



Nalcor and NunatuKavut strike 'strategic' deal that could affect past, future Labrador developments



A Southern Inuit land claims agreement is 'imminent,' and many projects fall within area, according to NCC

Katie Breen · CBC News ·

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Nalcor VP, Jim Keating, left, and NunatuKavut president Todd Russell shake hands after announcing an agreement Monday. (Katie Breen/CBC)

Nalcor and Labrador's Southern Inuit have signed an \$8-million agreement promising mutual respect in future negotiations — which might have to start happening more frequently.

The two groups could soon be more intimately linked as the pending Southern Inuit land claims agreement covers a large area in Labrador that many of Nalcor's projects are located within.



The Muskrat Falls spillway opens two of its five gates. (Twitter/Nalcor)

"Gull Island is in the catchment area. Muskrat Falls is in the catchment area. Upper Churchill is in the catchment area. The Labrador Island Transmission Link is in the catchment area, yes," said NunatuKavut Community Council president Todd Russell.

"All of these current projects, past projects, and potential future projects are within the land claim of the NunatuKavut Community Council, and it even goes as far as Labrador West."

The land claim has yet to be approved but Russell says its acceptance is imminent.

Formerly ignored

The NCC was left out of Muskrat Falls negotiations, years ago, and [Russell was arrested for protesting in 2013](#), trying to get the Crown corporation to the table.

- [Charges dropped against Muskrat Falls demonstrators](#)

Now, there's been a change of tune.

"It's much easier sitting down as colleagues looking for consent rather than adversaries looking for protestation," said Nalcor vice-president Jim Keating.

“This, indeed, for us is very strategic.

- Jim Keating

"This, indeed, for us is very strategic. I know it's going to create value."

His objective is to find "pathways to development" and he says the agreement announced Monday will help with that.

Potential for impacts benefit agreement

The Gull Island hydroelectric project is said to be the second phase of the Lower Churchill Project, after Muskrat Falls.

When asked about the likelihood of it being sanctioned, Keating said, "Where there's economic value, we need to be earnest in capturing that."



Some of the Labrador-Island transmission link is located on Southern Inuit land according to NCC president Todd Russell. (Jacques Boissinot/Canadian Press)

If it does go ahead and the land claim is in effect, there would be potential for a Southern Inuit impacts and benefits agreement — like the one [the Innu received](#) for Muskrat Falls — meaning, depending on what's agreed upon, the organization could be entitled to money and jobs for its members.

"Under the context of a land claim, impact-benefit agreements seem to be the way business is done, the way agreements are reached," Russell said.

“We are not giving the green light to any project with this ... agreement.”

- Todd Russell

But he wants to be clear: "We are not giving the green light to any project with this particular community development agreement."

And, he said, the current agreement doesn't address any past wrongdoings.

Details of current agreement

The \$8 million announced on Monday will be spread over the next six years — the duration of the community development agreement.

Some objectives are to engage in environmental protection, provide commercial opportunities for NunatuKavut-member businesses, and negotiate future projects.

The Muskrat Falls megaproject involves building a dam on Labrador's Churchill River. (CBC)

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Nalcor will fund a hair sample study, look into the potential for offshore oil and gas opportunities near Cartwright and develop an employment strategy for NCC members.

"It's not decades long like the [impacts and benefits agreement] with the Innu but it's reasonably long enough that it gives you some time to go through a myriad of opportunities and maybe even challenges to get to the next project or two or three," said Keating.

"[It's] also short enough that it keeps us eager and honest, keeps us motivated, because as time winds through that agreement I, for one, would like to be able to show something for it and show how we've built on this engagement that we've initiated."

NunatuKavut isn't making the agreement available online but those interested can get in touch with the organization for a copy.

