

Editorial

Fish, Fish and More Fish!

January 17, 2019

Maxence Jaillet



Diversifying products from Great Slave Lake is a giant step forward in growing the aquaculture industry in the Northwest Territories.

Diversification will also mean that species other than white fish can be turned to good account. Will lake trout, lake whitefish, burbot or walleye also be coming to market?

Cultural diversity in the Northwest Territories brings with it different tastes and different dishes. Fish parts other than fillets could be prepared better for consumer use. And when might “unknown” caviar be served up in Europe?

However, before we can look at global markets, the certified processing plant in Hay River is setting the stage for wider distribution in the Northwest Territories. What a joy it will be to see whitefish in grocery stores here! “Buy local” will finally become easier once this resource is more widely available.

Wider distribution will also mean that fishermen will be better compensated for their effort. Will more fishermen and improved fishing effort allow fixed quotas to be met in the future?

With this new impetus, the resource could also be seen as “NWT.” Water quality and temperature in Great Slave Lake is different than in other lakes in Canada. It means better quality and delicate fish meat. There are also processing methods that can give products more added value. An organic-branded fish from the Northwest Territories could well generate a few more dollars for the industry.

Governance: Strategies for Achieving Equality

January 24, 2019

Denis Lord



Katrina Nokleby discussing her concerns about getting involved in politics. (Photo credit: Denis Lord)

Guaranteed seats in the Legislative Assembly the answer?

Guaranteed seats, teaching sessions and reduced election spending limits were just some of the many ideas bandied about on January 17 at a hearing held by the Special Committee on Increasing the Representation of Women in the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories.

With only two of the 19 seats (10%) in the Legislative Assembly held by women, the Northwest Territories has little to boast about in that regard. In fact, it puts the Northwest Territories at the bottom of the list in Canada.

According to the United Nations, 30% is the threshold at which women can be said to have a voice, Committee Chair and Yellowknife Centre MLA Julie Green said.

A dozen or so women and two men took turns at the microphone on the 17th to talk about obstacles and solutions for achieving equality, following the discussion paper tabled by Jackson Lafferty, the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, in May 2018.

Among other solutions, the discussion paper proposes that, for a limited timeframe, seats automatically be created for women who garner the most votes. The goal is to have 20% female MLA representation in 2023 and 30% (six seats) in 2027.

Guaranteed seats

There was little enthusiasm for the guaranteed seats idea among the women who spoke. "I think that the guaranteed seat plan is paternalistic and bound to generate controversy," Kate Reid, who hopes to enter politics one day, said. "Women would be poorly viewed. I wouldn't accept that kind of seat."

"You'd have the job because you're a woman. That bugs me," Alexandra, a mechanical engineer, remarked. "You'd become a stooge." She would like to see more female premiers, MLAs and political leaders.

David Wasylciw, the founder of the OpenNWT website, once ran for a seat in the Legislative Assembly. He fears that guaranteed seats will give rise to similar representation formulas for immigrants, language groups, and so on.

One man, one woman

Jolene Saturnino, an Indigenous woman, also plans to run for office. "A quota would be like saying that female candidates did not win their seats," she lamented.

Saturnino explained that she has done extensive research on representation of women in politics. According to her findings, quotas do not lead to genuine improvement. "There has to be guaranteed equal representation. It exists in many countries. ... it didn't work in Nunavut. However, we have the opportunity to be a model in Canada."

At the dawn of the creation of Nunavut in 1997, residents turned down a referendum proposal that there be one male and one female MLA in every riding.

In addition, according to Saturnino, studies have shown that women are often more educated and capable than men in countries that have adopted such a model.

Former MLA Dave Nickerson echoed those comments and said that the target of 20% female representation in 2023 is not ambitious enough. He suggested that the number of ridings in the Northwest Territories be reduced and that residents of each riding be allowed to vote for one man and one woman.

Campaign schools

Jolene Saturnino described “campaign schools” for women as “slow lanes” that do not produce the results people are looking for. However, other women in attendance welcomed the initiative and said they hoped that such schools would be held more often.

Katrina Nokleby, an engineering consultant, noted that such schools can teach women how to fundraise and how to approach people and to know which types of people to approach and how much to ask for. She said further that such teaching should also help women to gain public speaking skills.

Participants then talked about the challenges of being in the public eye. “When you’re a public figure, people think they have the right to say anything they want,” Julie Green commented.

“You really do have to have thick skin,” said Education, Culture and Employment Minister Caroline Cochrane, who sat on the Committee. “... there are always at least half of the people who think that you’re wrong, and their voices are the loudest.”

Cochrane said that she developed a thicker skin over time and now takes criticism less to heart. She also said government by consensus is less aggressive than what she saw in federal politics.

Crux of the matter

On the topic of obstacles preventing women from running for office, Katrina Nokleby explained that election time is a very busy period for her in her job. She, like others, raised the issue of financial obstacles.

Some people didn’t know that childcare is considered an election expense. “The legislation doesn’t explicitly say so,” Kate Reid noted.

“The way it’s written, the law isn’t accessible,” David Wasylciw said, agreeing with Reid. Wasylciw was also in favour of reducing election spending limits to make politics more accessible. Wasylciw also said that the *Elections and Plebiscites Act* should be amended to take local travel costs into account.

Yellowknife mayor Rebecca Alty talked about her own experiences. She gave up job security for a more tenuous and uncertain future. “But, it’s in my personality, and I don’t have a family,” she admitted.

The Special Committee on Increasing the Representation of Women in the Legislative Assembly held hearings in municipalities across the Northwest Territories. It will be presenting solutions at its 20th and 21st hearings.