with certain variations in wording: "knowledge networks" now produce "skilled and empowered citizens" and ultimately an "inclusive society," while "increased competitiveness" leads to an "innovative economy." Binder's 2005 slide (figure 16.2c) makes it clear that various marginalized groups (including Aboriginals) are included among "skilled workers, entrepreneurs, and informed citizens"—who, as participants in the "network economy," will enjoy "higher incomes" and an "improved standard of living." In these slides, one can trace the evolution of the Innovation Agenda, which was Industry Canada's science and technology policy in the early 2000s. Only in Hull's 2000 presentation to the e-government conference (figure 16.2d) do we find references to factors such as personal development ("life-long learning") and the dissemination of culture ("high-quality Canadian content").

I asked several of the people I interviewed to comment on these slides. A senior manager in Industry Canada's telecommunications division suggested

that Lynch's presentation "was really a messaging text: 'There's something new here. We should all get behind it. We should all support it because it's an engine of change.'" In his interpretation, although the message that connectivity is necessary to a stronger economy remained consistent throughout the slides, the later slides began to highlight specific applications as the initial message was absorbed and new priorities emerged.

He also acknowledged that the government's new agenda had initially met with some resistance. Regarding Lynch's 1999 presentation to the SchoolNet Advisory Board, he commented:

When [we] started promoting SchoolNet, guess who were the ones to oppose us? Schools. School boards, teachers . . . We used to come to the SchoolNet Advisory Board, and [one teacher] used to say, "You want to invest in education? Hire more teachers." And you know, we snuck up on schools. We started in libraries because librarians were the most advanced knowledge-based managers in the school system.

He expanded on the theme of resistance to Industry Canada's vision of a connected Canada with regard to the later slides:

We are now into pitching productivity. And so we're trying to get productivity as our new password . . . only we're running into huge difficulties. Ministers are scared of the word because in many, many fora, productivity is viewed as less pay for more work. . . . And unions don't like the P word, even though economists love this. Politically it's a very, very tough sell.

As his use of the word "pitching" suggests, these slides serve a promotional purpose. As so often in PowerPoint slides, arrows substitute for a detailed analysis of cause-and-effect relationships.

The Saskatchewan Discourse: Equitable and Affordable Telecommunications

The Saskatchewan government has had a long-standing policy objective of providing affordable basic telecommunications services to all the province's residents (Pike 1998). For many decades, SaskTel worked to achieve this objective by the commonly used strategy of cross-subsidizing the rural and remote telephone system by increasing its rates in urban areas. Changes in the regulation of the telephone system in the 1990s ended that ability to cross-subsidize (Wilson 2000). In addition, as the result of a Supreme Court of Canada decision in 1989, SaskTel was brought under the control of the Canadian Radio-television Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) as of the year 2000, at which point SaskTel had to comply with the CRTC's rulings and tariffs.

One product of the province's objective of equitable and affordable telecommunications for all is CommunityNet—an initiative to deploy broadband

throughout Saskatchewan. Planned in 2000 and implemented starting in 2001, CommunityNet was the earliest of numerous programs with similar objectives that would come to exist in almost every Canadian province or territory (Canadian Radio-television Telecommunications Commission 2003). CommunityNet works on the model of aggregating the telecommunication needs and uses of public sector units, such as schools, health facilities, libraries, and government offices, including those located in rural and remote communities. Gathering these individual facilities under the umbrella of a single anchor tenant—the Province of Saskatchewan—allowed SaskTel to submit a single bill to the Saskatchewan Information Technology Office, which resulted in considerable administrative savings. During CommunityNet’s initial phase (from 2001 to 2003), the savings produced by this aggregation, combined with a subsidy from the provincial government and Western Economic Diversification Canada, enabled SaskTel to improve its rural and remote service by installing backbone lines, switches, and other core networking equipment in smaller communities. Although at the outset CommunityNet was available only to the public sector units affiliated with the anchor tenant, SaskTel was able to use its upgraded core facilities to market its Internet services to individuals, privately owned businesses, and other organizations located in smaller communities at prices roughly comparable to those available in larger cities (Himmelsbach 2000; Murray 2002).

Implicit in the anchor tenant approach is a significant challenge of scale. Government offices and major health facilities tend to be concentrated in larger cities and towns, but schools and libraries are located in many more, and much smaller, locations, scattered across a large territory. The CommunityNet plan to link them all to the Internet was thus very ambitious. As of 2008, CommunityNet had connected most of the province’s schools, including all eighty-five First Nations schools, and the regional colleges, as well as health facilities, government offices, and public libraries. High-speed broadband of at least 1.5 Mbps was available to 366 communities (some with as few as three hundred residents), and the number of communities being connected has continued to grow.⁸

During the period when CommunityNet was first being designed and implemented, the Province of Saskatchewan was actively engaged in trying to shape the national telecommunications policy environment in a manner that would enable the province to achieve its goals. Saskatchewan was an active participant in the CRTC Service to High-Cost Serving Areas hearings that began in 1997. The province, together with many other participants in the hearings, advocated the establishment of national standards of telephone service and the creation of a Universal Service Fund, which would have provided residents of rural and remote communities with basic telephone service at affordable

rates. When the CRTC rejected the call for a Universal Service Fund, Saskatchewan, together with Manitoba (although that province later withdrew as a result of the privatization of Manitoba Tel), appealed the decision to the federal cabinet. The federal cabinet supported the CRTC's objections to the idea of a Universal Service Fund and rejected the appeal, but it did acknowledge the importance of the issue of equity by ordering the CRTC to monitor telephone companies' deployment of telecommunication services to underserved areas by having companies file annual Service Improvement Plans (Sanders 2000). Importantly, however, the CRTC's decision pertained only to basic telephone service, not to the additional equipment and services needed to support Internet access. In its submissions in 2005 to Industry Canada's Telecommunications Policy Review Panel (Saskatchewan 2005; Hersche 2005) and again in 2010, in connection with CRTC consultations regarding basic telecommunications services (Saskatchewan 2010; Fiske 2010), the province has continued to press its objective of providing affordable telecommunications services to all residents. It insists that it is the federal government's responsibility to provide a sustainable national solution to the problem of servicing rural and remote areas, in which the potential for market failure makes a private sector solution unlikely.

The province's statements regarding the need for affordable and equitable telecommunications, along with its arguments in support of CommunityNet, together form a consistent discourse that is distinct from that of the federal government. This competing discourse promotes an activist role for the provincial government and insists that an ongoing subsidy is necessary to compensate for persistent market failure in rural and remote areas. The discourse adopted by the Province of Saskatchewan has, in turn, had an impact on the KCDC in its actions as a CBO facilitating the penetration of broadband telecommunications services to northern Saskatchewan.

When questioned about the province's consistency of purpose regarding universal access, a SaskTel executive—someone who had considerable prior experience as a civil servant responsible for a variety of telecommunications activities—commented: “There is consistency in [the] desire to do that because rural people want it: it's not a political statement of just Conservatives versus NDP. This government listened to that. The previous government listened to that. That's why CommunityNet got built, but we started some of CommunityNet under Gary Lane.”⁹ He went on to list an unbroken sequence of cabinet ministers from the Conservative, New Democratic, and Saskatchewan parties who had supported CommunityNet and the goal of affordable and equitable telecommunications. For him, the only real variation had to do with how much funding the province was able to afford or willing to invest at a given time in order to advance this goal. Some times

were better than others, to be sure, but there was never any wavering from the overarching objective.

He also took considerable pride in Saskatchewan's accomplishments in this area, especially in view of what he viewed as the disproportionate attention given to Alberta's SuperNet project in venues such as the *Globe and Mail* and the *National Post*. As he noted, the relative lack of attention to Saskatchewan's achievements "was part of the province's not having any money. When I was going to the feds, we were talking about CommunityNet, and Alberta was coming on with SuperNet. Well, they had \$2 million just for P.R. I had nothing. I had me. So they had full videos and whatever of all the things that they were going to do, and I had me."

I also spoke with a Saskatchewan civil servant who had managerial and policy responsibility for the province's telecommunications strategy and operations. He, too, described how proud the province was of CommunityNet, particularly because its success demonstrated to SaskTel that there was a market for residential and business broadband services in smaller communities:

I always remember back in 1999 the view even from the telco was sort of, "Well, you know, we've done a business case, and we've identified sixteen communities where clearly broadband high-speed Internet will be a seller, but the rest, probably not." It's almost a leap of faith, right, because then suddenly we're at 366 communities and it's selling like hotcakes and everybody's on it and everybody wants it. So sometimes it's not a business case, and/or the business case is not readily apparent.

Both he and the SaskTel official not only recognized the difference in outlook between the federal and the provincial governments but also appreciated the reasons for it. In response to a question about whether the Province of Saskatchewan and the federal government differed in their objectives with respect to extending broadband to rural and remote areas, the SaskTel official responded: "What we would like to see is exactly the same. We would like to see rural people with access. We would like to see that." But he went on to point out that the provincial government had a "different methodology" and that Industry Canada had other issues to address—"circumstances in Canada that I don't have to deal with in Saskatchewan." As he saw it, certain features of the BRAND program were not particularly well suited to the situation in some of Saskatchewan's smaller communities. The BRAND program was designed on a community aggregator model in which each community was represented by a community champion. If a community could not find a champion, it could not apply to the program. The program's tight timelines for initial applications, as well as its sustainability requirements, also placed communities that were very small and/or beset by poverty and social

problems at a disadvantage. Moreover, under the BRAND program, only communities that were not served at all by publicly available broadband were eligible to receive a subsidy. Underserved communities, which might be adjacent to unserved ones, were not eligible. The Saskatchewan preference was clearly to install broadband over as large a contiguous region as possible, to include not only communities that were underserved or had no service at all but also communities that might otherwise be regarded as too small or too “backward” to be ready for broadband. In addition, the BRAND program favoured private sector telecommunications companies (Ritter 2006), whereas SaskTel, as a crown corporation, was a public sector company.

For him, the solution was to ensure that federal programs could accommodate differences among the provinces. He described how the BRAND program had been modified to fit the circumstances in Saskatchewan, in an effort to address the interests of the assorted stakeholders: “We did work this out. We fought very hard. I worked with the PA [Prince Albert] Grand Council and the Meadow Lake Council and New North, which was KCDC for all intents and purposes. And the feds wanted to divide this BRAND program up, so only the guys in Meadow Lake or PAGC would win, or the New North. Luckily, we had solidarity.” He also noted that SaskTel has only one shareholder, the Province of Saskatchewan. This very direct relationship means that the company’s policy objectives are closely connected to those of the province. In contrast, private sector competitors have many shareholders whose fundamental goal is to maximize their profit, not to subsidize services to remote and rural users.

In addition, I spoke with a KCDC manager who had considerable expertise in and responsibility for computer applications and telecommunications and who was involved with the BRAND applications. He used the word “aggressive” to characterize SaskTel’s interest in the Northern Broadband Network: “SaskTel was incredibly aggressive about pursuing it. They wanted it, and in fact they were . . . at times almost stepping on our toes in terms of trying to take ownership of the project, even though technically it was our project and they were our vendors.” I also talked to an Industry Canada policy analyst who had extensive experience with the department’s programs in Saskatchewan. Regarding SaskTel and its working relationship with Industry Canada, she commented:

It’s a love/hate relationship. You love them because they are the only ones who are here and who always come to the table and indicate an interest, and you hate them because they’re the only ones here. . . . They are a crown corporation, and they are very protective of their territory. As a business they do what they have to do as a business.

But she also described SaskTel as “good corporate sponsors”: “They contribute to events. They contribute significantly to the Computers with Schools partnership with Industry Canada. If it wasn’t for the SaskTel Telephone Pioneers in Saskatchewan, we’d be very hard pressed.”

SaskTel’s involvement in the NBN project demonstrates how the province’s discourse succeeded in influencing the implementation of a federal program, namely, BRAND. The SaskTel executive, the KCDC manager, and the Industry Canada policy analyst all provide interesting insights into the interactions that went on in the course of the initial applications to BRAND and the development of the NBN’s business case. SaskTel’s expertise, its existing network infrastructure, and the financial resources the crown corporation could bring to bear, not only on the BRAND requirement of a 50 percent matching contribution from the applicants but also a five-year commitment to sustaining the network, meant that it could play a dominant role in the implementation of the NBN. Employing these advantages, SaskTel was able to ensure that BRAND’s support for the NBN also supported the province’s discourse of affordable and equitable telecommunications.

The Aboriginal Discourse: Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession

Matthew Coon Come, national chief of the Assembly of First Nations, endorsed the recommendations of the National Broadband Task Force immediately upon the release of its report. His comments established the priorities of economic development, health care, education, and autonomy, themes that would be repeated consistently:

The establishment of a network that will link all of our communities to the communications network will be a major benefit to all of our communities. It will improve the strength and productivity of the First Nations economy, will improve the quality of the First Nations health care system and ensure that all of our citizens have access to learning opportunities. As we move to assume control of our own affairs, this will be a major tool in achieving this goal.

He noted that the Assembly of First Nations, in anticipation of the report, had entered into discussions with major telecommunications companies about potential partnerships in order to take advantage of the opportunities to come. “We missed the Industrial Revolution; we will not miss the information technology revolution,” he declared (quoted in Assembly of First Nations 2001a).

The needs of the Aboriginal community in this area were acknowledged by the federal government in the 2001 Speech from the Throne (Canada 2001), which recognized “the critical goal of making broadband access widely available to citizens, businesses, public institutions and to all communities in Canada by 2004” and made explicit reference to Aboriginal communities. As

noted earlier, when the BRAND pilot program was announced in 2002, priority was to be given to unserved First Nations, Inuit, and remote and rural communities. A flurry of activity ensued over the following year, with reports, resolutions, and proposals produced by many groups at levels ranging from local to national. An analysis of these texts, including the unsuccessful applications of the Meadow Lake Tribal Council and the Prince Albert Grand Council to the first round of the BRAND program and the successful application of the Northern Broadband Network, reveals the discursive position of Aboriginal communities in relation to telecommunications.¹⁰

Two of the three applicants for the first round of BRAND funding were the Meadow Lake Tribal Council and the Prince Albert Grand Council. Tribal councils represent the interests of the individual bands that make up their membership. They were initially responsible for managing the various social welfare programs whose administration had devolved to local organizations, but their activities have expanded over the years in accordance with specific circumstances. In particular, they have become quite prominent as a vehicle for economic development.

The Meadow Lake Tribal Council, which originated in 1981, represents nine First Nations bands located in the northwestern section of Saskatchewan. It manages several educational and social welfare programs on behalf of its members and has also been notably successful in the area of economic development, with a strong presence in the forestry sector through its share of ownership in several forestry enterprises. More recently, as the forestry sector has languished, the council has embarked on commercial partnerships and joint ventures in the emerging oil and gas sector in that part of the province. The Prince Albert Grand Council, which dates back to 1977, represents twelve First Nations bands in central and northern Saskatchewan. Like the Meadow Lake council, it has a very active and successful record of economic development. Until recently, it was principally involved with businesses such as hotels and gas bars in urban areas, although its activities are diversifying. In the area of economic development, both the Meadow Lake Tribal Council and the Prince Albert Grand Council are well established, knowledgeable, and notably successful, with extensive experience in partnering with other companies.

The initial BRAND applications from the Meadow Lake Tribal Council and the Prince Albert Grand Council originated from their economic development offices. During the 1990s, Robert Anderson carried out research on Saskatchewan tribal councils and their economic development activities, and his ideas provided a helpful tool for analyzing the discourse of the Meadow Lake and Prince Albert councils in relation to the NBN. Anderson (1999) argues that Aboriginal engagement with the global economy can provoke a variety of responses, ranging from various forms of opting out—whether passively,

through isolation, or actively, through open resistance or even violence—to various modes of engagement, which can again be active or passive. Within this analytical framework, the actions of Aboriginal peoples in Canada in the area of economic development have been characterized by active engagement, but on their own terms (Anderson, Dana, and Dana 2006).

Anderson (1999, 13) describes the Aboriginal approach to economic development as:

1. A predominantly collective one centred on the community or “nation”
2. For the purposes of:
 - Attaining economic self-sufficiency as a necessary condition for the realization of self-government
 - Improving the socioeconomic circumstances of Aboriginal people
 - Preserving and strengthening traditional culture, values and languages (and reflecting the same in development activities)
3. Involving the following processes:
 - Creating and operating businesses to exercise control over the economic development process
 - Creating and operating businesses that can compete profitably over the long run in the global economy, to build the economy necessary to support self-government and improve socioeconomic conditions
 - Forming alliances and joint ventures among themselves and with non-Aboriginal partners to create businesses that can compete profitably in the global economy
 - Building capacity for economic development through (i) education, training and institution building and (ii) the realization of the treaty and Aboriginal rights to land and resources
 - Strengthening bonding and bridging social capital.

As Anderson’s analysis might suggest, the terms *ownership* and *control* figure prominently in the discursive strategy of Aboriginal peoples, as does the fact of their collective ownership of the land awarded them by treaty. The phrase “ownership, control, access, and possession,” which I chose to describe the competing discourse offered by Aboriginal groups, derives from an influential article by Brian Schnarch, who elaborates on these four principles in relation to research by and with First Nations, with particular reference to the concept of self-determination. According to Schnarch (2004, 80), “ownership, control, access, and possession” can be understood as “a political response to tenacious colonial approaches to research and information management.” Clear parallels exist between Schnarch’s summary of these principles as they pertain to information management and Anderson’s analysis of Aboriginal economic development (see table 16.1).

TABLE 16.1 Principles articulated in Aboriginal discourse

	Schnarch (2004, 81)	Anderson (1999, 13)
Ownership	"A community or group owns information collectively."	The community has collective ownership of economic enterprises.
Control	First Nations peoples "control all aspects of the research and information management processes that impact them."	<i>Control</i> refers not only to ownership but also to the strategies of partnerships and joint ventures by which ownership is exercised.
Access	"First Nations peoples must have access to information and data about themselves and their communities regardless of where it is currently held."	Access to the First Nations lands is one of the most powerful levers that First Nations can use to achieve their economic development goals.
Possession	Possession is a "mechanism by which ownership can be asserted and protected."	Ownership and joint ventures provide access to the operating details of various enterprises in a manner that promotes trust and confidence.

Ownership of the NBN was initially a high priority of the two tribal councils. The SaskTel official whom I interviewed had been actively involved in the company's response to the Request for Proposal (RFP) issued by the NBN. In answer to a question about whether the Meadow Lake Tribal Council and the Prince Albert Grand Council viewed the project slightly differently than did Industry Canada and SaskTel, he commented: "Yes. When they started . . . they looked at it as a business opportunity. So they said, when we first got started, 'I want to own it.'" To the same question, the KCDC manager and telecommunications expert, who was likewise closely involved with the preparation of the applications to BRAND, responded:

The perspective was there, from the Northern Broadband Network side, that there would be some type of ownership of the network at the end of the day, and SaskTel didn't want to do that. . . . There was going to be some discussion about business opportunities, etc. etc., which never really came to a whole lot. There was no network ownership. . . . No other sort of businesses started between SaskTel and the tribal councils to take advantage of that.

A senior KCDC staff member, who was also closely involved with the NBN application as it was developed, made a similar comment: "The philosophy for the First Nations side was that the money came to them from the federal government and that they should be able to leverage some of that into some ownership of the network," although, as he went on to note, "even within the tribal council[s] there was the alternate opinion that ownership of the network would include risk."

SaskTel was opposed to joint ownership of the NBN. In interacting with the tribal councils, their strategy was to call attention to the considerable on-going costs and risks involved in running a broadband telecommunications network. These included the financial risk of extending service to small, remote, and geographically scattered areas, as well as the costs of maintaining and upgrading equipment. SaskTel also highlighted the risk of having to cut off delinquent customers who might be members of one of the First Nations bands represented by the tribal councils who co-owned the network. As the senior KCDC staff member's comment indicates, at least some members of the tribal councils recognized these risks.

It is evident from this analysis that the approach taken by the Meadow Lake Tribal Council and Prince Albert Grand Council illustrates the pattern of active engagement, but on their own terms, that Anderson sees as characteristic of the approach of Canadian Aboriginal groups to economic development. Their interest in establishing ownership of the NBN also illustrates several of the processes of economic development that Anderson lists, among them “forming alliances and joint ventures among themselves and with non-Aboriginal partners to create businesses that can compete profitably in the global economy” and “creating and operating businesses to exercise control over the economic development process.” This was the immediate goal of the discourse of ownership, control, access, and possession. Also apparent, however, is the existence of a pragmatic element that recognizes, on a case-by-case basis, when that discourse might not be appropriate, as was the case with the NBN in its final form—a not-for-profit corporation formed solely for the purpose of administering the BRAND proposal.

The KCDC Discourse: Land, Health, and Jobs

Conversations with staff members at the KCDC during site visits and interviews made it clear that they see a distinction between the values and interests of northern Saskatchewan and those of Aboriginal peoples. While they understand that because the overwhelming majority of residents of the North are Aboriginal, any Northern organization must and will reflect Aboriginal concerns and interests, they also acknowledge the existence of a distinct discourse that focuses on the interests shared by most Northerners, whether Aboriginal or not. Reviewing the KCDC's Headwaters application to Industry Canada's Smart Communities project and its submission to HRSDC in connection with its Workplace Skills Initiative, as well as business plans and other documents,¹¹ I was able to identify a discourse of “land, health, and jobs”—a phrase that key KCDC staff members agreed was an appropriate description of their priorities.

As the texts I examined reveal, the KDC and its partner organizations feel that they are rooted in the land. Their values, interests, and activities are framed by the goal of enabling residents of northern Saskatchewan to engage in fulfilling lives despite living in geographically remote areas where they must cope with social isolation and relatively scant opportunities for employment. The documents also reveal a concern with physical and mental well-being, with health-related services delivered in the North through such means as Canada Health Infoway's Telehealth. Finally, the texts that focus on education and skills training aim at the creation of a skilled workforce whose members will be able to find jobs in northern Saskatchewan.

The KDC telecommunications expert—himself a long-time resident of northern Saskatchewan who felt fortunate to have found a challenging job in his own community—very explicitly noted the linkage between telecommunications infrastructure, education, and good local jobs for Northerners:

Math and science education, for example, in northern Saskatchewan is a real concern. The principal economic driver is mining. The skilled mining jobs—as opposed to equipment operators, which are semi-skilled—all require significant comfort levels with advanced science and math and post-secondary training that requires those as prerequisites. So you have both post-secondary school training needs and high school training needs in the maths and sciences which are difficult to fulfill [in northern Saskatchewan].

For the KDC, then, the point is not to educate and train residents of the North only to have them move to larger, better developed urban centres in order to find work. Rather, the goal is to strengthen the social and economic fabric of the North by encouraging skilled individuals to remain in the area.

As the discussion of these three competing discourses demonstrates, none of the actors was fundamentally opposed to the dominant discourse of the KBES. Each, however, sought to modify that discourse to better suit their respective interests. In reaction to Industry Canada's preference for relying on market economies, minimal subsidies, and limited-term projects to expand broadband services throughout the country, the Province of Saskatchewan sought to ensure that room would be left for universal, sustained, and non-market-based programs that would support equitable service for all the province's residents. The Aboriginal discourse of ownership and control endeavoured to allow First Nations to engage actively with the KBES but in a manner consistent with their particular cultural and economic circumstances and objectives. The KDC's discourse was concerned with bringing the full benefits of the KBES—social, educational, and cultural, as well as economic—to a specific rural and remote region via broadband telecommunications.

REVERSE ENGLISH

In billiards and pool, *reverse English* refers to the side spin that a player can put on the cue ball when striking it. The spin moves the ball into an advantageous position on the table in order to set up subsequent shots. By skillfully manoeuvring the cue ball in this manner, an expert player can sink every ball on the table.

The metaphor of reverse English offers a useful description of the strategies of resistance to the federal discourse of the KBES that the KCDC has employed, especially in connection with the BRAND program. Such a strategy is visible in the manner in which the KCDC tried to modify the rules governing the program and in the ways it built on earlier successes in an effort to win new grant competitions, as well as in the tactics it has used to draw jobs to northern Saskatchewan.

Community-based organizations such as the KCDC sometimes seek to modify the criteria according to which government policy and programs are designed and evaluated. This is one instance of the use of reverse English—attempting to alter the rules of the game so that future programs will be better suited to the CBO's objectives as well as to the constraints under which it operates. Commenting on the relationship that had evolved between the KCDC and the Saskatchewan-based staff of Industry Canada, the KCDC telecommunications expert noted that the arrangement allowed the KCDC some latitude. "Our entire Smart Communities program was based on bending the rules, not breaking [them]," he commented, "but where they didn't make sense, we bent them." He went on to say that Industry Canada staff members "were comfortable enough with us doing that, and we were comfortable enough that they were going to let us do it by the time we got to BRAND."

There is also an element of mutual dependence in the government's use of CBOs to deliver programs, which gives the CBOs a certain power. I asked the Saskatchewan-based Industry Canada policy analyst whom I interviewed what would happen if the requirements governing a particular program were so tightly designed and so stringent that no CBO was interested in becoming involved in program delivery. In response, she acknowledged that such a circumstance would create a severe problem for the government. She also noted that there has been increasing recognition that national programs must allow for tailor-made local solutions. "The Smart Communities project was a very innovative way of adapting one particular national project to a particular region," she commented. It "built on partnerships that identified various communities that are geographic communities of interest," while it also "set strategic outcomes and goals that would in fact address particular identified needs." In short, Industry Canada understood that, to achieve its own objectives, it needed to maintain some degree of flexibility.

The strategy of reverse English is also visible in the grant application that the KCDC prepared for submission to HRSDC's Workplace Skills Initiative program (Keewatin Career Development Corporation 2005). The KCDC proposed that it build on its existing expertise with video conferencing, acquired through its work as a First Nations SchoolNet RMO, to create a skills development and training organization. The organization would rely heavily on video conferencing and thus be available to any public or private sector group throughout northern Alberta and northern Saskatchewan, with a particular emphasis on small and medium-sized companies located in smaller communities. The application reviewed the KCDC's past accomplishments, presenting them as a logical sequence of development reaching back from the current BRAND, SuperNet, and CommunityNet broadband projects, to the teacher skills training and use of video conferencing it employed in its role as First Nations SchoolNet RMO, to the multi-level skills training that was part of the Headwaters Smart Communities project, and ultimately to the KCDC's very first project involving Internet-based skills training and support for employment counsellors in the North. Viewing its activities retrospectively, the KCDC was able to forge links between its earlier projects and the areas of expertise that would be required for participation in the Workplace Skills Initiative.

In so doing, the KCDC engaged in a certain sleight-of-hand. The WSI program had obviously not yet been developed when, for example, the Headwaters project was conceived. Although Headwaters did include a definite skills training and development component, the project was aimed primarily at novice ICT users, who were not the target audience of the Workplace Skills Initiative. The KCDC's strategy, however, was to position itself in the grant competition as an organization that could already claim considerable experience and success in the area of skills training and development. Even though its application for a Workplace Skills Initiative grant was ultimately unsuccessful, the KCDC's skill in presenting itself as an organization that could be entrusted with another large project was another instance of reverse English, one that allowed the KCDC to continue as a player in the game.

One factor in the KCDC's success in assuming a leadership role in the community was its experience with the Northern Labour Market Committee (NLMC). The NLMC, established in 1983, is made up of over eighty different government and private sector agencies in northern Saskatchewan, including Aboriginal organizations and industry-based groups, that are broadly involved with skills training, funding opportunities, and economic development. It meets quarterly and is a clearing house for anything of interest relating to employment and the economy. The KCDC was a member of the NLMC while the Headwaters project was underway and has maintained observer status since then. Through its participation in the NLMC, the KCDC was able to establish

a reputation in the community as an organization noted for its technological expertise. As the senior KDCD staff member who was involved with the NBN application observed:

Because of the Smart Communities program and the way we structured our matching funds, there was strong participation from both the school divisions and the municipalities for in-kind contributions. So they were very aware of what we had been doing already with Smart Communities at that point. We had been having some successes and making things happen, so we were definitely seen as the technological leadership group in northern Saskatchewan.

Finally, the KDCD's overarching policy objective has been to draw jobs to northern Saskatchewan, in particular, and, more generally, to keep people and jobs in the North. This goal is evident, for example, in the comment made by the KDCD telecommunications expert about the need for good mathematics and science training so that Northern residents will be qualified for skilled positions in the mining industry. The KDCD aimed to achieve this objective through its involvement with programs, such as BRAND, First Nations SchoolNet, and Breaking Barriers, that focused on connectivity. Participation in these programs was one way to keep the goals of employment and an improved quality of life in the North in play.

One continuing risk, however, is that by engaging in initiatives that emphasize broadband connections and video conferencing in support of job training, the KDCD is helping Northerners acquire skills that might ultimately encourage them to leave the region.

The NBN project actually did result in more jobs for residents of northern Saskatchewan, while simultaneously producing an increased revenue stream for the KDCD. SaskTel did not have much of a staff presence in northern Saskatchewan at the time, nor were there local companies who could do the required work of installation. The KDCD seized on the opportunity and was able to fill the gap with graduates of its youth IT trainee program, who carried out the final installation in local communities. As the KDCD telecommunications expert noted, during the implementation of the NBN project, the KDCD stood in a double relationship with SaskTel:

So KDCD became in effect a SaskTel vendor, much the same as any big city [service retailer such as] Wireless Age. All of these different companies, if you go to them, they have "High Speed Dealer" in their window. Well, KDCD became a SaskTel High Speed Dealer for Northern communities. That put us in a business relationship with SaskTel, so we were in a slightly odd position, I suppose. On one hand we were the proponent, and on the other hand we were a subcontractor of the main vendor.

Although the KCDC was able to capitalize on this dual relationship, the NBN project was of limited duration, and a concern with the creation of skilled jobs remains one of the KCDC's priorities.

CONCLUSION

Three more observations can be made about the KCDC and its role in northern Saskatchewan. The first is that things change. The individuals associated with the NBN application and the subsequent installation of broadband services had a track record with each other that facilitated the project. But many of these people have now moved on, and new relationships have to be built. The funding environment has also changed. The KCDC senior manager noted that the organization now has “more of a straight business relationship” with one of the Saskatchewan tribal councils, “as opposed to a community development partnership.” As he went on to explain:

That's partly because that's the way that KCDC is evolving. Now our partners are business partners. . . . It's because the government programs have dried up, and we don't have any core funding at all. So we have to, in order to survive, go in the direction of providing commercial services in more of a business arrangement as opposed to program proposals. . . . It really changes the nature of your organization. It really takes you out of community development.

Second, in the environment of the development of broadband telecommunications in northern Saskatchewan and the BRAND program, there were, to paraphrase the Saskatchewan-based Industry Canada policy analyst, no secrets. With regard to SaskTel, he remarked: “You know, there are a lot of well-known secrets about SaskTel's infrastructure, what's already in the ground, and what was being put up . . . and [about] how aggressive they are in protecting their own territory, too.” But the notion of “well-known secrets” applies more broadly. Whatever their formal organizational affiliation, the individuals involved in the BRAND proposals had worked with one another for many years. There was considerable back-and-forth as the proposals were being developed. Industry Canada provided feedback on the proposals as they evolved. SaskTel was actively involved not only as a respondent to the RFP but also in the ongoing development and evaluation of the two rounds of proposals. The KCDC talked with other applicants across Canada. The same is true of other government programs in which the KCDC has participated. Personal relationships had formed over time. There was confidence that the various parties could deliver on their commitments and obligations. In rural and remote areas, people often wear a lot of hats. Everyone knows what is going on. Although it is possible to distinguish specific discourses and analyze the

relationships among the various actors, the fact remains that everyone knew everyone else's business and conducted themselves accordingly.

The third observation concerns the question of what affordable and equitable telecommunications might mean in rural and remote areas. In contrast to urban dwellers, residents of rural and remote areas typically do not have many choices when it comes to health services and education. They must rely on broadband connections for access to telehealth and on multicast video conferencing for advanced education and skills training. It is possible to argue that the goal of equity requires that rural and remote residents be provided with *better* telecommunications capacity and services than urban Canadians because they are so reliant on those services. Should this argument prevail, it makes the challenge of addressing market failure in these regions an even more pressing issue than it is currently assumed to be.

As a community-based organization located in a remote area of Canada, the KCDC has successfully faced numerous challenges, taken advantage of the opportunities available to it, and worked hard to create other opportunities. An initial examination of key texts has demonstrated that the KCDC was able to manoeuvre among competing discourses in order better to fulfill its mission of "bringing technology to the north." Closer examination of texts, as well as a dialogic analysis of the interaction of these texts with various social contexts, is necessary, however, to fully describe the KCDC's role in exploiting those discourses. It is my hope that the research described in this chapter will contribute to the skills that CBOs such as the KCDC routinely employ not only to ensure their continued survival but also to further their ability to serve their communities. I also hope that this research will contribute to the development of a knowledge-based public policy.

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NOTES

- 1 The NBTF report estimated the maximum cost of connecting all communities, homes, and businesses at \$4.6 billion. In June 2001, David Johnston, the NBTF chair, clarified that the task force had proposed a two-phase process. The first phase, which would cost between \$1.85 billion and \$2.5 billion, would connect all communities by 2004. This cost would be shared by all levels of government and the private sector. The second phase, costing approximately \$2 billion, would extend broadband connectivity to homes and businesses and would be funded primarily by the private sector (Johnston 2001). Minister of Industry Brian Tobin gained cabinet support for \$1 billion in funding, but when the budget was presented in December 2001, the amount had been reduced to \$35 million over a three-year period from 2004 to 2006 (Scofield 2001). This provoked a very public dispute between Tobin and Prime Minister Paul Martin that culminated in Tobin's high-profile resignation from the cabinet.

- 2 For more information, see “Broadband Canada: Connecting Rural Canadians,” <http://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/719.nsf/eng/home>, and, in particular, the “Frequently Asked Questions” section (http://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/719.nsf/eng/h_00004.html#BPQ1).
- 3 *Community-based organization* is one of several terms used to describe organizations that are involved with the delivery of services and programs—typically, although not exclusively programs sponsored by governments—to individuals and groups in a community. Other terms include the *not-for-profit sector*, the *voluntary sector*, the *third or independent sector*, and the *non-government sector*.
- 4 This and additional information about the region is available at <http://www.fnmr.gov.sk.ca/nad>.
- 5 The KCDC’s involvement with Alberta’s SuperNet and Saskatchewan’s CommunityNet, as the First Nations SchoolNet RMO responsible for both provinces, provided it with an insider’s view of both initiatives at all stages, from public discussion, the formulation of program objectives, and systems design and delivery through to operational realities.
- 6 For a critical examination of this rather narrow interpretation, see Stevenson 2009.
- 7 Examining the impact of PowerPoint on organizational communication, Yates and Orlikowski (2007) argue that PowerPoint presentations are coherent texts with specific characteristics that can be identified and tracked. The tendency for PowerPoint to encourage a somewhat simplistic and reductive form of thinking has also been noted (see, e.g., Parker 2001). In addition, everyday experience with presentations made by civil servants suggests that the “deck” is a carefully prepared script and that speakers rarely depart from or embellish the text accompanying the slides.
- 8 These statistics appeared in the December 2008 CommunityNet FAQ. CommunityNet remains a major priority of the provincial government, as was indicated by a grant to SaskTel in 2008 of \$90 million (later quietly reduced to \$45 million). This grant provided partial funding for a \$129 million SaskTel project to extend CommunityNet to even more communities, to upgrade existing facilities, and to add additional cellphone towers to support wireless broadband access. The next objective of the program is to bring high-speed broadband to farm gate and to communities that are exceedingly remote.
- 9 “This government” is that of Brad Wall and the Saskatchewan Party, which came to power in 2007. The previous government was that of the NDP, which governed Saskatchewan from 1991 to 2007, with Roy Romanow and then Lorne Calvert as premier. Gary Lane was the minister responsible for telecommunications during the administration of Grant Devine and the Conservative Party (1982 to 1991).
- 10 Primary texts include, at the national level, Assembly of First Nations 2001b, 2004, and 2008, and, at the provincial, B.C. First Nations Technology Council 2005. I also examined documents from other Aboriginal organizations: Meadow Lake Tribal Council 2002; Northern Broadband Network 2003, 2007; K-Net 2004; Keewaytinook Okimakanak 2005. Also useful were consultation documents and reports of meetings that represent significant Aboriginal participation (Jock et al. 2004; Aboriginal Voice 2005; Nickerson and Kaufman 2005) and published academic research (Alexander 2001; Matiation 1999; Pannekoek 2001; J. Whiteduck 2010; T. Whiteduck 2010), as well as and briefs and submissions, such as a RICTA 2005.
- 11 Included among the numerous KCDC documents I examined were “Headwaters Project: Vision of the Future” (1999); “Headwaters Project Business Plan” (2000); “Headwaters Project 2004: Online Report” (2004); “Saskatchewan and Alberta

e-Communities: Rural, Remote and Aboriginal, Three-year Plan, 2006–2009” (2005); “Northern Innovation” (2005); “Workplace Skills Initiative: Submission to Human Resource and Skills Development Canada” (2005); and “Decreasing Rural Poverty Through Application of Information and Communication Technology (ICT): Presentation to the Senate Standing Committee on Agriculture and Forestry—Rural Poverty Hearing” (2007). In addition, between 2002 and 2005, I looked at various announcements in the News and Events section of the KCDC home page.

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