

**Roundtable on Aboriginal Issues  
Mr. Jose A. Kusugak  
President**

**Speaking Notes**



**ᐃᓄᐃᑦ ᑕᐱᓃᑦ ᓅᓇᑕᑦ  
INUIT TAPIRIIT KANATAMI**

**Monday April 19, 2004**

**Government of Canada Conference Centre  
Ottawa, Canada**

**Mr. Jose A. Kusugak  
President  
Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami**

**Speaking Notes  
Roundtable on Aboriginal Issues**

Mr. Prime minister, members of the cabinet, fellow aboriginal leaders, distinguished guests,

Inuit hope today is a turning point in our relationship with the Federal Government. Prime Minister, your remarks indicate we are moving in the right direction.

Inuit pride themselves in working together. I can assure you we are here ready to participate and work with you to meet our mutual objectives.

Inuit are more than first Canadians, we are also Canadians first.

Let me explain briefly. When my first-born daughter Aliisa married a fine young fellow named Cedric, tradition dictated that Cedrick not only was added to our family, but he became my “Ninguak”. This means he has been elevated to a higher level in our family than our daughter. Cedrick’s family also accepts and places my daughter on a higher pedestal. Similarly Inuit are married to Canada. Canada is our ninguak. But in accepting Canada we shouldn’t have to worry about losing our identity or loving ourselves any less. Sometimes i have wondered where Inuit fit in the Canadian family.

In recent years, we have watched the government of Canada moving towards an aboriginal policy with a “first-nations-on-reserve” focus. But it has been silent about Inuit.

Prime minister, during our recent meeting on March 11<sup>th</sup>, when I pointed out that Inuit were consistently ignored in federal budgets and throne speeches, you acknowledge those oversights. I want to thank you for that, and recognize your commitment to adopt a different and inclusive approach for Inuit and all aboriginal peoples.

Until today, we have often found ourselves working in what many here may call a vacuum, or what I refer to as an “uukkarujjaujuq”. That’s the term we use when we are hunting at the floe

edge. You may have had great success, with plenty of seal, whale or walrus and you're returning home. Then you realize you have been "uukkarujjaujuq" - cut off from firm ground by open water and you can't cross.

Our relationship with the federal government is something like that. For the past several years I've felt we have been cut off. We've found ourselves moving back and forth, at this political and bureaucratic floe edge, unable to see our land claim settlements fully implemented, or our policy ideas fully considered.

Inuit believe this summit signifies a shift in the winds and tides, and we can see the ice shift providing a bridge towards firm ground.

To renew the relationship, we need an Inuit specific strategy that includes a partnership agreement and an action plan. Our proposal reflects the recommendations of the royal commission on aboriginal peoples and the government of Canada's response called gathering strength.

The department of Indian and northern affairs has not found our proposal acceptable, but has also refused to say in a constructive way what would be acceptable. Today is not the time to complain about past practices but we have to show leadership if we are to move forward.

Inuit remain committed to concluding a partnership agreement. I urge the aboriginal cabinet committee to consider our draft partnership agreement as the foundation framework to achieve Inuit specific programs and policies.

In the political development of the Inuit regions over the past thirty, Inuit have successfully concluded comprehensive land claims agreements with the government of Canada. These are modern treaties, negotiated by the Inuit of Nunavik - northern Québec, Nunavut, and the Inuvialuit of the Northwest Territories. All were ratified by parliament. Inuit of Labrador are soon to vote on their land claims agreement.

These agreements deal with land, natural resources, environment, economic development and self-government. They are key to the relationship between the government of Canada and Inuit. They provide tools, institutions and processes that both Inuit and the government of

Canada can use to improve our economic and social circumstances. But, as the auditor general reported, these agreements are not being implemented to full effect.

Last year Inuit and other aboriginal peoples formed a land claims agreement coalition to encourage the government of Canada to adopt a formal policy on claims implementation. I am taking this opportunity to bring the coalition's materials to your attention and to express ITK's support.

Our land claims agreements are extensive and historic, but they do not absolve the government of Canada of its political and jurisdictional responsibilities to Inuit for matters such health, housing and education. Nor do they remove responsibilities for delivering government services.

No discussion about the place of Inuit in Canada can be complete without examining the efforts Inuit have made to address issues in an international context.

Inuit communities are not isolated. Industrialized pollutants from all parts of the globe are carried by winds and ocean currents to the Polar Regions. And they find their way into the food chain and onto our dinner tables. These contaminants pose a real threat, particularly to the health of women and children.

Inuit are already seeing adverse effects from climate change. Our homelands are being visibly altered. In 50 years - within the lifetime of my grandchildren - depletion of summer sea-ice will cause the decline and displacement, perhaps even disappearance, of polar bears, walrus, and some species of seals. Let me be very frank; climate change will threaten the very existence of Inuit as a hunting society.

The Inuit circumpolar conference, representing the Inuit from across arctic countries, chaired by Sheila Watt-Cloutier, has been instrumental in confronting environmental and sustainable development issues. This has included the creation of a northern foreign policy for Canada.

Inuit can add tremendous value to Canada's international efforts. As we all saw last week, Inuit rangers were instrumental in conducting Canada's longest ever sovereignty patrol to Elsmere Island. Who better than Inuit to stand-up for Canada's sovereignty over the Northwest Passage? Inuit are also well positioned to persuade others to live up to the Kyoto protocol and to negotiate additional international agreements to reduce greenhouse gases.

Canada has embraced a northern dimension in its foreign policy, but has yet to develop a clear domestic arctic Inuit policy. That is what we are talking about here.

Only an integrated and Inuit specific approach will address the social and economic conditions that place Inuit at the extremes of statistic Canada's indicators: highest rates of unemployment, lowest income, highest cost of living, worst housing conditions, highest rates of communicable diseases, and shortest life expectancy.

These painful social statistics result from poor and overcrowded housing, an education system that fails its students, health care that doesn't reach the sick in a timely way, and chronic unemployment.

These are the difficult issues that we and Pauktuutit struggles with every day. Inuit have played their part in developing their economies by creating jobs through land claim corporations. But we cannot solve these social issues alone.

As evidenced in the speech from the throne and its agenda for this meeting, health, housing, education and employment are among the federal government's aboriginal priorities. The

speech from the throne also referred to a national oceans strategy and a northern economic development strategy.

There is a direct connection between an ocean strategy and the critical economic, environmental and health issues facing Inuit. The ocean strategy needs an “Inuit specific” approach.

In addition, a northern economic development strategy must acknowledge the value and potential of broadband. The new broadband technology is as important to the Inuit, as the CPR and St. Lawrence Seaway were to southern Canada.

In summary, prime minister, Inuit welcome your commitment to do business differently. A new partnership with Inuit and aboriginal peoples is long overdue. We must begin by examining our proposed partnership agreement to establish an Inuit specific approach to the complex socio economic issues that face our communities.

As I said at the beginning, Inuit have embraced Canada as our “Ninguak”. Your commitments indicate you are equally willing to embrace us.

All of us should remember the recent visit of mr. Kofi annan, the secretary general of the united nations, and the resounding ovation he received when he said canada is a shining example to the whole world for its commitment to multi-culturalism.

Prime minister, i know you agree with me, that we cannot be a truly multicultural society if we insist on a melting pot for aboriginal peoples.

I invite you to demonstrate your determination to live up to secretary annan's gracious assessment of canada by taking concrete steps on the proposal inuit have submitted to you.

Qujannamiik.

Thank you.

Merci

# **A PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT**

***BETWEEN***  
**THE INUIT OF CANADA**  
***AS REPRESENTED BY***  
**INUIT TAPIIRIT KANATAMI,**

***AND***

**HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN**  
**IN RIGHT OF CANADA,**  
***AS REPRESENTED BY***  
**THE PRIME MINISTER OF CANADA**

***AND***

**THE MINISTER OF INDIAN AFFAIRS AND**  
**NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT**

*WHEREAS Inuit are an indigenous people of the circumpolar world;*

*and WHEREAS Canada is a democratic, federal state, belonging to the international community of states and governed by the rule of law;*

*and WHEREAS Canadian Inuit live in Labrador, Nunavik, Nunavut, the Inuvialuit Settlement Region and many centres in southern Canada;*

*and WHEREAS Canadian Inuit from Labrador are represented by the Labrador Inuit Association, from Nunavik are represented by Makivik Corporation, from Nunavut are represented by Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, and from the Inuvialuit Settlement Region are represented by the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation and these four organizations together form Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami;*

*and WHEREAS Inuit are an Aboriginal People of Canada, recognized as such by the Constitution of Canada;*



*and WHEREAS a variety of factors --- including unique geography, language, culture, history, law and politics --- have contributed, and continue to contribute, to the status of Inuit as an Aboriginal People of Canada, possessing distinct strengths, pursuing distinct aspirations, and facing distinct challenges;*

*and WHEREAS the status of Inuit as an Aboriginal People of Canada must find appropriate expression in two, mutually reinforcing, ways:*

*legal rights, obligations and jurisdictions, including rights, obligations and jurisdictions derived from aboriginal use and occupation of lands and waters, from land claims agreements, from Constitutional texts, and from other sources, including relevant international law --- that combine to anchor the unique place of Inuit within the Canadian legal order, and*

*political undertakings exchanged between representatives of Inuit and the federal and, where appropriate, provincial and territorial governments, and intended to define relations between Inuit and other Canadians in ways that are respectful, productive, and dynamic, and that lead to focused and pragmatic policy making and decisions;*

*and WHEREAS political undertakings in relation to various topics can best be pursued in the context of a partnership agreement that*

*identifies principles, objectives, and activity areas, and*

*establishes an initial Action Plan for the purpose of achieving tangible progress on matters of shared priority and contemplates a process for the periodic renewal of that Plan;*

*and IN RECOGNITION of*

*the contributions of Inuit to Canada's history, identity, national unity and sovereignty in the Arctic,*

*the commitment of Inuit to the principles for which Canada and its Constitution stand, including the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and*

*the spirit of faith, optimism and determination with which Inuit view the future;*

**NOW, THEREFORE, THE INUIT OF CANADA, AS REPRESENTED BY INUIT TAPIIRIT KANATAMI, AND HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN IN RIGHT OF CANADA, AS REPRESENTED BY THE PRIME MINISTER OF CANADA AND THE MINISTER OF INDIAN AFFAIRS AND NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT, AGREE AS FOLLOWS:**

## Principles

*This Partnership Agreement is based on the following principles:*

1. Inuit have constituted, do constitute, and will constitute, an identifiable people within a broader Canadian society.
2. Inuit have a right to self-government in Canada.
3. Without detracting from the Inuit right to self-government within Canada, the Parliament of Canada has the legislative authority to make laws in relation to Inuit.
4. Canadian federalism, and Canadian political values, can be sufficiently flexible, creative, and generous to reconcile Inuit rights, identity and aspirations with the privileges and responsibilities that attach to a common Canadian citizenship.
5. The demographics and socio-economic dynamics of Inuit regions and Inuit communities must be candidly and realistically taken into account in the design of governmental institutions and in the design and delivery of programs and services aimed at serving Inuit.
6. Institutions and organizations representing Inuit must be provided with the resources to maintain core representational, policy making and administrative capacity and such resources must, at a minimum, be comparable with those provided to Canadian First Nations adjusted to recognize the unique geographic, cultural and historical circumstances of Inuit.
7. In the design of effective governmental institutions and in the delivery of programs and services aimed at serving Inuit, the following factors must be given appropriate attention and weight:
  - the representative roles of Inuit institutions and organizations
  - the need for Inuit to make practical use of programs and services, keeping in mind that many existing programs and services have been designed primarily for members of First Nations on reserve and there is an accompanying lack of Inuit-specific programs and services
  - the need for Inuit consent prior to the delegation of administrative responsibilities to non-Inuit structures
  - the social, cultural and economic circumstances of Inuit in comparison with other Canadians, particularly other Canadians living in Inuit regions and communities
  - differences among Inuit regions and communities, the needs of component

parts of the Inuit population-- for example, men and women, elders and youth, persons with disabilities -- and the existence of significant numbers of Inuit in urban centres outside the Arctic

- the need for a solid economic base, and physical, financial and communications infrastructure to support programs and services and to assist governmental institutions
  - the need for appropriate care and accountability in the use of public funds, and
  - the potential benefits to be derived from broad-based reform.
8. A constructive partnership of the kind contemplated in this Partnership Agreement requires a consistently high level of government and Inuit commitment to:
- discussions and decisions rooted in objective facts and analysis
  - the central role to be played by informed and inclusive participation by Inuit in decisions affecting Inuit rights and interests, and
  - defining an active role for Inuit in decisions with respect to broader issues affecting Inuit as citizens of Canada.

## **Objectives**

*This Partnership Agreement has the following longer-term and shorter-term objectives:*

### *Longer -Term*

1. To identify and resolve issues of common concern to Inuit and the Government of Canada through a partnership based on mutual respect, recognition, responsibility and sharing;
2. To nurture and maintain self-sufficient, healthy, culturally vital and secure Inuit communities and to improve the social and economic conditions of all Inuit accordingly;
3. To facilitate Inuit contributions to the betterment of Canada and the stewardship of the circumpolar world; and,
4. To increase public awareness and understanding of the Inuit as a distinct, unified and dynamic people.

### *Shorter-Term*

1. To examine the relationship between the Inuit and the Government of Canada in the context of recent advancements in land claims and governance;
2. To design appropriate institutions and organizations, structures and processes to support an effective and ongoing partnership between the Inuit and the Government of Canada;
3. To strengthen the core representational policy making and administrative capacity of Inuit institutions and organizations;
4. To enhance the capacity of Inuit institutions to participate in the development and implementation of public policies;
5. To develop meaningful and effective mechanisms to ensure full Inuit participation in decisions that affect their rights and interests;
6. To develop and deliver policies, programs and services that are responsive to the specific needs and priorities of Inuit; and,
7. To support the Inuit-specific research needed for policy and program development and implementation.

## **Theme Areas**

*This Partnership Agreement seeks to make concrete progress in the following three theme areas*

### **I. Organizing and Sustaining the Partnership**

This theme area involves finding the best structures, both shared and separate, and defining the best rules, for getting work done. It also involves ensuring that Inuit participate fully in decisions that affect them and that Inuit institutions and organizations have the capacity required to carry out their responsibilities. Moving forward may require, in the inspired words employed by an Inuk leader during Constitutional reform talks “constructive damage to the status quo”.

### **II. Generating Wealth and Improving Living Conditions**

This theme area involves finding ways to improve the economic and social circumstances of the Inuit, with a particular view to securing a greater measure of economic self-reliance, a more balanced combination of public sector and private sector activity in Inuit regions and communities, and designing public sector programs and services, comparable to those enjoyed by other Canadians, to meet the distinctive needs of the Inuit.

### **III. Reaching Out**

This theme area involves supporting ongoing efforts to assist Inuit in dealing effectively with international challenges and in taking advantage of global opportunities. Both problems (for example, global /trans-boundary climate change, long range transport of atmospheric pollution, ozone depletion) and opportunities (for example, trade in arctic products, including marine mammal products and Inuit assistance to aboriginal peoples in other parts of the globe) are rapidly evolving in their dimensions, complexity and implications. This theme area will explore ways for governments and Inuit, in active and creative partnership, to tackle challenges and seize opportunities.

## **Action Plan**

*1. An Action Plan designed to achieve tangible progress on matters of shared priority will be negotiated in the period between signature of this Partnership Agreement and March 31, 2000 and will be appended to this agreement.*

*2. It is intended that the initial Action Plan will be replaced by further Action Plans corresponding to two-year periods succeeding the elapse of the first Action Plan.*

*3. The achievement of results under Action Plans will be monitored through*

- semi-annual meetings of the President of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami with the Prime Minister and the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development;*
- the creation of a Standing Committee headed by four senior officials, two appointed by the President of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, one appointed by the Prime Minister and one by the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development;*
- as directed by the Standing Committee, such working groups, special project teams, and other initiatives as may contribute to achieving success*
- --- in this regard the participation of outside professional and academic expertise is likely to be desirable in many areas; and,*
- the Standing Committee will meet annually with the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami Board of Directors and appropriate members of Cabinet.*

**FOR HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN IN RIGHT OF CANADA**

**On behalf of the Government of Canada**

---

**The Prime Minister of Canada**

---

**The Minister of Indian Affairs and  
Northern Development**

**FOR THE INUIT OF CANADA**

**On behalf of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami**

---

**President  
Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami**

---

**President  
Inuvialuit Regional Corporation**

---

**President  
Labrador Inuit Association**

---

**President  
Makivik Corporation**

---

**President  
Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated**

# **The Case for Inuit Specific:**

## **Renewing the Relationship Between the Inuit and Government of Canada**



**ᐃᓄᐃᑦ ᑕᐱᓃᑦ ᑲᓇᑕᑦ**  
**INUIT TAPIRIIT KANATAMI**

**Report Prepared by Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami**

**April 19, 2004**

**Ottawa, Canada**



# **"The Case for Inuit Specific"**

## **Renewing the Relationship Between the Inuit and the Government of Canada.**

### **Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami**

At a recent meeting with the President of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, the Metis National Council and the National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, the Prime Minister of Canada said that the current system of delivering programs and addressing the social and economic challenges facing Aboriginal Peoples across Canada is "broken" and needs to be "redefined".

Inuit agree with the Prime Minister's assessment that many federal programs designed for our benefit are often ineffective, poorly co-ordinated, and inadequately targeted. These problems are compounded by the absence of a framework to ensure accountability to Inuit and, in cases, program underfunding. From the Inuit perspective, the system will remain broken until the Government of Canada embraces Inuit specific policies and programs and agrees to fully implement Inuit comprehensive Land Claim Agreements.

As a first step, and as a matter of priority, there is a need to negotiate an overall partnership agreement to develop integrated, Inuit specific, policies and programs. Such an agreement would establish the agenda, timetable, and process for overall approach. Sub-agreements on distinct policy and program areas such as housing, education, an health, would follow. The Cabinet Committee on Aboriginal Affairs might usefully authorize and oversee negotiations with Inuit to further develop a partnership agreement and the subsidiary agreements that would follow.

Attached to this document is a draft Partnership Agreement developed by ITK, The Inuit Circumpolar Conference Canada, and the regional Inuit organizations in 2000. This draft Agreement and the Inuit specific approach it promotes was too broad to be fully considered under government policies of the day. However, in light of the Prime Minister's remarks and commitment to renew the relationship between the Government of Canada and Aboriginal Peoples, Inuit believe the Partnership Agreement is not only consistent with current initiatives, but that it is imperative as a foundation to repairing a broken system.

ITK is optimistic that the relationship between Inuit and the Government of Canada can be refocused through the new Cabinet Committee structure, and suggests the attached Partnership Accord be considered for immediate consideration.

## **Current Relationship between Inuit and The Government of Canada**

In the political development of the Inuit regions over the past thirty or more years, Inuit have often focused on public Government. This is clearly reflected in varying degrees in Nunavut, the Northwest Territories, Quebec (Nunavik) and Labrador (Nunatsiavut). This choice determined that Inuit would be taxpaying Canadians who see themselves as "more than First Canadians, but also Canadians First". This does not mean that we have absolved the Federal Government of its fiduciary responsibilities in areas such as health, housing, education, economic development, environmental issues, or aboriginal rights.

Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami is mandated is to advocate on behalf of Inuit, to promote opportunities that will allow Inuit to obtain a standard of living comparable to other Canadians, all the while safeguarding our identity, language and culture.

The Prime Minister characterizes Aboriginal living conditions as "shameful and intolerable". While it would not be useful to conduct an exhaustive examination of past and current practices, it is helpful to provide some context in order to support discussions on new approaches.

Increasingly, Inuit have witnessed the Federal Government moving towards a narrow aboriginal policy under the umbrella of "First Nations on Reserve". In fact, within the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC), there is not a single division, or directorate, or for that matter, a senior public servant, with sole responsibility for Inuit.

What is more, the annual spending estimates from DIAND do not identify actual amounts of money spent on Inuit programs, but rather present department spending under the term "First Nations and Inuit Programs". This suggests Inuit spending is equitable with First Nations, which is at the best inaccurate and at worse misleading.

For some considerable time now Inuit in Canada have been demanding that the Government recognize the Aboriginal realities in Canada, by changing the name of the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, to reflect its responsibilities to all indigenous peoples in Canada.

## **Role of Inuit Land Claim Agreements**

There is also within the Federal Government, the misleading view that, with the ratification of land claim agreements, and the creation of Nunavut, Inuit issues "have been dealt with". This view also distorts the Inuit presence in Canada, which is made up of four regions: Labrador (Nunatsiavut), Northern Quebec (Nunavik), Nunavut, and the Inuvialuit Settlement Region in the Northwest Territories. Many forget that half of the Inuit population lives in regions outside of Nunavut.

Following many years of negotiation, Inuit of Nunavik (Northern Quebec), the Inuvialuit Settlement Region, and Nunavut signed comprehensive land claims agreements - modern treaties - with the Government of Canada. All were ratified by Parliament. Inuit of Labrador (Nunatsiavut) are soon to vote on their land claims agreement.

Dealing with land, natural resources, environment, economic development, and sometimes aspects of self-government, these agreements and the constitutionally protected rights they define are the key to the relationship between the Government of Canada and Inuit. They provide tools, institutions and processes that both Inuit and the Government of Canada can use to improve our economic and social circumstances.

As Inuit organizations have known for some time, and as stressed in the recent report of the Auditor General, these agreements are not being used to full effect. Standing in the way is a minimalist interpretation of agreements taken by the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, and widespread ignorance on the part of other federal departments and agencies as to their meaning, intent, and utility.

Aboriginal Peoples from across Canada, including Inuit organizations that have signed land claims agreements, recently formed a Land Claims Agreement Coalition (LCAC) to encourage the Government of Canada to adopt a new implement policy for these important documents. The Coalition wrote to the Prime Minister on March 24, proposing the Cabinet Committee on Aboriginal Affairs oversee a co-operative process based on the draft the policy paper, which is attached. ITK supports this initiative and has asked the Prime Minister for an early response.

While land claims agreements are highly important, they don't deal with the complete range of social, cultural, and economic issues facing Inuit. Notwithstanding these agreements, Inuit continue to be placed at the extreme of national social indicators: highest rates of unemployment, lowest income, highest cost of living, worst housing conditions, highest rates of communicable diseases, and shortest life expectancy.

Fundamentally, the Land Claims Agreements are vehicles for Inuit to utilize their lands, financial resources, and benefits, to realize their full potential, both collectively and as individuals. In terms of developing the resources of the Arctic, the Land Claims Organizations are well placed within their respective regions to play a vital role in the development of the north's resources. However, their effectiveness could be greatly augmented through the development of Inuit specific policies and programs.

### **An Inclusive Approach**

It is ITK's view that only an integrated policy approach for Inuit specific issues will begin to address the complexity of inter-related social and economic conditions which saddle Inuit with some of the worst social Indicators in the country, including high

unemployment, low income, poor housing conditions, high rates of communicable diseases, and short life expectancy.

Much of this painful social statistic can be tied to poor and overcrowded housing, an education system that fails its students, health care that doesn't reach the sick in a timely way, and chronic unemployment. All these problems are inter-related as this assessment attempts to point out. However, if government continues to address these matters individually, it is not reasonable to expect significant improvements. That is why ITK is encouraged by the creation of a special Cabinet committee on Aboriginal Affairs. Within that committee, ITK recommends that a Sub-Committee be formed to examine the priorities described below, in the context of overall Inuit Specific Social and Economic Development Strategy.

## **Critical Social Economic Factors**

### ***Housing:***

The root of many of the social issues facing Inuit, are directly related to an acute shortage of housing. ITK sees a housing initiative as a key element in an overall Inuit Specific integrated social economic policy approach.

In fact every examination of the social needs of the Arctic has identified housing as a priority. Certainly there would be no lasting social economic benefits if the Government of Canada were to announce a new housing program with the single purpose of increasing the number of houses. This would be a throw back to earlier failed programs, where the "housing starts" were in the communities, but the economic and other benefits were far outside the Inuit communities, usually in southern Canada or the Territorial capitals. ITK advocates that an Inuit Specific housing initiative must include Inuit training programs, procurement and employment opportunities, and home ownership for low income Inuit. ITK does not see itself delivering any of these programs. Our land claim organizations and regional institutions are well positioned to work in partnership with Governments at all levels in developing the appropriate regional strategies and delivery programs.

### ***Education:***

In Inuit Communities the issue is not a lack of education opportunities. Territorial Governments and Land Claims organizations offer generous assistance for Inuit students who want to pursue post secondary education. Our challenge remains the unacceptable dropout rate. Fully 59% of Inuit in their early 20s have not finished high school. While part of this problem is related to overcrowded housing, there are also more complex cultural and environmental issues at work. The Throne Speech contained a commitment to improve early childhood development programs. It is vital that this initiative be considered in the context of an Inuit Specific socio-economic strategy.

The solutions may lie within our own communities. In consultation and partnership with Inuit organizations, regional and local school authorities, the federal government, territorial or provincial governments, there is a need to initiate a major examination the northern education systems, with emphasis on the drop out rate and the overall quality of education.

### ***Training:***

On training matters ITK has worked with four federal government employment training initiatives, including the Aboriginal Human Resources Development Strategy. This program is useful as it empowers Inuit at the local level to prioritize and fund training proposals. However, many other programs are unsuited to the Inuit and northern reality insofar as they encourage major national employers (from forestry plants to industrial manufacturers) to train and hire Aboriginal People. Generally, these programs are not relevant to Inuit who are not predisposed to leave their regions to take up jobs in manufacturing plants thousands of kilometers away. There is a great need for Inuit Specific human resources development and placement programs, in conjunction with long term plans for economic development, including the development of natural resources of the Arctic.

It should be noted that Inuit Land Claim Agreements have many training and employment provisions that are not being fulfilled. Research has confirmed that failure to address employment and provisions of the Nunavut claim alone, means an annual loss of 120 million dollars to Inuit in terms of lost wages and an unnecessary annual cost to Canadian taxpayers of 65 million dollars a year to pay for a largely fly-in bureaucracy.

There is a clear and unique paradox in Inuit regions in relation to education and unemployment. Overall unemployment rates among Inuit are far above the national average. Yet in Inuit regions, job opportunities abound, and are generally filled by other Canadians or immigrants, because Inuit cannot meet the job qualifications. The Government of Nunavut cannot meet its own objective of a workforce that reflects the population at large. Educated Inuit, regardless of age, but particularly those finishing post-secondary education, have a wide selection of job opportunities. There are, however, few jobs in small communities in the context of overall integrated policies.

### ***Employment and Economic Development***

Employment and economic development in aboriginal communities are high priorities. Within Federal, Territorial and Provincial governments there is complex web of various economic development initiatives and employment programs. All operate in the absence of any clearly defined plan or economic development strategy.

Add to this, the commitments in the Throne Speech for a Northern Economic Development, and an Oceans Strategy. The northern political leadership at all levels applauded the announcement as a positive, albeit long overdue, commitment. What is missing is any clear framework on the parameters of the strategies.

Inuit believe that these proposed initiatives must be part of an overall integrated approach and which includes Inuit specific policies and programs in relation to housing, employment, training and education needs of Inuit.

Moreover, there should be discussion with Land Claim Organizations on their participation and investment in future northern development.

### ***Environment***

There are direct links between environmental issues and other northern priority challenges, including economic development and health.

There is a direct and proven link between human health and the natural environment. The world's industrial pollutants, carried by wind and water, are now deposited deep into the Arctic ecosystem and food chain. These "contaminants" are now key factors affecting the health of Inuit.

There is no single issue in which the relationship between Inuit and the Government of Canada has been as productive and relevant as the co-management and research issues associated with the Northern Contaminants Program. Through this program, Inuit and a broad base of government departments and agencies have pooled resources, expertise and commitment to understand and react to the growing threat of trans-boundary pollution on the Arctic marine life and Inuit who depend on the sea and wildlife for their food.

The success of this program should be evaluated as a "Best Practice" for addressing Inuit Specific issues in an integrated way. In particular, the Northern Contaminants Program model can and should be transferred to an Arctic Climate Change program.

These two environmental issues also have a direct connection between with the proposed national Ocean Strategy outlined in the Throne Speech. ITK recommends an Ocean Strategy should be a national priority and must also put particular emphasis on the Arctic Ocean, which has more coastline than the Atlantic and Pacific combined.

An Ocean Strategy clearly needs an Inuit perspective, or "Inuit Specific" approach. We are a coastal people. All but three of our communities in Canada are coastal settlements. An ocean strategy should examine potential economic opportunities for small coastal settlements. Marine research in the Arctic regions remains woefully

inadequate. Canada has yet to establish a year-round Arctic Marine Research station. The result of Climate Change, already a factor in many northern communities, will have dramatic impact on the Arctic Ocean, not only in terms of marine life, but also on ice cover, accessibility and an increase in shipping.

### ***Health***

Statistics Canada has recently completed a survey of Aboriginal Peoples that paints a troubling picture of northern health. For Inuit, life expectancy is ten years shorter than southern Canada. Suicide among youth is eight times higher than southern Canada and Tuberculosis is an astonishing 17 times higher than in the south.

In spite of its efforts and some success, Health Canada continues to fight the dual challenge of attempting to address both First Nations and Inuit health issues at the same time, and under the same umbrella.

ITK believes the current FNIHB programs should be realigned into an Inuit specific Health Branch with a clear focus on unique health challenges facing Inuit.

Unlike First Nations that advocate for greater control over health delivery, Inuit often rely on the public government system. Inuit concerns are more related to practical matters of whether the funding is adequate, given the extreme geographic challenges confronting northern health. Another concern is ensuring the money earmarked for Inuit addresses Inuit priorities, for example, while suicide rates in northern communities among young people are eight times the national average programs to address mental health issues are woefully inadequate.

Most important, the health conditions of Inuit have a direct relationship to overall economic and social policy. The extremely high rates of tuberculosis and chronic respiratory illness in small children are directly related to inadequate and overcrowded housing.

### ***Information and Communication Technology***

In terms of developing an overarching social and economic strategy for Inuit and Northern regions, the value and potential of information and communication technology (ICT) must be considered.

For Inuit, information and communication technology is as important to the Arctic as the CPR and the St. Lawrence Seaway was to developing southern Canada.

The positive impact this technology can play in terms of adding value to Health care (including diagnosis), education and training (including distance learning) and economic development (tele-work, and consulting) is enormous.

No new major government initiatives or programs should be implemented without considering implementing a technological component.

What is more, in terms of economic development and job creation, education and training, ICT will offer tremendous payoffs. Such an initiative cannot be effectively implemented without a clear federal commitment, as a matter of public policy, to deliver blanket broadband connectivity to all communities in northern Canada in the same context that satellite service brought radio, television, and telephone service to all northern communities in the 1970s.

Currently, there are several emerging government sponsored programs and initiatives aimed at delivering Internet technology to northern regions, including the Aboriginal Canada Portal (ACP), and Crossing Boundaries. Both are well positioned to deliver an analysis on the positive impact ICT can have on health, education, and economic development initiatives.

In relation to ICT matters, it is not enough to "think outside the box", in terms of Arctic or Inuit ICT matters, we have yet to build the box.

## **Conclusion**

It is hoped that by setting out the complexity of the socio economic issues facing Inuit in Canada, this document adds weight and context to the need to develop to Inuit specific policies and programs.

It is clear that a new partnership with Inuit is long overdue. A new partnership was the major recommendation of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. The response of Government of Canada to these recommendations included an Inuit Action plan to examine and act on many of the priorities and challenges outlined above remains unfulfilled.

If the Government of Canada is to deliver on its fiduciary responsibilities to Inuit, and meet the broad objectives and legal obligations under the Land Claim Agreements, it must do so in the context of an overall Inuit Specific approach. Negotiating a Partnership Agreement for this purpose is an essential first step.



# Backgrounder on Inuit Health

For Discussion at Health Sectoral Meeting,  
November 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>, 2004, Ottawa, Ontario



ᐃᐅᐃᑦ ᑕᐱᑎᑦ ᑲᐱᑕᑦ  
INUIT TAPIIRIT KANATAMI

Prepared by Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami

October 20, 2004

Ottawa, Canada

# **Backgrounder on Inuit Health**

## **Table of Contents**

<b>Section</b>	<b>Page</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Current Delivery Systems and Jurisdiction</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Access and Capacity</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Health Determinants</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>12</b>

# Backgrounder on Inuit Health

## Introduction

Numerous reports commissioned in the last several decades have called attention to the gap between the health status of Aboriginal Canadians and that of non-Aboriginal Canadians and made concrete recommendations for fundamental change to reduce these inequities. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples and, more recently, Romanow and Kirby also highlighted the need for changes to the current health system in Aboriginal communities. Current work on the policy process must not proceed in isolation of these recommendations.

As one of Canada's Aboriginal peoples, Inuit deal with unique realities in health care delivery. The history, geography, culture and political structures of Inuit regions demand innovative responses. Inuit want to work with federal, provincial/territorial governments, non-government delivery agents and with other Inuit to share knowledge and resources. For many years, Inuit have advocated Inuit-specific initiatives. "Inuit-specific" refers to planning, policies, programs and services, developed with meaningful participation of Inuit organizations to reflect Inuit realities. Inuit strongly believe that, by addressing challenges posed by current delivery systems and jurisdiction, limited access and capacity, and non-medical determinants of health, we can overcome the sustainability challenges of the current system. Thus, sustainability is not treated as a separate topic in this document.

Recent decisions by the federal government, such as the development of an Inuit Secretariat within the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, and the commitment to Inuit-specific approaches in the implementation of the newly announced seven hundred million dollars for Aboriginal health care, have provided Inuit with hope for positive change in future. Concrete change requires the involvement of Inuit in the process of implementing these commitments.

Inuit have a distinct culture, language and strong values of self-sufficiency, resilience and adaptability. Inuit have knowledge and practices to protect and preserve their own health and recognize that the total environment influences health and well-being. Since the 1950's, Canadian Inuit have experienced significant change, both positive and negative, as a result of federal government actions taken to respond to outbreaks of starvation and infectious disease in some regions of the Arctic, and to protect Canadian sovereignty in the Arctic. Inuit are a culture in transition, actively engaged to protect and preserve tradition while adapting tools of the modern world to their own uses.

The Inuit population is young and growing at twice the rate of the general Canadian population. The Inuit population is expected to reach more than 60,000 by 2016. In 2001, the median age in Canada was 37.6 years; for Inuit, it was 20.6 years. More than 57% of Inuit are under 25 years of age.<sup>1</sup> This "generational divide" illustrates how programs aimed at the Canadian general population may not be relevant to the Inuit general population.

---

<sup>1</sup> 2001 Census, Statistics Canada

## Backgrounder on Inuit Health

While national health data for Inuit is severely limited, some of the available regional data provides a rough sketch of the health of Canadian Inuit.

- Life expectancy for Inuit men is 16 years less than the Canadian average and 10 years less than other Aboriginal men<sup>2</sup>
- Accidental death rates in the two largest Inuit regions are nearly three times the Canadian average
- Suicide is reported at more than six times the national average
- In Nunavik, the TB rate for children 0-5 for 1996-2001 was 40, compared to a rate of 2 for all of Quebec.<sup>3</sup>
- In 2000, according to the Canadian Institute of Cancer, lung cancer rates in some Inuit regions were 60% higher than the national average.
- Inuit babies are being negatively impacted by the PCB's and mercury found in their country foods taken from the environment.
- Inuit community health and safety is being negatively impacted by climate change.

*Romanow describes the health impacts of living in the far north:*

*"... geography is a determinant of health. ... Access to health care also is a problem, not only because of distances, but because these communities struggle to attract and keep nurses, doctors and other health care providers.... let alone accessing diagnostic services and other more advanced treatments.... facilities are limited and in serious need of upgrading. (People must)... travel in order to access the care they need. This often means days or weeks away from family and social support as well as the added cost of accommodation and meals."*<sup>4</sup>

Issues arising from current delivery systems and jurisdiction for health care, Inuit access and capacity for health care, and determinants of health, all impact Inuit health status. The following sections discuss these issues and identify areas for action.

### Current Delivery Systems and Jurisdiction

#### Federal Delivery System

Fifty years ago, only the federal government provided health services to Inuit. Now, federal, provincial/territorial, and other agencies, through a variety of delivery methods, provide health services to Inuit. The results: uncoordinated, "stove-piped" programs, gaps and duplications, high costs, and heavy administrative burdens.

"A 1974 ministerial policy statement describes federal responsibility for Aboriginal health issues as voluntary... This continues to be the position of the federal government."<sup>5</sup> Inuit

---

<sup>2</sup> Archibald and Grey: Evaluation of Models of Health Care Delivery in Inuit Regions; Sep 2000

<sup>3</sup> "Our Children: Health Status of Children Aged 0-5 Years in Nunavik"; Nunavik Regional Board of Health and Social Services, 2003

<sup>4</sup> Building on Values, The Future of Health Care in Canada, Chapter 7, pp 159-160; 2003

<sup>5</sup> Building on Values, The Future of Health Care in Canada, Chapter 10, p 212.

## **Backgrounder on Inuit Health**

view federal health programs as an aboriginal right and believe the federal government has a fiduciary role in health care services and programs.

Most federal health care programs for Inuit are funded through the First Nations and Inuit Health Branch (FNIHB) of Health Canada. From FNIHB Inuit receive Non Insured Health Benefits (dental, drug, vision, crisis mental health services, medical equipment and supplies and medical transportation benefits not available through provincial or territorial systems); and targeted community-based public health and health promotion programs including the Aboriginal Diabetes Initiative, Home and Community Care, Building Healthy Communities and Brighter Futures, to name a few.

The Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB) program, one of the highest federal expenditures, is administered in some regions by First Canadian Health, which does not separate Inuit expenditures. It is therefore difficult to analyze the effectiveness of this funding for Inuit.

Inuit are served by three separate regions of FNIHB: Atlantic Region for Labrador (Nunatsiavut); Quebec Region for Nunavik; and Northern Secretariat for NWT and Nunavut. These regions are responsible for both First Nations and Inuit but the focus is on First Nations. Priorities identified by Inuit may go unaddressed.

Other federal departments provide funding which impacts Inuit health, such as Aboriginal Head Start, Childcare Initiatives and the Northern Contaminants Program. Inuit have requested the review and adjustment of Federal policies, programs and initiatives to ensure they respond to Inuit needs and are consistently available to all Inuit in Canada.

### Provincial and Territorial Delivery Systems

#### **The Northwest Territories and Nunavut Territory:**

In 1988 the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) and in 1999, the Government of Nunavut (GN) made Transfer Agreements with the federal government, accepting responsibility for health care services to all residents, including most programs targeted to Inuit and First Nations. The agreements specify that they do not prejudice Aboriginal rights to receive insured health services or benefit from policies and programs enjoyed by Aboriginal peoples elsewhere in Canada.

Inuvialuit receive health care services through regional boards established by the GNWT. Inuvik has a hospital; other communities have health centres. Travel outside individual's home community or region is required for many health care services and treatments.

Inuit in Nunavut receive health care services through a centralized system that serves all residents. There is a hospital in Iqaluit and a birthing centre in Rankin Inlet. Two Regional Health Centres will soon open in Rankin Inlet and Cambridge Bay. All communities have nurses; most have a Community Health Representative (CHR). Travel outside the home community or region is still required for many health care services and treatments.

## **Backgrounder on Inuit Health**

### **The Province of Québec (Nunavik):**

Inuit in Nunavik receive health care services through the Nunavik Regional Board of Health and Social Services. The Board, which is governed by Inuit, was established under the James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement. Health care funds, provincial and some federal, flow from the Québec government to the Board. Other federal funding goes directly to the Board through contribution agreements. The Board employs all health care staff with the exception of CHR's and mental health staff, who are employed by municipalities. Travel outside the home community or region is required for many health care services and treatments.

### **The Province of Newfoundland and Labrador (Nunatsiavut):**

Inuit of Labrador receive primary health care services through the provincial government. The Labrador Inuit Health Commission (LIHC) delivers public health programs. There is a hospital in Happy Valley/Goose Bay and Inuit communities have provincially-employed clinic nurses and nursing assistants as well as some public health staff employed by LIHC. Travel outside individual's home community or region is required for many health care services and treatments.

## **Land Claims Agreements and Roles of Land Claim Organizations**

From the Inuit perspective, health status will improve when comprehensive Land Claim Agreements in the four Inuit Land Claim areas are fully implemented by all levels of government. The roles of Land Claim Organizations, as they relate to health, depend on the terms of their Agreements, and impact:

- The level of authority exercised by Inuit signatories;
- Design of the health delivery system (by creating health and social service boards);
- Roles and responsibilities of all signatories in health care delivery; and
- Mechanisms through which federal and provincial funding is provided.

**The Labrador Inuit Association (LIA):** LIA created the Labrador Inuit Health Commission in 1985 to exercise jurisdiction over a range of health promotion and public health programs. Under the new Land Claim Agreement the Nunatsiavut Government may make laws on education, health, child and family services and income support. Section 17.13.1 of the Agreement lists health programs and services under their control.

**Makivik Corporation:** The James Bay and Northern Quebec Land Claims Agreement (Part 9 Section 15) details the makeup and responsibilities of the Nunavik Regional Board of Health and Social Services, which governs administration of all provincial and federal health services. Under the Agreement, the province must provide special education programs to overcome barriers to Inuit employment.

**Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated (NTI):** Under the Nunavut Land Claim Agreement, Article 32.1.1, Inuit have the right to participate in developing "...social and cultural policies and in the design of social and cultural programs and services..." The Governments of Nunavut and Canada must provide opportunities for such participation to reflect Inuit goals

## Backgrounder on Inuit Health

and objectives in social and cultural programs and services. NTI has identified health as one of the social programs that falls under this Article.

**Inuvialuit:** Under Article 17 of the Inuvialuit Final Agreement, the federal government provides special funding to the Inuvialuit Social Development Program Fund, established to deal with social concerns, including health. Inuvialuit Regional Corporation advocates an Inuit-Specific approach and has been involved in a number of health-related initiatives.

### Areas for Action:

- Implementation of Land Claim Agreements is vital, not only to renew and preserve effective working relationships with government, but to address health in our communities. Inuit in Nunavut and Inuvialuit have the right to participate in design, development and delivery of social programs, including health. Inuit in Labrador and Nunavik have jurisdiction over a range of health services. The Agreements provide tools, institutions and processes for both Inuit and governments to improve economic and social conditions.
- Completion and implementation of a partnership agreement between the federal government and Inuit.
- Inuit have identified the need for a meaningful Inuit Health Policy to promote targeted, culturally appropriate, community and population health based strategies. The policy would be a foundation for an approach to all federal programs and services that address the various determinants of Inuit health. Under an Inuit Health Policy, all health and wellness programs and services would include monitoring, evaluation and communication and ensure respect for the culture and rights of Inuit.
- Review and realignment of all federal departments' regional structures is needed to ensure the appropriate involvement of Inuit.
- Currently governments do not have the capacity to identify and track the use of Inuit-targeted health funds. This must be addressed to provide the information needed to enable all delivery agents and Inuit organizations to evaluate and plan for the future.
- Better coordination between federal, provincial/territorial, Inuit and other health care delivery agents is needed to make the best use of available funding.

## Backgrounder on Inuit Health

### Access and Capacity

Inuit lack access to many programs and services taken for granted by southern Canadians. We have little influence on health policies, programs and services that affect us. Inuit find it hard to trust a health care system that is not inclusive of our culture, language and values. Inuit issues related to accessing current health programs and services arise from geography; program design and funding; capacity and resources; and language and culture.

#### Geography

Geography has a tremendous impact on Inuit health. Inuit may need to travel thousands of kilometers from home for diagnosis and treatment, at very high economic and social costs, both to individuals and the health care system. The remote location and lack of adequate infrastructure makes it difficult to attract and retain health care providers. Health care workers in isolated Inuit communities lack necessary supports such as peer contact in the community or even the region. Training opportunities are limited, due to the cost of travel and the scarcity (and expense) of importing qualified temporary replacements.

#### Program Design and Funding:

Current programs are narrowly focused on specific health issues and do not have the flexibility to respond to influencing factors such as environmental and socioeconomic issues that greatly impact health. This leaves Inuit priorities either unaddressed or under addressed.

There are insufficient mental wellness programs for Inuit, despite epidemic suicide rates. The costs of this situation, both social and economic, are very high. In June of 2003, the ITK Board of Directors resolved that Mental Wellness and Suicide Prevention are the number one Inuit health priority. In September 2004, the Prime Minister announced a National Aboriginal Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy. It is welcomed by Inuit as a first step toward addressing mental wellness in Inuit communities.

Inuit have indicated their desire to share resources and information, but current program design does not allow for this. Program gaps and duplications can result from inability to combine program funding, rigid criteria or inflexible administration. For example, some programs are currently available only to Inuit of Labrador and to First Nations on Reserve, such as the First Nations and Inuit Tuberculosis Elimination Strategy, despite the high rate of tuberculosis in Inuit communities across the Arctic.

Cost of health care delivery in Inuit regions is higher than in southern Canada, but funding formulas rarely address this issue adequately. Federal health funding is calculated, not on the cost of delivery, but on a *per capita* basis, with isolation factors added, which differ from program to program. Allocation of funding often seems inconsistent and ad hoc.

A continuing problem for Inuit is the focus on treating illness rather than addressing areas that would prevent illness and injuries. For example, women who experience violence can seek treatment for injuries but there are few effective supports for preventing violence within the communities. Illnesses may be diagnosed later stages due to a lack of diagnostic or screening processes, which limits Inuit access to timely treatment and prevention. As of



## Backgrounder on Inuit Health

2000, 66.2% of Canadian women aged 50-59 were screened by mammography for breast cancer. In Nunavik (Northern Quebec) only 36% had been screened.<sup>6</sup>

Programs and services designed by Inuit for Inuit are more accessible to Inuit. This was demonstrated by the enthusiastic reception of Pauktuutit's HIV/AIDS prevention activities which have taken place throughout Inuit regions. Most Federal initiatives have taken a pan-Canadian or pan-Aboriginal approach and have not developed Inuit-specific strategies. This impacts the success of these strategies in Inuit communities.

### Capacity and Resources

Inuit health care systems lack Inuit health care workers and face continuous staffing shortages and turnover of non-Inuit health care staff. This places enormous stress on front line health staff and contributes to the focus on illness rather than on prevention and health promotion activities. The time, energy and resources needed for staff to develop an understanding of Inuit culture, language and values are simply not available. High staff turnover rates in Inuit communities do not allow the time needed for Inuit to become comfortable with providing personal information to new people.

Lack of medical interpretation and translation is an issue of capacity for Inuit health care. It is a very specialized skill, requiring standardized programs, which may not exist in all regions. Unilingual Inuit traveling to southern locations for health care have only family members to escort them, who are usually not trained medical interpreters.

Inuit communities lack basic medical equipment, adequate medical facilities and infrastructure for new technologies, and training to use and maintain it.<sup>7</sup> For example, lack of broadband capacity limits Inuit access to tele-health, which has potential to improve health care delivery in remote regions.

The lack of Inuit-specific data and resources for research hampers efforts to gather evidence for planning and program development. Comparable health data for Inuit is not available due to the lack of ethnic and gender identification in statistics. Some health indicators are more important for Inuit, including, for example, maternal/fetal/infant health and tuberculosis rates. In most Inuit regions, only new research projects that respond to community needs and priorities and include local capacity development will now receive approval.

Significant capacity is required to prepare proposals for program funding and reporting on the use of funds, once received. Most Inuit communities lack such capacity and do not have the resources needed to develop and implement strategic plans for community wellness, which limits Inuit access to health promotion activities.

Lack of Inuit representation at the national and regional levels, to influence the design and delivery of programs and services, can maintain current barriers to accessing health care.

---

<sup>6</sup> Review of Health Canada Expenditures to Inuit, 1999-2000 and 2000-2001: Lemchuck-Favel for Health Canada, October 2001

<sup>7</sup> Evaluation of Models of Health Care Delivery in Inuit Regions; ITK, 2000 p.43

## Backgrounder on Inuit Health

### Culture

Inuit have a rich tradition of healing and wellness practices and have maintained their traditional language. Despite the high usage of Inuktitut, the language of health care in Inuit regions is primarily English or French. No regions require health care workers to speak Inuktitut, however, most have developed material to give non-Inuit staff some awareness of common phrases and terms used in the medical setting.

Current health delivery systems are based on western medical models and dominated by non-Inuit. Inuit women have identified the need to feel welcome and equal when attending health clinics as a priority issue.<sup>8</sup> Current systems include very little of Inuit knowledge, culture and values. There are some notable exceptions: birthing centres in Nunavik and Nunavut have done much to integrate contemporary and traditional methods.

### **Areas for Action:**

- Implement Inuit-specific, holistic, community-based strategies for prevention and health promotion as well as for primary health care. Inuit-specific program content will combine Inuit knowledge and culture with contemporary health knowledge.
- Develop and implement strategies based on the Mental Wellness Framework developed by Inuit in 2001 and the Inuit Youth Suicide Prevention Framework developed in 2003.
- Diagnosis, treatment and aftercare components must be present in all health programs and services.
- Resources for new and existing technologies, such as broadband capacity for telehealth and diagnostic equipment, are needed.
- One consistent, cost-of-delivery based federal funding formula would provide a more realistic base for health care delivery in Inuit regions. Multi-year funding from both federal and provincial/territorial governments would facilitate planning, hiring and programming in Inuit regions.
- Health human resource capacity can be improved by developing Inuit capacity for planning, administration, surveillance and service delivery.
- Transitional arrangements, policy change, training, and improvements in the education system are needed to attract young Inuit to health care fields. Information about health careers, role models and health education grounded in both contemporary and traditional knowledge is needed. Recruiting, then retaining health workers requires resources for training, and professional development.

---

<sup>8</sup> Pauktuutit Health Conference, 2001

## Backgrounder on Inuit Health

- Capacity for medical interpretation can be improved with standardized programs to ensure clear translation and interpretation.
- Developing the cultural competencies of health care providers will help to make the health care system more accessible to Inuit.
- Usable and relevant health information in all dialects and in media appropriate to an oral tradition is needed. Inuit-specific data must be collected and analysed and Inuit-specific research must be funded.
- Funding must target community needs and ensure each region and community defines their own health and wellness priorities for research.

### Health Determinants

Inuit take a holistic view of health. Inuit have long known that, to be healthy, we need healthy environments, education and employment opportunities, adequate, safe housing and social supports as well as access to health care systems. Investing resources in eliminating disparities between Inuit and other Canadians will reduce demands on the health care system. “We must arm Inuit with appropriate information to make their own informed decisions.”<sup>9</sup>

### Income and Employment

Income is most closely linked to health status<sup>10</sup>. Low income is the norm in many Inuit communities, since there are so few opportunities for employment. Inuit unemployment in Nunavut was over three times the national rate in 1999<sup>11</sup>, nearly two times higher than the Aboriginal rate<sup>12</sup>. (Note: National Inuit employment data is not available.) When Inuit are employed, their wages are often lower than those of non-Inuit. In 1996 the average income for Inuit in Nunavut was \$16,122, but non-Inuit in the region earned, on average, \$36,574.<sup>13</sup>

### Education

Education refers to learning throughout the life span and includes early childhood development initiatives, primary school, secondary school, post secondary school and job skills training. Access to appropriate education is limited in the North. There is a need to enhance child care infrastructure and early childhood programming. Most Inuit communities now have high schools but drop out rates continue to be higher than the Canadian average.

There is no university in any Inuit region; colleges offer limited programming. Inuit students may be required to take additional high-school level courses to be accepted to post-secondary schooling in southern Canada. Innovative approaches are needed to increase Inuit education

---

<sup>9</sup> Jose Kusugak, in his speech for the Prime Minister’s Aboriginal Summit, April 2004

<sup>10</sup> [The impact of unemployment on health: A review of the evidence](#). Jin RL; Shah CP & Svoboda TJ. Canadian Medical Association Journal, September, 1995, 153(5), p 529-540.

<sup>11</sup> 1999 Nunavut Labour Force Survey, Nunavut Bureau of Statistics

<sup>12</sup> [Strengthening Aboriginal Participation in the Economy](#). The Working Group on Aboriginal Participation in the Economy May 11, 2001

<sup>13</sup> 1996 Census, cited in [Evaluation of Models of Health Care Delivery in Inuit Regions](#) ITK, 2000 p.18

## Backgrounder on Inuit Health

levels. For example, Nasivvik, a partnership between Inuit, the University of Laval and the Canadian Institute for Health Research, is developing processes to support Inuit students interested in further education. Inuit who wish to take courses or training programs must frequently re-locate on a temporary basis.

### Food Security and Environmental Health

Many Inuit health issues are related, either directly or indirectly, to food security and food safety. Inuit have the right to safe and nutritious country foods. However, environmental factors, such as long range transport of contaminants and climate change are damaging the food chain in Inuit regions. Over the last two decades the Northern Contaminants Program has documented alarming levels of persistent organic pollutants, heavy metals, and radionuclides in the air, land, sea, animals and even people of the Arctic. The nutritious “country food” diet of seal and other marine mammals is compromised by the presence of Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs). PCB levels in 2000 in over 60% of Inuit children under age 15 exceed “tolerable levels” set by Health Canada.<sup>14</sup> On average, Inuit women have levels of PCB's in their breast milk 5 to 10 times higher than women in southern Canada.

The affordability of food is a growing problem in Inuit regions. The cost of hunting and fishing has risen for many reasons, including changing migration patterns and the cost of equipment. The alternative “southern” diet of groceries purchased at local stores, costs as much as 50% more than in southern Canada. As well there are issues related to the availability of healthy foods at northern food stores.

### Housing

According to the 2001 Census, 53% of Inuit lived in crowded conditions (1 or more persons per room) versus 7% of all Canadians and 19% of First Nations living on reserve. Many Inuit wait from two to five years, sharing “affordable” but overcrowded social housing with relatives, to be allocated their own housing.<sup>15</sup> “Housing in Rural Non-Market and Remote Communities”, a document produced by NWT, Nunavut, the Yukon and Manitoba, states:

“Social research has shown that crowded housing conditions can limit health, social and educational program development. Higher rates of communicable diseases, elevated personal stress, interpersonal conflicts and family violence can be attributed to poor housing and living conditions. Evidence of these conditions is indicated by higher death and suicide rates, which are linked with higher rates of violent crime and higher levels of alcohol and drug abuse.”

### Social Networks

Inuit networks for social support have become increasingly relevant to Inuit health status. Dramatic changes in the size of Inuit communities once formed of family networks of 20 or so have challenged the effectiveness of Inuit social support networks, as evidenced by the high suicide rates in many communities. Family relationships have changed in the last 50 years, due to changing social conditions and loss of language resulting from close contact with the dominant culture. The removal of children to residential schools has had lasting impacts. These children, now adults, and their families, may be negatively affected by

---

<sup>14</sup> Pauktuutit: Inuit Women's Health, March 2000

<sup>15</sup> Pauktuutit: Inuit Women's Health, March 2000

## **Backgrounder on Inuit Health**

problems arising from the early separation from parents and community and treatment received at the schools. Some family networks have suffered from contact with the justice system, which only recently has begun to include traditional methods of reparation within the community. Grandparents and grandchildren may have difficulty communicating because of language loss. Communities are working to find ways to strengthen social supports to deal with the social ills that have recently arisen, including the high rate of youth suicide.

### **Areas for Action:**

- Strategies to increase employment opportunities and result in equitable income must be developed and implemented. Access to opportunities for lifelong learning must be increased through community based strategies. Governments must work to ensure the quality of education in Inuit regions and develop culturally relevant materials.
- Both national and international commitments to reduce levels of persistent organic pollutants, heavy metals, and radionuclides in Inuit regions are vital to improving Inuit health.
- Strategies which provide Inuit with the tools to minimize and adapt to the impacts of climate change are required.
- Issues impacting food security, including but not limited to the high costs of obtaining country foods and store bought foods, must be addressed
- Inuit need strategies to ensure an adequate supply of affordable housing in Inuit regions, maintain existing housing and ensure new housing is appropriate.
- All policies and programs should include elements to maintain and enhance community and family social supports. Programs and services that meld traditional and mainstream methods must be developed. Inuit need training in all fields that impact health.

## **Backgrounder on Inuit Health**

### **Conclusion**

This document was developed to provide a basis for discussion during the November Aboriginal Roundtable Health Sector meeting. Areas for action are suggestions to be further discussed and developed in collaboration with Inuit and government representatives. Key elements in many of the areas for action are: Inuit specific processes, meaningful Inuit engagement in policy and program development; Land claim implementation and developing Inuit capacity, which will improve Inuit access to health care.

Unlike First Nations, who advocate for greater control over health delivery, Inuit often rely on the public government system. Inuit concerns are more related to practical matters of adequate funding, given the extreme geographic challenges of northern health care delivery, ensuring funds earmarked for Inuit address Inuit priorities and that Inuit are actively engaged in all levels of health care design, delivery and implementation.

Most importantly, the health of Inuit has a direct relationship to overall economic and social policy. This highlights the need for coordinated, innovative approaches, not only to treat the ill but also to address in a holistic manner, the factors contributing to the health status of Inuit.

# **Backgrounder on Inuit and Education**

**For Discussion at Life Long Learning Sectoral Meetings, November 13 and 14<sup>th</sup> in Winnipeg and November 18 and 19<sup>th</sup> in Ottawa**



**ᐃᓄᐃᑦ ᑕᐱᓃᑦ ᑲᓄᑕᑦ**  
**INUIT TAPIRIIT KANATAMI**

**Prepared by Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami**

**October 20, 2004**

**Ottawa, Canada**

## Table of Contents

<b>Section</b>	<b>Page</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Historical Perspective</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Areas of Importance and Areas for Action</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>12</b>



## Introduction

Numerous reports commissioned in the last several decades have called attention to the gap between the educational status of Aboriginal Canadians and that of non-Aboriginal Canadians and made concrete recommendations for fundamental change to reduce these inequities. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples recommended sweeping changes to the way in which territorial, provincial and federal governments deal with Aboriginal people, their land claims and self-government. The target year for substantial positive results for Canada's aboriginal people, including the Inuit, is 2016. The Conclusion of the Commission's report noted that the Canadian government officially attempted by means of formal education since 1920 to "assimilate" aboriginal people, that is, to eradicate aboriginal cultures. The resulting damage done to aboriginal people in the intervening years by such education is still evident today. Inuit did not escape the "assimilation by education" strategy. To ensure that education in Inuit land claims areas does no more damage, does not further erode Inuit cultural identity but does aid in restoring language and culture, strategies must be found to assist Inuit of these areas to devise appropriate education systems in order to prepare Inuit to strengthen themselves, their families and communities.

Recent decisions by the federal government, such as the development of an Inuit Secretariat within the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, and the commitment to Inuit-specific approaches in the implementation of new federal commitments are viewed as positive steps by Inuit.

As one of Canada's Aboriginal peoples, Inuit deal with unique realities in education delivery. The history, geography, culture and political structures of Inuit regions demand innovative responses. Inuit want to work with federal, provincial/territorial governments, non-government delivery agents and with other Inuit to share knowledge and resources. For many years, Inuit have advocated Inuit-specific initiatives. "Inuit-specific" refers to planning, policies, programs and services, developed with meaningful participation of Inuit organizations to reflect Inuit realities.

The Inuit population is young and growing at twice the rate of the general Canadian population. The Inuit population is expected to reach more than 60,000 by 2016. In 2001, the median age in Canada was 37.6 years; for Inuit, it was 20.6 years. More than 57% of Inuit are under 25 years of age.<sup>1</sup> This "generational divide" illustrates how important strong educational initiatives are to the future of Inuit

Inuit have a distinct culture, language and strong values of self-sufficiency, resilience and adaptability. Historically Inuit taught their children largely through modeling, by being with children who watched indirectly and learned through observation. Children learned at their own pace. Modern education is much more structured and utilizes formal and direct educational methods that are distant in approach from the way Inuit teach their

---

<sup>1</sup> 2001 Census, Statistics Canada

children.<sup>2</sup> For Inuit education systems to be successful harmony between traditional teaching and Western teaching methods must be developed.

Lifelong learning for Inuit and Inuvialuit in the four land claim areas of Nunavik, Nunavut, Nunatsiavut and Inuvialuit may be achieved by means of research-based, well-planned education systems that provide active support for lifelong learning in all its aspects and phases. These include the current child and youth education in elementary, middle and high schools, young adult and adult education in post-secondary programs and college, but the phases are not yet complete for total lifelong learning. Early childhood education (ECE) and education in youth and adult remedial, correctional and recovery programs need to be addressed so that all the phases of lifelong learning in land claim area education systems coordinated in a coherent manner. These non-traditional educational areas to be included are of particular importance as they deal with vulnerable students entering or re-entering the educational systems and the manner in which they enter or re-enter is crucial to their continued success in the systems. In such education systems Inuktitut and English bilingualism, that is, literacy as well as language and culture, would be integral parts of all educational programs fostering an Inuit workforce and population that functions well in their own languages as well as in English. Such restructured education systems embracing the total developmental lives of Inuit would enable them to fully participate as informed, responsible citizens leading productive, socially integrated lives in their communities, proud of their language, heritage and skills. Finally, through the results of such envisioned education systems, meeting the employment obligations to Inuit land claim area agreements in their public service would become possible.

### **Historical perspective**

To understand the current challenges facing Inuit in the area of education, it is necessary to review some of the rapid social changes that have impacted Inuit over the past fifty years. Fifty years ago, the majority of Inuit continued to live primarily in small semi-nomadic groups relying upon the resources of the land and sea for sustenance. Camp life centered on extended family groupings, which regarded the rearing of children as a responsibility of the larger group, and not solely that of the immediate family. Children could turn to any adult or older child for comfort or food or to learn life skills. Older children assumed many childcare responsibilities early in life and learned critical parenting skills as they themselves were growing up. Elders were revered for their wisdom and knowledge including their valuable advice and expertise in the area of child rearing and parenting.

This situation changed dramatically when Inuit were moved to communities at the request of the federal government with the promise of health, education and housing services. It was at this critical juncture when Inuit society began to unravel under the stress of rapid change. The extended family was no longer the key social unit as government agencies began to assume many responsibilities of health, education, and

---

<sup>2</sup> 2005, ITK, Inuit Early Childhood Development Issues Discussion Paper

justice and was the repository of essential resources. As well, southern culture began to inundate the north and began to heavily influence the younger generation in particular. In turn, these changes undermined the traditional role of elders and began to impede the transmission of knowledge and values between generations.

With the establishment of a wage economy and continual inundation from southern media, Inuit social ties have become strained and language usage has declined. Inuit society continues to be in a process of rapid transformation. The traditional role of elders has altered and the responsibility for child rearing has become more focused upon the immediate family. Combined with chronically high levels of unemployment and poverty, radical structural shifts in the harvesting economy, rapid population growth, mounting social problems, and a weakening of informal social support mechanisms, the ability of Inuit families to raise their children as well as they wished continues to be under serious pressure.

To further exacerbate these challenges, residential schools were responsible for removing Inuit children from the families for extended periods of time. The critical bond between parents and children, and the subsequent transference of essential skills and knowledge including parenting skills, was broken for many Inuit. Many of the survivors, and their children, continue to be impacted as a result of the residential school experiences and have indicated that their ability to raise their children as well as they can has been seriously compromised. While not all Inuit were negatively impacted as a result of their experiences at residential schools, this issue adds another element to the many challenges that have faced Inuit parents in their efforts to raise their children as well as they can.

Subsequent to the missionaries who introduced organized learning, formal education in the form of “Federal Schools” operated in major centres in Inuvialuit, Nunatsiavut, Nunavik and some parts of Nunavut by the late 1950s. Many students travelled or were sent from their home communities for long periods of time to attend schools that aimed to assimilate them into the contemporary Canadian lifestyle. At school, Inuit were actively discouraged from using their first language in favour of English. In the early 1960s, schools began to be built in all communities of the four land claim areas and were completed in 1968. Thereupon, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police enforced attendance of Inuit school-aged children, so that their families moved into the communities from outpost camps to maintain contact with them. The curricula followed by the new community schools were based on that of southern Canadian mainstream schools and spoken Inuktitut continued to be discouraged until about the mid-1970s.

Subsequent to the missionaries who introduced organized learning, formal education in the form of “Federal Schools” operated in major centres in Inuvialuit, Nunatsiavut, Nunavik and some parts of Nunavut by the late 1950s. Many students travelled or were sent from their home communities for long periods of time to attend schools that aimed to assimilate them into the contemporary Canadian lifestyle. At school, Inuit were actively discouraged from using their first languages in favour of English. In the early 1960s, schools began to be built in all communities of the four land claim areas and were completed in 1968. Thereupon, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police enforced attendance

of Inuit school-aged children, so that their families moved into the communities from outpost camps to maintain contact with them. The curricula followed by the new community schools were based on that of southern Canadian mainstream schools and spoken Inuktitut continued to be discouraged until about the mid-1970s.

Many Inuit parents and elders, particularly in small communities, could not comprehend why their able-bodied older children, their helpers, had to sit about in school learning nothing useful for their lives, as they saw it. As soon as children were of legal age to leave school, many families encouraged their children to join their parents in hunting and maintaining their families. Particularly in larger communities was schooling and learning English considered desirable because their Inuit/Inuvialuit parents could send their somewhat educated children to labour jobs to earn wages. In this way adolescents helped support their families with their wages while other family members hunted and performed the other family duties: childcare, preparing skins for sale, sewing and carving. In addition, the daily shift of authority from parents and elders at home to teachers in school often confused the students, often resulting in a loss of respect for their parents, elders, their language and traditions. The school drop out rate was very high as students struggled to balance the new school demands with conflicting family demands while attempting to become adults.

#### **The Province of Québec (Nunavik)**

Nunavik can be said to have had the most progressive education system right from the start in the early 1960s by the inclusion of Inuktitut language instruction in the school curriculum. This was due to the language-friendly education policies of the Quebec government of the day. After the first modern comprehensive land claims settlement was reached between the Province of Quebec and the Northern Quebec Inuit Association in 1975, the Kativik Regional Government was formed for Nunavik within Quebec. The first Inuit Teacher Training Program, supported by McGill University, Montreal, took place in Nunavik as well, setting a compelling example to the people living in the other land claims areas where Inuit/Inuvialuit were only used as imported teachers' interpreters and helpers. The other land claim areas today aspire to the well-organized Nunavik early childhood education system in all their communities with well-run daycare/pre-schools that offer Inuktitut programming to the young children in their care.

#### **The Province of Newfoundland and Labrador (Nunatsiavut):**

The Inuit of Nunatsiavut in Labrador had contact with Europeans since at least the mid-1700s, if not earlier, far longer than the people of the other land claims areas. Still, they were generally ignored by Canada until Newfoundland and Labrador joined the Canadian confederation as its newest province in 1949. The Inuit of Nunatsiavut were among the last aboriginals to move to permanent settlements in the 1960s when their children began to attend schools. Some efforts have been made since the 1970s to include Inuktitut in Nunatsiavut schools. Negotiations for Nunatsiavut, the last land claims area settlement of the four Inuit/Inuvialuit land claims areas, began in 1977. On May 26, 2004, the Inuit of Nunatsiavut voted to ratify the Final Agreement of the land claims settlement of Nunatsiavut in Labrador. The provincial and federal governments have yet to complete the process for settling the Nunatsiavut land claim.

**The Northwest Territories and Nunavut Territory:**

The Inuvialuit and Nunavut land claim areas after 1968 were not as fortunate as Nunavik. The fledgling Northwest Territories (NWT) government, which did not possess the provincial resources and powers over their affairs as the Province of Quebec enjoyed, administered these areas during that period. In spite of all the positive initiatives undertaken for traditional language and cultural inclusion in the curricula of their schools, the education systems of these areas were chronically under-funded.

Although in 1976 legislation was passed by the NWT government to have Inuktitut/Inuvialuktun taught in the Inuit/Inuvialuit schools and the 1990 NWT Official Languages Act ensured that Inuktitut and Inuvialuktun, along with seven other aboriginal languages, stood equal to English and French within the NWT, the NWT government did not, or could not, provide the funds sufficient for adequate Inuit teacher training or for the training of personnel in learning materials production to support Inuktitut/Inuvialuktun literacy and language programs in the two education systems.

In 1984, the Inuvialuit settled their land claims. Under self-government within the NWT Territories the education system of Inuvialuit began to evolve from its early beginnings to include Inuvialuktun in school programs and established daycares/preschools in their Inuvialuit communities.

In 1999, Nunavut became a territory and educators who cared about Inuktitut literacy expected that the issues of embedding Inuktitut literacy and language training in the education system along with all that is needed to ensure success would finally be met. This was not the case. In a territory where 72% of the population speak Inuktitut and where children learn best in their first language, it is a strong desire to have Inuktitut as a language of instruction from K-12 with English taught as a second language.

**Areas of Importance**

**Literacy**

Literacy is the cornerstone of education and includes not only reading and writing but the fluency to be able to communicate fully in a language. Inuit need to be fully able to not only read and write but fluently speak their traditional language as well as English/French. As one of the strongest aboriginal languages in Canada, Inuit are to be applauded for the strength of their language but further support is required to ensure that the language remains strong.

The importance of first language literacy training in the student's dialect to the well being of Inuit and the success of other language learning cannot be overemphasized. Language skills need to be taught with supporting materials that are understandable by the students. Not only are there minimal appropriate learning materials but a lack of expertise to

develop and produce them. This hampers not only literacy and language programs but all learning programs. Dedicated Inuit have produced Inuktitut learning materials for use in classrooms and learning programs. These and other entrepreneurs need to be trained and supported in order to continue to produce quality Inuktitut materials.

English/French literacy is also important in Inuit communities so that people can interact with those outside their communities and successfully gain employment. English and English as a Second language training is a priority need for a population whose present literacy level is below the national average. Inuit specific English/French literacy documents needs to be created.

Funding of community literacy and language programs also presents a difficulty. Single year, proposal based funding allows for little continuity in the programmes. There is also a lack of coherent or consistent planning and design. The lack of adequate facilities, learning aids and instructors only enhances the problem.

The issue of literacy in Inuktitut and English/French at all levels of learning, from infancy through adulthood, must be addressed.

### **Areas for Action**

- Innovative programs to train Inuit educators in all segments of the industry
- Infrastructure and connectivity requirements to increase the production of learning documents in Inuktitut
- Support for Inuit learning or improving English/French skills
- Streamlined multi-year literacy funding to allow for consistency of programming

### **Early Childhood Education**

Future success is based on learning in the early years. Although daycares exist in most Inuit communities there is still a lack of Inuit specific daycare and early childhood services beyond daycare. This lack of programming is due to funding, staffing and infrastructure. Difficulty obtaining funds from various government departments, and the year to year structure of most funding programs impedes communities' abilities to create sustainable programs. Staffing early childhood programmes remains an issue due to lack of training, training opportunities and comparatively low wages and benefits, although some successful on site early childhood training has occurred across the North. Most daycares and early childhood programs are operated by a board of directors with no link to one another. This results in inconsistency in language and cultural programming.

A wide range of issues affect children in their early years and highlight the importance of excellent early childhood programming. Priority issues identified by Inuit include parenting; Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder; nutrition; hearing impairment; appropriate support and care for women during childbearing; and lack of school readiness.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

### **Areas for Action**

- Federal, territorial, provincial and municipal funding for children's programs 0 –6 needs to be pooled and made more readily accessible, possibly through a single-entry, one-window approach.
- Access to appropriate, reliable, consistent, experienced, qualified professional services at all levels must be secured for Inuit children, now.
- Action must be taken to ensure that Inuit culture, lifestyles and language thrive.
- Inuit in all regions should have equal opportunity to access children's funding.
- Education is age appropriate and grounded in an understanding of the value of the acquisition of culturally relevant foundational skills, which incorporate school readiness. Legislation and Regulations affecting licensed programs are based on Inuit lifestyle and climate.

### **Schools – Elementary through Secondary**

Inuit presently participate in a school system that has been drawn from southern Canadian school system models, although Inuit staff do work in the schools, the majority of teachers and principals are non-Inuit and the curricula is based on southern models. Elementary, middle and secondary schooling is available in most communities but there are few opportunities for at-risk students to experience positive learning successes throughout all levels of public schooling resulting in an alarmingly high drop out rate.

The drop out rate of Inuit adolescents at the high school level far exceeds the national average, stressing families, contributing to the social ills that trouble communities, often leading to crime and suicide. These drop outs are the future troubled parents of unfortunate children who must bear with them as they attempt to succeed at school. Statistics show a higher proportion of female Inuit attaining high school certificates. Although there are 3 times more Inuit who have not completed their high school diploma when compared to Canada as a whole (age group surveyed 25 to 34 years)<sup>4</sup> there is currently no consistent and ongoing campaign that exists to encourage students to remain in school to gain their high school diplomas. Learning beyond the traditional academic structure, such as traditional, vocational, artistic and recreational skills is not available at present for most Inuit students. Such programs may currently occur in some schools but usually on an ad hoc basis and often lack a learning plan with coherent learning objectives. Interest and successes in such programs may encourage academically faltering students, thus discouraging the student from dropping out. An added benefit may be that students become better able to make choices for continuing their education for related careers and occupations.

There is currently little support for Inuit students to aid them in determining their educational and career path. Inuit need to know what opportunities are available and how to prepare for and access them.

<sup>4</sup> 2001, Statistics Canada

### **Areas for Action**

- Strategies to encourage students to complete their education must be developed and applied. This could include building on vocational, traditional and cooperative education.
- Active career/work counselling to prepare for future employment and education
- Strategies to encourage and support all Inuit entering all fields related to education
- Research into the current state of the education systems in the four land claims areas to form the documentation necessary to undertake short-term and long term planning
- Resources to build, foster and advance a solid foundation for the inuit languages as spoken throughout the entire education system

### **Post Secondary, adult training and college programs:**

It is not surprising that there are also a low number of Inuit who go on to complete trade certificates, college certificates/diplomas or University degrees given the low number of Inuit high school graduates. The reason for this is twofold: skills are not always at a level acceptable to many post secondary institutions due to early drop out, low literacy skills or the unavailability of certain courses at the high school level; as well as travel outside the community. Few courses at the college level and limited courses at the University level are offered in the land claims areas. There are insufficient qualified Inuit trades people, despite interest and aptitude.

Incomplete high school combined with low English literacy skills make it difficult to enter and succeed in the system. Those wishing to undertake skills training, career development courses or trades training are still frequently compelled to travel away from their home communities. Promising practises that diminish the need to travel away from home territory and take into account literacy skills are required. Nunavut offers a classroom section for apprentice carpenters in Iqaluit and includes additional help for those having difficulties communicating in English.

Presently there are not enough trained Inuit to fill the positions necessary to govern and service their land. Inuit are underrepresented as professionals serving in their own lands such as in the areas of health, environment, social and legal services. Far too often Inuit obtain positions that require less skills and training and receive less remuneration. Highly skilled positions are frequently filled by people from southern Canada. Inuit need to be proportionately represented in all employment areas at all levels from entry level positions to senior management.

### **Areas for Action**

- Innovative programs to encourage Inuit to re-enter the education system and that support their success in obtaining further education.
- Ongoing continuing education, staff development and skills training for Inuit in all employment sectors including trades, education, health, environment, justice, etc are required.



- Creative programs that allow Inuit students to obtain higher levels of study without being removed from their communities or regions and that are inclusive of language. This could include, but is not limited to, distance education, community based programs, etc.
- Comprehensive financial support provided for Inuit for post-secondary education not dependent on residency
- Innovative literacy programming for all students
- There is a need for skilled adult educators

### **Barriers to Learning**

Many parents, themselves poorly educated and often suffering the effects of residential schools, are unemployed. Home management skills such as nutrition, health, family budgeting, parenting, family relationships and human rights have often been lost and go untaught. Ill able to afford hunting equipment and unable to stretch income support to meet all the family needs, families are often unable to provide their children with the food and clothing necessary for them to be prepared to learn at school. Houses are chronically overcrowded in Inuit land claims areas leaving young learners with no quiet place in which to do homework. 53% of Inuit live in overcrowded housing, versus 7% of all Canadians.<sup>5</sup> Should members of the crowded household also bring substance abuse, emotional problems or physical abuse issues to the young learner's life, the children will also have mental health issues to surmount<sup>6</sup> before being prepared to learn.

Within the school system and the community there is little support for people with learning disabilities and physical and mental challenges. One of the learning disabilities is Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder. Students are often not identified and therefore strategies to help them succeed are never developed and funding for additional support cannot be secured. Expertise to identify, diagnose and support people with learning and intellectual difficulties is scarce. To further the challenges for Inuit students the formal school system does not teach the same way Inuit traditionally teach and learn which makes it difficult to acquire and retain information. Learning challenges are further exasperated by the low literacy rates in the languages' instruction.

Inuit in the correctional system experience unique educational challenges. These facilities offer no coherent, consistent continuous literacy or job training programs. Many young Inuit leave such institutions and programs without discernable improvement and face few prospects for work or positive lifestyle changes.

### **Areas for Action**

- Develop a school system that is sensitive to the needs and methodology of both formal and traditional knowledge acquisition

---

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

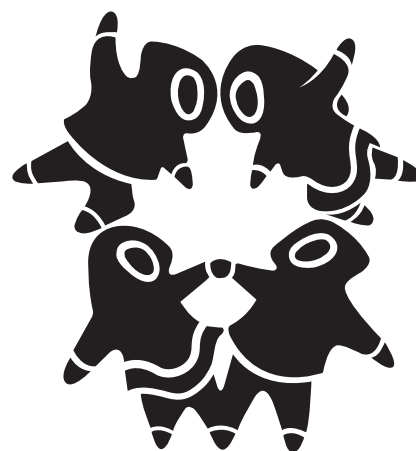
- Ensure that Inuit students have proper, culturally sensitive support for adequate housing, nutrition, clothing and school supplies.
- Ensure that students and their families have adequate resources to deal with their mental health issues.
- Increase the support for students with learning challenges so that they can succeed
- The justice system needs to be examined and programmes to support inmates so that they can successfully return to communities are needed.
- Cooperative working relationship to provide data to address the challenges for inuit

### **Conclusion**

The educational systems for Inuit share common concerns although they do not share a uniform history of educational development. The general overview of these systems identifies these concerns which, in turn, raises a variety of points for further discussion touching on all phases of lifelong learning, from early childhood education through elementary, middle and high schools, to graduation from colleges, post-secondary and adult remedial/recovery programs. Of particular concern is the provision of a well-planned, coherent process of lifelong education, which addresses the learning needs of Inuit. The necessity for Inuit as well as English literacy and language learning to be provided throughout the educational systems cannot be overstated. No less important is the matter of training sufficient trained Inuit teachers and educators. The Inuit education systems are now unable to provide equitable and quality programs to their students. Also, considering the high student drop out rate, it is imperative that ways and means be developed to retain students to program completion with every possible mode of support and encouragement. Finally, the imperative to meet the land claims area's employment obligations cannot be met without education systems designed to promote the individual achievement and excellence that should accompany pride of heritage and language of Inuit.

# **Backgrounder on Economic Opportunities**

**For Discussion at the Economic Opportunities  
Sectoral Meeting, December 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>, 2004,  
Ottawa, Ontario**



**ᐃᐅᐃᑦ ᑕᐱᑦᑦᑕᑦ ᑲᐱᑕᑦ**  
**INUIT TAPIRIIT KANATAMI**

**Prepared by Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami**

**November 15, 2004**

**Ottawa, Canada**

# Backgrounder on Inuit Economic Opportunities

## Table of Contents

<b>I</b>	<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>II</b>	<b>Economic Characteristics of the Inuit Regions.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>III</b>	<b>Supporting the Growth of the “Capital Assets” of the Inuit Regions.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>IV</b>	<b>Shared Barriers to Economic Development.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>V</b>	<b>Supporting Inuit Economic Opportunities Through Strengthened Governance Structures and Enhanced Organizational Capacity.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>VI</b>	<b>Supporting Inuit Economic Opportunities Through Improved Access to Capital and Investment.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>VII</b>	<b>Supporting Inuit Economic Opportunities Through the Development of Lands and Resources in the Inuit Regions.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>VIII</b>	<b>Supporting Inuit Economic Opportunities Through the Improvement Of Regulatory/Legislative Frameworks.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>IX</b>	<b>Supporting Inuit Economic Opportunities Through the Development of International Opportunities .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>X</b>	<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>13</b>

# **Backgrounder on Inuit Economic Opportunities**

## **I Introduction**

Inuit are a circumpolar people that share a common language, cultural heritage, and archaeological record of settlement stretching from Siberia in the west, to northern Alaska and northern Canada in North America, and on to Greenland in the east. In Canada, the traditional Inuit homeland comprises almost one third of the land mass of Canada and includes fifty three communities primarily located along coastal areas that are only accessible by air and sea-lift on a seasonal basis and, in some cases, air alone on a year round basis.

Not only do circumpolar Inuit today find themselves separated by international boundaries, the Inuit that live within the traditional homeland in Canada are also subject to different political and economic jurisdictions. Inuit in Canada are appropriately recognized as one “Aboriginal People” for constitutional and other purposes. Yet, as a result of the history of provincial and territorial boundary delineations and extensions, and the closely related process of the settlement of Inuit land claims agreements in Canada, the Inuit homeland in Canada is divided into four different Inuit “land claim settlement areas”. These, in turn, are located within three different territorial government jurisdictions (i.e., Nunavut, the Northwest Territories, and the North Slope area of the Yukon Territory) and two provincial government jurisdictions (i.e., Quebec, and Newfoundland and Labrador).

Recognizing the “oneness” of Inuit in Canada, and prior to the start of the Inuit land claims process, Inuit founded the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada (now the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami) in 1971. The national Inuit organization played a strong early role in supporting the regional land claims negotiations and helped the Canadian government understand their right to self-determination. Canadian Inuit also recognized their important links to all circumpolar Inuit and founded the Inuit Circumpolar Conference (ICC) in 1977. The Canadian office of ICC works closely with ITK and Canadian regional Inuit organizations to help share information and promote joint ventures among Inuit across international lines. In the 1970s, for example, Inuit in Greenland and Alaska learned from the Canadian land claims settlement process and vice-versa.

In a speech to the Canadian Council on Aboriginal Business on February 18, 2003, Jose Kusugak, the President of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, observed that the national Inuit organization was now over thirty years “young” and that over these years “Inuit have developed solid partnerships with our fellow Canadians who assisted us in settling our land claims, supported our political and constitutional rights, and the development of our capital.” He also commented that “a return to self-reliance was at the very heart of the land claim demands we made on the government of Canada thirty years ago.”

In a review of the history of ITK, available on the ITK web site, it is pointed out that the discussions at the very first national meeting of Inuit representatives, who had gathered together to create the national organization, identified many of the core issues that have defined the mandates and activities of ITK since its founding in 1971. These issues

## **Backgrounder on Inuit Economic Opportunities**

included: aboriginal rights; concerns about both large scale development, especially the potential of oil exploration, and smaller scale or local development such as the establishment of northern tourism by outside interests; the need to formalize Inuit rights with respect to development and to establish appropriate mechanisms for Inuit participation, consultation and decision making powers; formulating policies, programs and research for dealing with rights to territory and resources and concerns about the right to maintain traditional land use and harvesting practices.

The history of the negotiation and finalization of Inuit land claim settlement agreements in Canada, which is a process that has not yet been completed, can also be seen as one of the more exciting chapters in the overall story of the economic and political development of Canada. In fact, the two aspects of this process – the economic and the political - are closely intertwined. The *James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement (JBNQA)*, which was signed in 1975, was the first modern land claims settlement agreement in Canada and was negotiated under enormous political pressures related to the Government of Quebec's desire to proceed with the James Bay hydro-electric mega-development project. Similarly, the extensive oil and gas exploration activities that were being carried out in the Beaufort Sea and Beaufort Delta area of the N.W.T. in the 1970s and the desire of the major petroleum companies to build the proposed Mackenzie Valley pipeline, provided the background context for the negotiation of the *Inuvialuit Final Agreement*, which was signed in 1984.

The signing of the *Nunavut Land Claims Agreement* in 1993 not only provided certainty with regard to many issues related to the development of mineral and other resources in the Nunavut Land Claim Settlement Area, but also directly led to the creation of the Nunavut Government on April 1, 1999. The *Labrador Inuit Land Claims Agreement*, which is currently in the process of being finalized and ratified by the federal government, will lead to the creation of different levels of Labrador Inuit self-government institutions and includes extensive provisions regarding economic development. In addition, as the final piece in the overall structure of Inuit land claims agreements, the *Nunavik Marine Region Comprehensive Land Claims Agreement*, which is currently being negotiated between Canada and the Inuit of Nunavik (i.e., the Inuit in the area of Quebec north of the 55<sup>th</sup> parallel of latitude), will provide, upon ratification of the Agreement, for the establishment of procedures for the development of projects in this off-shore area and for the harvesting of renewable resources on the islands and in the waters surrounding the fifteen Nunavik Inuit communities.

When the negotiation and ratification of the Inuit land claim agreements is completed, there will be a total of five comprehensive settlement agreements, entered into by the four groupings of Inuit beneficiaries (i.e., Inuvialuit, Nunavut, Nunavik, and Labrador Inuit beneficiaries), which will set out Inuit rights with regard to the ownership of or access to land and resources in these Inuit land claim settlement areas and provide for a constitutionally protected framework for the development of resource projects in these areas and for the pursuit by the Inuit of local or regional economic opportunities.

## Backgrounder on Inuit Economic Opportunities

Although the Inuit land claim settlement agreements have many different provisions, there are also many similarities when it comes to economic development. All of the agreements include provisions related to land ownership regimes, procedures for access to Inuit land, wildlife harvesting regimes, financial compensation, the review and assessment of development projects proposed for the settlement areas, public sector employment, government procurement, and specify that Inuit will live in regular municipal structures (i.e., not on reserves). As well, almost all of the agreements include provisions for land use planning, the co-ordination of economic development programs and policies, and for the type of Impact Benefit Agreements that would need to be entered into in relation to the approval of resource development projects. As well, none of the agreements provide for a special tax status for Inuit beneficiaries or their companies. With regard to the economic provisions set out in Section 16 of the *Inuvialuit Final Agreement*, it is specified that Canada and the Inuvialuit agree that the various economic measures contained in that Section were designed to support the achievement of the following objectives:

- (a) full Inuvialuit participation in the northern Canadian economy; and,
- (b) Inuvialuit integration into Canadian society through development of an adequate level of economic self-reliance and a solid economic base.

All of the Inuit land claims settlement agreements as well as the national and regional Inuit organizations can be seen to share this overall objective with regard to the development of resources in their respective settlement areas and with regard to the pursuit of local and regional economic opportunities.

However, largely because they result from a similar claim settlement process and also share many other organizational linkages and experiences, the local and regional Inuit organizational structures in Canada share many other organizational features that play a significant role with regard to economic development, which include the following:

- **Local Inuit organizations** usually hold title to Inuit lands, issue various types of wildlife harvesting and other permits, invest in certain types of local business opportunities, and play a role in determining Inuit beneficiary status.
- **Regional Inuit organizations** appoint Inuit representatives to various types of Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement (CLCA) mandated bodies, hold CLCA land claim settlement funds and are responsible for the stewardship and wise investment of these financial resources, and have frequently made capital investments in strategic regional development initiatives.
- **Regional Inuit development corporations** (the Inuit heritage corporations) have been created in all four Inuit land claim settlement areas (i.e., the Labrador Inuit Development Corporation, Makivik Corporation, Nunasi Corporation, and the Inuvialuit Development Corporation) and in the three regions within Nunavut

## Backgrounder on Inuit Economic Opportunities

(Qikiqtaaluk Corporation, Sakku Investments Corporation, and Kitikmeot Corporation), which are responsible for pursuing commercial business opportunities on behalf of beneficiaries in their respective regions and which are wholly owned and controlled by the regional Inuit organizations.

- All of the Inuit heritage corporations have in turn established wholly Inuit-owned **subsidiary corporations** of their own and currently participate in a wide variety of joint ventures and other business partnerships and arrangements in specialized areas of business activity (airlines, fishing ventures, shipping companies, construction companies, etc.) that play an important role in the various regional economies in northern Canada.

## II Economic Characteristics of the Inuit Regions

In addition to sharing many organizational similarities, the Inuit regions of Canada and, indeed, all circumpolar Inuit regions, also share many of the same economic characteristics. In this regard it can be commented that all of the Inuit regions in Canada are characterized, of course, by their cold climate, sparsely settled and remote geographical location, and a reliance on transportation linkages provided by air and sea. As well, all of the Inuit regions are also characterized, in an economic sense, by the existence of a “mixed economy” that combines traditional or subsistence harvesting of wildlife resources, either for direct domestic consumption or for commercial sale, existing alongside of a cash or wage economy that has developed at different speeds and to varying degrees within the northern communities.

However, while the wage economy is growing rapidly in all of the Inuit regional economies, it can easily be observed that many of these new jobs are related to the expansion of public services and the devolution of government administrative positions to northern communities. As a result, in many Inuit communities, over 70% of the available jobs are often found within the public sector and are involved with the provision of health or educational services or relate to locally available government administrative positions. The *Nunavut Economic Development Strategy* noted, in this regard that, “Government spending on wage and non-wage activities constitutes 65 percent of the Territory’s overall expenditures.” After taking into account a small non-profit sector (i.e., churches, charities, etc.) the remainder of the economy is composed of the private sector, which is comparatively less developed than in the south and which is faced with many challenges in terms of its potential for growth and job creation.

The demographic make up of the population in the Inuit regions, combined with the expected leveling of the rate of growth in public sector expenditures in the north over the coming years, makes the growth and diversification of the private sector of vital importance. It has often been noted that the relatively high birth rates in the north mean that Inuit communities have a correspondingly “young” population. One half of the



## Backgrounder on Inuit Economic Opportunities

regional population in Nunavik, for example, is under the age of 25 and over three quarters of the population is under 35 years of age.

In order to successfully meet this challenge, the barriers to business development in the private sector will have to be overcome and the “capital assets” of the Inuit regions will have to be maximized with the objective being to achieve the development of a mature and diversified economy capable of providing a sufficient level of employment opportunities to the growing population base and a standard of living equal to that enjoyed by other Canadians.

### III Supporting the Growth of the “Capital Assets” of the Inuit Regions

The *Nunavut Economic Development Strategy* makes the point that economic growth is vitally necessary for Nunavut and comments that the main analytic tool that is used by economists when talking about economic fundamentals is the concept of “capital”, which refers to the assets or wealth of a community. However, in developing the proposed development strategy for Nunavut, the concept of Nunavut’s capital assets is expanded “to include natural resources like mineral wealth (natural capital), people’s abilities and potential (human capital), the capacity of Nunavut’s organizations (organizational capital), and physical assets as diverse as buildings, airport runways and satellite dishes (physical capital).”

This four-part conceptualization of the capital assets of Nunavut could equally be applied to all of the Inuit regions and is useful when discussing strategies to promote economic opportunities. The important point flowing from this discussion is that strategies for maximizing economic opportunities in the Inuit regions must be aimed at increasing the existing capital assets currently found within these communities, along each of the four dimensions of capital formation, and toward reaching basic thresholds of economic growth in each of these areas so that a region’s full economic potential can be achieved.

In order to take full advantage of the economic opportunities in the Inuit regions, it will therefore be necessary to invest in all four of these aspects of economic growth.

- The **natural capital** of the Inuit regions is still being explored and delineated in many ways, which will need to continue, and the environment and the renewable and non-renewable resources that it contains will need to be protected from harmful types of exploitation.
- The **human capital** of the Inuit regions can only be fully developed through building healthy communities, the provision of appropriate education and training to the growing population, and the elimination of social problems like inadequate housing, and drug and alcohol abuse.

## **Backgrounder on Inuit Economic Opportunities**

- Local and regional Inuit organizations must be strengthened if the **organizational capital** of the Inuit regions is to be maximized.
- The **physical capital** or infrastructure of the Inuit regions is also inadequate in many ways and currently impedes both the social aspects of economic development and the commercial development of viable business enterprises necessary for a strong and diversified economy.

### **IV Shared Barriers to Economic Development**

Other Aboriginal communities as well as other northern and remote communities in Canada share many of the barriers to economic development faced by the Inuit. These problems have been accurately described in a number of reports and studies such as those produced by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples and the National Aboriginal Financing Task Force. These barriers need not be elaborated here, but can be seen to include such realities of daily life as the following:

- The limited size of communities and their distance from the major metropolitan centres of Canada
- The remoteness of the communities and the lack of surface connections both to the south and amongst northern communities
- The high cost of transportation of people and goods to the north and within northern communities, along with the need to import most foodstuffs, consumer products and building materials, etc. from southern suppliers and delivery points
- The high burden of taxation faced by residents of the north due to the application of various types of user fees (e.g., NAV Canada landing fees) and consumption taxes (GST, provincial sales taxes) applied to high consumer prices
- The lack of an effective telecommunications infrastructure in the region
- The almost complete absence of banks and other mainstream financial institutions in many northern communities along with the personal and commercial deposit and lending services normally provided by such institutions
- The harsh climate of the region and the impact that this has on the construction and operating costs of facilities of all kinds
- The cultural and language realities of remote Aboriginal communities that mean that organizations often have to provide services to customers and/or deal with government departments and agencies in two or three different languages
- The difficulties in remote areas in locally recruiting specialized manpower, and
- The international trade laws and regulations that act as barriers to marketing a spectrum of Inuit produced products (e.g. sealskin coats and other marine mammal products, caribou meat, products from muskoxen, etc.).

These realities of daily life in the Inuit regions affect everyone living and working there and all of the public and private sector organizations that provide services to clients within the region. These broad regional development barriers act as very real constraints

## **Backgrounder on Inuit Economic Opportunities**

on all types of development and so businesses along with other organizations must take them into account in planning their activities. As well, these barriers also lead to a more specific set of obstacles that have to be faced by private sector entrepreneurs in relation to their business activities, which from a business point of view can be stated as follows:

- ❑ The small population and scattered nature of the local markets
- ❑ The low purchasing power and lack of personal savings within local markets
- ❑ The high taxation levels, which are reflected in increased business costs and which inevitably result in higher consumer prices which, in turn, reduce demand for products and services produced within the region
- ❑ The high cost of transporting goods, services and people into and out of the region and the logistical difficulties of having to arrange for transportation of all heavy or bulky goods by seasonal sealift operations
- ❑ The high cost of constructing and operating facilities within the Inuit regions
- ❑ The lack of modern telecommunications services in many northern communities and the high cost of these services to the extent they are available
- ❑ The relatively high wage structure of the labour force in northern communities based on the high cost of living and the dominance of public and para-public organizations within the regional economies
- ❑ The lack of specialized knowledge on many of the products that could potentially be produced from the Inuit regions, the potential for marketing these products outside the north (either domestically or internationally), and the potential profitability of such ventures.
- ❑ The lack of many types of technical and professional services (i.e., legal, accounting, business and financial planning, audit, investment, architectural, engineering, environmental, etc.) in most communities in the Inuit regions
- ❑ The lack of access to appropriate sources of commercial loans for many business activities, from capital sources located within the Inuit regions, and the cost and difficulty of accessing business financing if located outside the region, and
- ❑ The difficulties faced by many entrepreneurs in learning about and successfully accessing various types of financial and business advisory services that might potentially be available to them from local, regional, provincial/territorial or federal government departments and agencies
- ❑ The problems in exporting certain types of Inuit produced products to other countries or to import various products and materials into Canada.

### **V Supporting Inuit Economic Opportunities Through Strengthened Governance Structures and Enhanced Organizational Capacity**

In any discussion related to enhancing the capacity of Inuit organizations, there will be two major components to this discussion. The first of these relates to capacity building at the local level through strategies and initiatives that promote community economic development, which is often simply referred to as CED. The second component of the discussion will relate to the need to strengthen the regional Inuit organizations and for the

## **Backgrounder on Inuit Economic Opportunities**

enhancement of their role in the delivery of programs and services of various kinds, at a regional level, in close cooperation with the Inuit organizations at the community level.

For example, the *Nunavut Economic Development Strategy* comments that Inuit participation in the economic growth in Nunavut depends on linking that growth to the communities and notes “CED is attractive for two principal reasons. First, it promotes a bottom-up approach to development, which involves the full participation and control by local people, as an alternative to the outside-in approaches to development that have had limited success in the past. Secondly, a CED approach to economic growth is a sustainable development approach ...”

However, while the delivery of services must shift, wherever possible, to the community level from federal and provincial/territorial government program level, this devolvement should be within the context of multi-year program delivery arrangements that are entered into between the respective governments and the regional Inuit organizations. Again, as emphasized in the *Nunavut Economic Development Strategy* “Building a regional network to support community economic development will help breakdown stovepipes in government.” As well, the regional Inuit organizations are in an excellent position to combine or pool elements of government programming that might originate in different departments or even at different levels of government and deliver them in culturally and regionally appropriate ways to the communities located within their respective regions in support of economic growth and diversification.

It will also be important to ensure that Inuit women benefit from the limited job and business opportunities in their communities and regions. Pauktuutit, the national Inuit women’s association in Canada, has emphasized that a high priority in this regard is the need to address the critical gaps that prevent significant numbers of Inuit women from becoming self-employed. Pauktuutit and the regional Inuit associations could be used to provide a range of informational material, financial assistance, and other support services to potential Inuit women entrepreneurs.

Because of the shared regional economic characteristics and barriers to development, and the similarities in their land claims settlement structures, it is appropriate that this proposed devolution of program delivery responsibilities be accomplished by way of Inuit-specific programs and initiatives. With respect to the federal government, the examples of program delivery arrangements with the regions that come closest to this approach are probably the Community Economic Development Organizations (CEDO) Program of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) and the Aboriginal Human Resource Development Strategy (AHRDS) of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC), which both use the regional Inuit organizations in the delivery of programs within their respective regions with services being provided at the community level through a network of service delivery personnel. Mechanisms must be found to extend this approach to other areas of economic development and Aboriginal business support programming in INAC, the regional development agencies, and Aboriginal Business Canada. At the international level, the Canadian International Development

## **Backgrounder on Inuit Economic Opportunities**

Agency (CIDA) is an international example of the federal government using Inuit to help deliver programs. ICC Canada is currently in the sixth year of a multi-million dollar capacity-building program that not only assists Russian indigenous peoples, but Canadian Inuit as well.

Supporting Inuit economic opportunities through the enhancement of organizational capacity must also focus on education and training related to both public and private sector employment and for jobs within the Inuit organizations themselves. There are innumerable economic opportunities in the Inuit homeland that will mostly benefit non-Inuit if a significant focus on skills development is not present.

### **VI Supporting Inuit Economic Opportunities Through Improved Access to Capital and Investment**

As noted above, the lack of access to investment capital is one of the significant barriers to the growth and diversification of the regional Inuit economies. This reality has been commented upon in virtually every study on Aboriginal economic development or on business development in the Inuit regions of Canada. In many Inuit communities, financial institutions of any kind are completely absent, which means that capital is not accumulated within the communities or available for investment in business enterprises.

The response by government, and the Inuit regional organizations themselves, to this problem has generally consisted of the initiation of grant, business loan, and contribution programs in support of Inuit business development. These programs have a variety of eligibility criteria, loan or contribution size limits, and may be restricted to different types of business enterprises. The programs also focus somewhat differently on the various phases of the business development cycle, which moves through the following phases:

- ❑ Identification of business or commercial potential
- ❑ Preparation of a business plan
- ❑ Financing of the business
- ❑ Business start-up and operation, and
- ❑ Business expansion or re-financing

At present, Inuit entrepreneurs must usually go to different departments for different types of program support and often have to “stack” the support from different programs that are available at the different levels of government. Federal government support for Aboriginal business development, for example, is usually limited to 40% of the amount that is needed counting all departmental sources of funding. The other 60% must come from other levels of government, support from the regional Inuit organizations, commercial lending, or from the entrepreneurs own funds. This is very difficult, to say the least, in communities with no local financial institutions and very low levels of personal savings or assets against which business loans might be secured.

## **Backgrounder on Inuit Economic Opportunities**

There are two examples of Inuit-controlled developmental lending institutions that should be mentioned in this context. The Nunavik Investment Corporation (CFDC) was incorporated in 1987 (originally known as the Kativik Investment Fund) and provides commercial financing to Inuit and eligible non-Aboriginal businesses in the Nunavik region. This institution currently receives operational funding from the federal regional development agency in Quebec and has two sets of loan funds: one is an Aboriginal Capital Corporation (ACC) fund and is restricted to Inuit businesses while the other is a Community Futures Development Corporation (CFDC) fund and is available to Inuit and non-Aboriginal businesses.

The other example is the Atuqtuarvik Corporation, which was created by the regional Inuit organization in Nunavut, Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. (NTI), about four years ago and was provided with \$70 million in core funding from NTI that has been used to provide large-sized loans to new and expanding Inuit-owned businesses. Atuqtuarvik Corporation currently has equity in Inuit-owned businesses and loans to the regional Inuit development corporations totaling more than \$57 million.

The fact that these two institutions are the only examples of Inuit-controlled developmental lending institutions means that federal government programs in support of such institutions have not been designed with the business needs or economic realities of the Inuit regions in mind. This is an area where Inuit-specific programming is desperately needed and where new approaches should be developed to support the creation of viable Inuit-controlled regional developmental lending institutions.

There are also other investment opportunities on the international front. With natural and historical ties to other Inuit, joint ventures that cross international borders may also be useful in assisting the economic development of Inuit regions in Canada. Other international “land claims” regions (e.g. the North Slope Borough in Alaska, the Government of Greenland, etc.) have access to capital that Canadians may jointly pursue with their fellow Inuit abroad.

However, it must be kept in mind that business financing is only one of the phases – although a very important one – in the business development cycle. To be effective, business support services should be developed that will cover all of the phases of Inuit business development. For example, if a region has great support for carrying out feasibility studies and for preparing business development plans but lacks investment capital it is likely that the business plans will not come to fruition. The regional Inuit organizations lend themselves to the creation of a “one window” system of support for the provision of business development, support and aftercare activities to Inuit entrepreneurs and Inuit-owned businesses and as the parent organizations that could be responsible for the creation of regional developmental lending institutions that could receive investment capital and operational funding from the federal government. Regional land claims settlement organizations, like NTI has done, should not have to try to meet this need on their own using CLCA heritage funds.

## **Backgrounder on Inuit Economic Opportunities**

### **VII Supporting Inuit Economic Opportunities Through the Development of Lands and Resources in the Inuit Regions**

As mentioned above, all of the Inuit land claims settlement agreements include provisions related to the assessment and approval of developmental projects within their respective settlement areas. The most important tool for the reconciliation of the interests of the resource development companies, with those of the local and regional Inuit populations, has been the use of Inuit Impact and Benefit Agreements (IIBAs) in the Inuit land claim settlement areas in relation to major resource development projects such as the oil and gas exploration activities in the Inuvialuit Settlement Area, the development of diamond mines in Nunavut, the Raglan mining project in Nunavik, and the Voisey's Bay mineral project in Labrador. These agreements have provided for Inuit involvement in these projects by way or royalty payments or equity participation, employment and training opportunities, service and supply contracts, wildlife compensation, or restoration and mitigation activities.

The development of the resources that are found in the Inuit regions will continue to be an important source of growth for the regional Inuit economies for many years to come. However, these opportunities will only be meaningful if the Inuit beneficiaries living in these regions have the education, training, and technical skills necessary to fill the employment opportunities that are created and if local or regional Inuit-owned businesses are in a position to take advantage of the business development opportunities that emerge.

Similar opportunities will become available as investments are made in relation to the development of public sector financed infrastructure in the Inuit regions, which is often done in conjunction with regional development projects and Inuit beneficiaries and businesses must be in a position through education and training and business support activities to capitalize on these development or the benefits will largely flow to southerners and non-Inuit business enterprises.

### **VIII Supporting Inuit Economic Opportunities Through the Improvement of Regulatory/Legislative Frameworks**

There are four priority areas where the federal government's policies and related regulatory and legislative frameworks must be strengthened in relation to the fulfillment of the federal government's land claims obligations and in support of Inuit economic opportunities.

First of all, the federal government's procurement policies must be amended in order to fully implement the public sector contracting obligations set out under Article 24 of the *Nunavut Land Claims Agreement* (NLCA) and procedures must be developed to put this policy into effect as soon as possible. Under this article, the governments of Canada and Nunavut are required to actively assist Inuit firms to compete for government contracts

## **Backgrounder on Inuit Economic Opportunities**

for goods, services and construction. The Government of Nunavut has developed and successfully implemented a policy to provide this preference to Inuit firms for territorial contracts, known as the Nunavummi Nangminiqatunik Ikajuuti (NNI) Policy, but Canada has yet to introduce a comparable policy eleven years after signing the NLCA.

Secondly, Article 23 of the NLCA requires the governments of Canada and Nunavut to achieve a public service workforce reflective of the Nunavut population, which is 85% Inuit. Yet again, after 11 years, the Government of Nunavut's workforce is about 42% Inuit and the federal government workforce in Nunavut is only about 33% Inuit, and these rates have been falling. This situation has significant and concrete economic consequences for Inuit. A study by PricewaterhouseCoopers in 2003 showed that every year that passes with Inuit representation in government stuck at 42 to 45%, Inuit are losing \$123 million in salaries and benefits. The study also showed that the governments spend \$65 million each year to recruit workers from the south and pay for unemployment and social assistance for the unemployed Inuit. After three years, negotiations with the Government of Canada have broken down on funding for the labour force development measures needed to achieve implementation of this crucial component of the NLCA.

Thirdly, the comprehensive land claims settlement agreements that have been entered into by the Inuit with Canada, related to all of the settlement regions, include provisions for access to various types of renewable resources, commercial harvesting priorities (e.g., fish quotas), or other measures related to economic opportunities. Federal government departments must ensure that regulatory processes and procedures do not effectively nullify these provisions of the CLCAs. These regulatory provisions are usually complex, involve other non-Inuit business interests, and are highly industry-specific, but the harmonization of these regulations with the related land claims provisions is of vital importance if the economic opportunities provided by these provisions are to be fulfilled.

And finally, as noted above, Canadian Inuit have numerous opportunities to market products, knowledge, and services internationally. Improved international regulatory and legislative frameworks must be given some consideration in this regard. International covenants, laws, and agreements have significant impact on the Inuit way of life and in exploiting future economic opportunities. Governments, Inuit entrepreneurs and their organizations must become more aware of these matters, which are sometimes opportunities and also barriers. Significant work must be done within international organizations such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the World Trade Organization (WTO), the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), the Arctic Council, the Association of American States, the United Nations (and its various agencies), etc. Further, on a bi-lateral basis, Inuit with the support of the federal government must gain a better understanding of national laws in various countries other than Canada that can serve as an opportunity or a barrier to Inuit economic development.



## **Backgrounder on Inuit Economic Opportunities**

### **IX Supporting Inuit Economic Opportunities Through the Development of International Opportunities**

The Inuit of Canada have worked together with other circumpolar Inuit for the promotion of Inuit economic opportunities and other shared objectives since the founding of the Inuit Circumpolar Conference (ICC) in 1977. In this regard, The ICC's *Principles and Elements for a Comprehensive Arctic Policy* states "Initiatives to attain economic goals and aspirations in the Inuit circumpolar homeland can be significantly enhanced through regional, national, and international cooperation. Major economic challenges facing present and future generations of Inuit and other northern peoples are unlikely to be effectively met through isolated efforts."

Not only do the Inuit of Canada pursue these objectives by working with other circumpolar Inuit at the international level, they also work with other indigenous peoples internationally (e.g., the Canada-Belize project and the ICC-Russia capacity building project), international companies, and on projects or programs that have an international character (e.g., the promotion of international tourism in the circumpolar regions).

The importance of eliminating or reducing international trade barriers is illustrated by ICC's work on the Task Force on Arctic Trade and in relation to the *Marine Mammals Protection Act* in the United States. In her remarks to the United Nations in May 2003, Shiela Watt-Cloutier, the current ICC chairperson, stated "[Our] steps forward will result in failure if we do not exert ... influence in the development of international trade agreements be they global, regional or bi-lateral. We must sit at the negotiation tables of the World Trade Organization. Our concerns must be heard by the negotiators of the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas..." The ICC is also very active with regard to other issues such as climate change in the Arctic, the sovereignty of the north, the opening of northern sea routes, the effect of pollution on the Arctic, and global economic issues.

### **X Conclusion**

This document was developed to provide a basis for discussion during the December Aboriginal Roundtable Economic Opportunities Sector meeting. The areas for action listed below are suggestions to be further discussed and developed in collaboration with Inuit and government representatives. Common elements underlying these areas for action are: developing Inuit specific programs, meaningful Inuit involvement in program and policy development, full implementation of the Inuit land claims settlement agreements, and developing Inuit organizational capacity in the regions.

Overcoming the barriers to economic development in the Inuit regions will involve the active coordination of many different bodies as well as the different levels of government all working toward the development of innovative approaches to maximizing the capital assets (in the broadest sense of the term) of the communities in these regions and the

## **Backgrounder on Inuit Economic Opportunities**

development of a mature and diversified economy that will provide both economic opportunities for Inuit and a standard of living equal to that enjoyed by other Canadians.

### Areas for Action:

- Initiate discussions with the local and regional Inuit organizations for the development of initiatives that promote effective community economic development strategies and coordinating mechanisms in each Inuit community.
- Undertake a comprehensive review that will identify federal government programs that support economic opportunities in Aboriginal communities or the Inuit regions in order to determine where program responsibilities might be devolved to regional Inuit organizations under multi-year funding arrangements.
- Produce printed information and develop group or self-directed business training programs or modules that are specifically directed at Inuit women who would be interested in either starting their own business or becoming self-employed and make this information widely available to Inuit women through Pauktuutit and the regional Inuit organizations.
- Develop “one window” approaches in each Inuit region where clients can apply for project funding for community economic development projects as well as where Inuit businesses and potential entrepreneurs can apply for business development grant and loan applications.
- Undertake a study to determine the feasibility of establishing an Inuit-controlled developmental lending institution in each of the six Inuit regions (i.e., Labrador, Nunavik, Qikiqtani, Kivalliq, Kitikmeot, and Inuvialuit) and for the provision of adequate levels of investment capital and operational subsidies to these institutions to meet the developmental lending needs of Inuit-owned businesses in their respective regions.
- Develop new mechanisms through which the federal government can discuss opportunities and work together with the regional Inuit organizations and development corporations with respect to major strategic investments that might be made with regard to various sectors of the regional economies such as the development of mineral resources, oil and gas development, transportation services, the tourism sector, or the telecommunication industry.
- Undertake a review, in close cooperation with the regional Inuit organizations, of the infrastructure needs in each Inuit region and how investments toward meeting these needs (i.e., social housing, transportation infrastructure, hospitals and schools, and public buildings) might be structured in order to maximize local involvement in temporary and permanent employment opportunities, job training for Inuit beneficiaries and the development of occupational skills, the

## Backgrounder on Inuit Economic Opportunities

participation of local or regional Inuit-owned businesses in procurement and supply opportunities, and the potential for developing viable Inuit businesses related to the building, operation or maintenance these structures.

- Negotiate a Canada-Nunavut Economic Development Agreement based on the priorities identified in the *Nunavut Economic Development Strategy*.
- Complete the negotiation and ratification of the remaining two Inuit land claims settlement agreements and implement fully the existing CLCAs in Nunavik, Nunavut, and the Inuvialuit Settlement Region.
- On a priority basis, fully implement the federal government's public sector procurement obligations under Article 24 of the *Nunavut Land Claims Agreement* and put in place the contracting policies and procedures necessary to make this policy an effective tool for the promotion of Inuit economic opportunities.
- Similarly, on an urgent priority basis, fully implement the federal government's public sector employment obligations under Article 23 of the *Nunavut Land Claims Agreement* and put in place the provisions necessary to achieve a federal public service workforce in Nunavut reflective of the Nunavut population.
- Through on-going discussions with the regional Inuit organizations and development corporations, take steps where necessary to ensure that the regulatory provisions and administrative procedures of federal government departments do not conflict with or effectively nullify the resource allocation provisions or guarantees contained in the Inuit land claims settlement agreements.
- Support Inuit regions and communities -- through ICC (Canada) and other Inuit organizations -- in identifying and taking the necessary steps to remove international trade laws and regulations that act as barriers to marketing a spectrum of Inuit produced products (e.g. sealskin coats and other marine mammal products, caribou meat, products from muskoxen, etc.).
- Support Inuit through organizations such as ICC (Canada) in their work on global and circumpolar issues that affect the economic, social and cultural well being of Inuit and the environmental health of the circumpolar regions of the world.
- Involve Inuit throughout the complete processes of development of both the Northern Strategy and the Ocean Strategy announced in the 2004 Federal Budget.

# **Backgrounder on Inuit and Housing**

**For Discussion at Housing Sectoral Meeting, November  
24 and 25<sup>th</sup> in Ottawa**



**ᐃᓄᐃᑦ ᑕᐱᓃᑦ ᑲᓄᑕᑦ**  
**INUIT TAPIRIIT KANATAMI**

**Prepared by Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami**

**November 1, 2004**

**Ottawa, Canada**

## Table of Contents

<b>Section</b>	<b>Page</b>
<b>Introduction: The Highest Rate of Overcrowding in Canada</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>“On Reserve” vs. Inuit Housing... Why the Distinction?</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Addressing the Inuit Housing Shortage</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Nunavut’s Housing Crisis</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>A Crisis Stemming from Federal Government Decisions</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>The Nunavut 10 Year Inuit Action Housing Plan</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>The Labrador Inuit Housing Situation</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Nunavik</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>“Makivik’s Concentrated Construction”</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>House Construction</b>	<b>11</b>

## **I. Introduction: The Highest Rate of Overcrowding in Canada**

With the settling of three major land claims agreements in the Inuit regions (and one pending in Labrador), Inuit leaders are optimistic that they are now going to gain control over the tools required to guide the development of their society and achieve greater wellness and strength as an Aboriginal people. Housing is the basic building block of a healthy and productive society, and business activity associated with house building is one of the main indicators of a healthy economy. Unfortunately, with the exception of the Inuvialuit region, which may benefit from plans to develop a pipeline, the remaining three Inuit regions do not have high levels of economic growth—except those associated with the public sector.

A harsh climate, remote geography, extremely small population base, lack of road or rail access, underdeveloped infrastructure systems and the high costs of labour and materials combine to prevent the development of the kind of housing market which encourages private investment in southern Canada. Consequently, the creation of new housing supply in the Inuit regions is heavily dependent on public sector involvement.

The federal, and, later, territorial governments, have both been major participants in housing programs for Inuit for nearly half a century. While efforts by both governments have included a range of programs and services over the years, the end result remains the same: Inuit currently experience the highest levels of overcrowded, inadequate housing in the country. Health Canada has warned that inadequate housing is linked to a host of health problems, including increased likelihood of transmission of infectious diseases such as tuberculosis and hepatitis A, and also increased risk for injuries, mental health problems, family tensions and violence.

In 1993, the federal government cut public social housing to zero (while continuing it for “on-reserve Aboriginals”), perhaps not fully aware that the majority of Inuit (especially in Nunavut and Nunavik) live in social housing. Since that time, overcrowding among Inuit has become the worst of all Aboriginal groups. Overcrowding in Canada generally is 7%, according to Statistics Canada. For Inuit the average number of households which are overcrowded sits at 53%—much higher than the rate for other Aboriginal peoples (13% for urban Aboriginals, and 19% for rural Aboriginals).

Of the four Inuit regions the overcrowding situation is worst (and worsening) in Nunavik and Nunavut. In the five years between censuses, 68% of Inuit in Nunavik lived in crowded conditions as of 2001, up slightly from 67% five years earlier. In 2001, 54% of Inuit in Nunavut experienced crowding, 28% in Labrador and finally, 35% of Inuvialuit live in overcrowded conditions in the Northwest Territories.

In 1999, forced to address overcrowding in Nunavik, Makivik Corporation turned to the dispute resolution provisions of the JBNQ to force Federal and Provincial governments to address their housing crisis. In Labrador, the provincial government put in place a short-term (three year)

\$7million program to increase house construction in Inuit communities. Meanwhile Nunavut Inuit are in the eleventh year of a severe, escalating housing shortage with no meaningful solution in sight.

## **II. 'On-Reserve' versus Inuit Housing... Why the Distinction?**

ITK, Makivik and NTI have raised the issue that the Federal Government often makes a distinction regarding its responsibilities for housing programs for 'on-reserve' First Nations and Inuit. There is no basis for this distinction. The Government responsibilities under Section 91(24) of the Canadian Constitution apply to both Inuit and First Nations. If anything, it can be argued that Canada has a greater duty to Inuit on this matter since Inuit were originally encouraged to settle in permanent communities with the clear understanding that the Federal Government would provide the necessary housing.

Canada, through DIAND and CMHC, has a long-standing policy that First Nations build and control their own social housing—these are called the on- and off-reserve housing programs. Meanwhile, Inuit are expected to access non-Aboriginal social housing. Up until the 2000 Makivik-Canada Agreement, there was no Aboriginal housing construction policy or program for Inuit. ITK is well aware of the inequity in the Department of Indian Affairs and CMHC providing housing money to build 2600 houses per year (and renovate 3300 more) for “on-reserve” Aboriginals since 1993, while completely halting social housing programs in the north. According to the April 2003 *Report of the Auditor General of Canada* (Chapter 6: “Housing on Reserves”), since 1993 over \$3.8 billion has been invested in First Nations-specific housing. ITK is not advocating the taking away from one group at the expense of another: the need is severe in all aboriginal communities. As ITK President, Jose Kusugak has frequently stated “You don’t take away the bannock from one individual to feed another. You need to make a bigger bannock!”

Makivik was perhaps first to bring the Federal government’s attention to these inequities by citing Sections 2.12 and 29.0.2 of the constitutionally protected JBNQ during its dispute with Canada:

### ***Section 2.12 of the JBNQA***

*"Federal and provincial programs and funding, and the obligations of the Federal and Provincial Governments, shall continue to apply to the James Bay Crees and the Inuit of Quebec on the same basis as to the other Indians and Inuit of Canada in the case of federal programs, and of Quebec in the case of provincial programs, subject to the criteria established from time to time for the application of such programs."*

### ***Section 29.0.2 of the JBNQA***

*"Programs, funding and technical assistance presently provided by Canada and Quebec, and the obligations of the said governments with respect to such programs and funding shall continue to apply to the Inuit of Quebec on the same basis as to other Indians and Inuit of Canada in the case of federal programs, and to other Indians in Quebec in the case of provincial programs, subject to the criteria established from time to time for the application of such programs, and to general parliamentary approval of such programs and funding."*

Article 2 of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement also clearly states that Inuit as Aboriginal Canadians are entitled to access any federal programs or services intended for Aboriginal peoples. This protection is guaranteed in Section 2.7.3:

*"Nothing in the Agreement shall: (a) be construed so as to deny that Inuit are an Aboriginal people of Canada...; (b) affect the ability of Inuit to participate in and benefit from government programs for Inuit or Aboriginal people generally as the case may be..."*

Through use of the JBNQ, Makivik re-oriented the Federal approach to Inuit, winning agreement that they are an Aboriginal people and equally entitled to supports offered generally to other Aboriginal peoples. NTI is now making the same case through their Housing Action Plan. ITK is advancing the issue generally through their successful call for the Federal government to establish an Inuit Secretariat within the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs.

### **III. Addressing the Inuit Housing Shortage: A long Term Investment in Improved Health, Education, and Economic Development**

*Crowding among Inuit in the Far North is a serious concern. There, 53% of Inuit lived in crowded conditions, compared with 13% of all Aboriginal people living in urban areas across the country and 19% in rural areas outside the Canadian Arctic. (Statistics Canada Survey of Aboriginal Peoples, 2001)*

Investment in housing is an important step in addressing one of the root causes of poor health among Inuit and Aboriginal peoples in Canada. Inadequate, unsuitable, overcrowded housing has long been linked to community and social well being. There is increasing evidence, for example, that overcrowded conditions can have direct health effects upon household members - especially infants. Health Canada has warned that overcrowded housing conditions contribute to the transmission of infectious diseases such as tuberculosis. ITK echoed this warning in 2002, advising that "the overcrowding of housing is a clear non-medical health indicator for Inuit."

Overcrowding also affects families by increasing the risk of injuries, mental health problems, family tension and violence. These stressors are powerful triggers for negative coping behaviours such as dependence on alcohol and drugs. Such behaviours, in turn, are two of the most common and recurring themes encountered within northern justice systems - behaviours with profound effects on the lives of the aggressors, their victims and the north as a whole. ITK's *Report on the Needs of Inuit offenders in Federal Correctional Facilities* (June 2004) noted that "many Inuit offenders had difficult home environments during childhood, including exposure to violence and substance abuse." Significant anecdotal evidence also suggests that children in overcrowded, stressful homes skip school more often and are less successful in their studies.

The health indicators linked to overcrowding have devastating social consequences:

- Tuberculosis rates are 25 times than the Canadian average.
- Nunavut and NWT have the highest infant mortality rates in Canada.



- Negative impacts on education; as children are without space or quiet time to do homework.
- Overcrowding is a factor in spousal abuse and other forms of crime.
- Overcrowding is a contributing factor in Inuit youth having one of the highest suicide rates in the world.

Building houses and reducing overcrowding provides the foundation for better health, education, social stability and economic development. Investment in housing is an important step in addressing one of the root causes of poor health among Inuit and Aboriginal peoples in Canada.

#### **IV. Nunavut's Housing Crisis**

The housing situation in Nunavut stands out as a genuine crisis of worsening proportions with no solution in sight. 54% of Nunavut Inuit live in overcrowded conditions – a rate of 3.84 individuals per dwelling (compared with the Canadian average of 2.65 per dwelling). The percentage of dwellings with more than one person per room is 25.76% in Nunavut, compared to 1.7 % in Canada generally. In Nunavut, it is not uncommon for 3 generations of a family to live under one roof. With over half of Nunavummiut living in overcrowded conditions, health problems are bound to follow. Along with higher rates of TB and other infectious diseases, Nunavut suffers from high rates of respiratory tract infections in infants. According to Baffin Hospital's Dr. Banerji, of 51 infants admitted in 1997-98, 42 had lower respiratory tract infections—the second highest rate in the world. Banerji has stated that one of the contributing factors is overcrowding.

Of the approximately 8,200 dwelling units in Nunavut, over 45% are public housing units. About half of these social housing units are over 25 years old. In contrast with southern Canada, the Arctic climate means that a 20 year old house in Nunavut needs significant retrofitting and a 40 year old house is effectively at the end of its useful lifespan.

There are some 3,900 public housing households in Nunavut, housing nearly 14,000 residents, 98% of whom are Inuit. 15% of Nunavut's population are on waiting lists for public housing. The Nunavut Housing Corporation (NHC) estimates that 3300 houses are needed to address the immediate housing shortage (and 250 per year after that). But when a plain 740 sq ft social housing unit in Iqaluit costs \$250,000 to build and \$18,000 to operate annually, it becomes obvious that Nunavut is facing a genuine housing crisis.

Nunavut is essentially a non-market environment. In contrast with the rest of Canada, where 63% of people own their own homes, only 28% of people in Nunavut are homeowners. Of these, only 7% did not receive direct government assistance to purchase their homes. Take a look at the costs: the same ten foot 2x4 that costs less than \$3 in Ontario costs \$9.50 in Iqaluit.

Independent homeownership is inhibited by the cost of materials and by the significant expense of operating a home. Construction costs in Nunavut average \$330 per square foot, compared to \$104 per square foot in southern Canada. When young adults in Nunavut begin to look for housing options outside of their parents' homes, virtually the only choice is to add their names to the public housing waiting list. Inuit rely heavily on public housing – in most of the communities in Nunavut this form of housing is the only option.

The recently released CMHC Research Highlight: *Geography of Household Growth and Core Housing Need* describes the desperate situation in Nunavut. CMHC research examines housing core needs in the areas of adequacy, suitability and affordability. Adequate housing is housing not in need of major repair. Suitable shelter is housing that is not crowded; affordable housing should cost 30% or less of before-tax household income. Using these three measures of core need CMHC found that 38.7% of Nunavut households are in core need; the Canadian average core need is 15.8%. But since each and every private dwelling unit in the territory receives some type of housing subsidy, if these subsidies were removed or factored out, all but the most affluent of Nunavummiut would have affordability problems. In this scenario, Nunavut percentage of households in core need would rise from the current - unacceptable - 38.7% to well over 90%.

In southern Canada capital repayment costs are usually the largest single item in a social housing provider's budget. By contrast, in Nunavut utilities and fuel comprise fully 56% of the on-going costs for social housing. Utility costs alone average \$11,370 per year. Further, while the prospects for economic and human resource development in Nunavut are promising, they remain some years away. There is no realistic option for replacing government support through tenant charges in most communities.

The creation of Nunavut saw an additional 250 subsidized staff housing units constructed, however over 200 additional Government of Nunavut staff housing units are still needed, but none of this will do much to reduce overcrowding in social housing. 300 staff housing units were built or acquired by the Federal government to provide housing for its increased presence in Nunavut. Of these, 99% are in Iqaluit, and virtually all are occupied by southern Canadians.

## **V. A Crisis Stemming from Federal Government Decisions**

In 1986, Nunavut Land Claims negotiators specifically proposed to take on responsibility for housing as part of the settlement. The Federal Minister of the day rejected their proposal, insisting that social housing must be a Federal responsibility and denying Inuit control. In 1993 the Government of Canada signed the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement (NLCA) with the Inuit of Nunavut on behalf of Canada. Within a few months, the Federal Government cut new social housing funding for Inuit to zero, leaving Inuit (literally) out in the cold.

Thus, social housing programs for Nunavut ceased even while on-reserve housing programs for other Aboriginal Canadians were maintained and, in some cases, improved. Since 1993, over \$3.8 billion has been invested in housing for First Nations, while Inuit - clearly recognized as Aboriginal People - were specifically excluded. The \$3.8 billion in INAC/CMHC housing money has built 2600 houses per year (and renovated 3300 more) for “on-reserve” Aboriginals since 1993. None were built or renovated in Nunavut.

Based on conservative projections, without a major house-building program in Nunavut by 2016:

- The overcrowding rate among Inuit will increase by 30% to reach almost 70%;
- The percentage of units over 20 years old will rise from a current 66% to 91.9%; and

- The percentage of units over 40 years old will rise from a current 6.5% to 31%.

## **VI. The Nunavut Ten Year Inuit Housing Action Plan**

In August of 2004, NTI and the Government of Nunavut (GN) submitted a ‘Nunavut Ten Year Inuit Housing Action Plan’ to DIAND Minister Andy Scott and Housing Minister Joe Fontana, arguing that the federal government needs to make a special 10 year federal intervention on housing for Nunavut Inuit to make up the backlog of 3,000 units and to keep up with the demand for new housing. The Action Plan calls for the renovation of 1000 existing units and new construction of 2730 more, with an average annual cost of \$190 million over its ten year span.

Within Nunavut, a sustained ten-year plan to build 500 - 700 units a year would also create:

- More experience, training and hours towards local trades certifications;
- Estimated total full time employment for approximately 1500 people;
- Reduced dependence on Income Support system;
- Increased local community expenditures (local economic development).

Socio-cultural benefits of the Action Plan would include:

- Contribution to the reduction of health and social problems linked to overcrowding such as family violence, high attrition rates and high rates of respiratory disease/tuberculosis;
- Increased community well-being through capacity building and empowerment;
- Training and technology transfer in Inuktitut where appropriate.

Inuit in Nunavut are urgently in need of suitable, adequate housing. NTI and the GN, through Nunavut Housing Corporation (NHC), contend that the Federal Government has responsibilities, pursuant to the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement (NLCA) and in keeping with recent statements made by the Governor General of Canada and the Prime Minister of Canada, to intervene into this escalating crisis in Nunavut. Through a partnership between the Government of Canada, the GN and NTI, a long-term intervention can become a reality and Nunavummiut can enjoy the same basic right to adequate shelter as all Canadians.

## **VII. The Labrador Inuit Housing Situation**

The Torngat Regional Housing Association represents approximately 4000 Inuit and non-Inuit in the North Coastal Communities of Labrador. With the resettlement programs of the Smallwood government, the Inuit way of life was drastically changed. A large number of Inuit were resettled away from Killinek, Ramah, Hebron, and Okak, and moved into Nain, Hopedale and Makkovik. Resettled people were housed in substandard “matchbox” dwellings. The five modern-day Inuit communities of Nain, Hopedale, Postville, Makkovik and Rigolet are all remote and have no road connections; they rely on air service and summer sealift.

The provincially-coordinated Housing Needs Survey of 2003 garnered responses from 657 of the 816 households in the five Inuit communities. 290 households (44%) were determined to be in 'core need'. The average number of persons per dwelling was 3.8; and 17% of households were occupied by 6 or more persons.

In marked contrast to the other Inuit regions, 82.1% of people surveyed in the five predominately Inuit communities in Labrador own their own homes. However, of this percentage, 32% need minor repairs, 42% require major repairs, and a further 10% are considered beyond repair. 57% do not have complete bathroom facilities, and 69% do not have adequate heating systems. 64% of those surveyed had incomes below the poverty line, including 34% who earned less than \$10,000 annually.

According to Statistics Canada, the overcrowding rate among Labrador Inuit households is 28%. In 2001, responding to media reports of deplorable housing conditions, the provincial government initiated a three-year \$7.7 million housing program which funded the construction of 43 houses and major improvements to 84 more units.

### **VIII. Nunavik: First Canada-Inuit Housing Program a Success But Still 500 Houses Short**

Of all the Inuit regions, overcrowding is worst in Nunavik, and has actually deteriorated according to Statistics Canada. 68% of Inuit in Nunavik lived in crowded conditions as of 2001, up slightly from 67% five years earlier. Almost the entire Inuit population in Nunavik's 14 communities is housed in social housing units. Some form of subsidized housing is provided for almost all staff of government, non-profit, and private businesses. In 1998, there were only about a dozen homes under private ownership in the region. As of November 1998, the Nunavik Regional Board of Health and Social Services' report on the region's housing situation concluded that the problems of housing and overcrowding in Nunavik constituted a major risk factor for the population's physical and psychosocial health.

Faced with a housing crisis and the related health crisis, Makivik Corporation and the Kativik Regional Government (KRG) lobbied Quebec and Canada to re-establish social housing in Nunavik. Upon meeting with denials from Canada's Department of Indian and Northern Affairs (DIAND), Makivik turned to the Dispute Resolution Mechanism (DRM) of the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement (JBNQ), citing two principal provisions (2.12 and 29.0.2) in their contention that since Canada provided a robust social housing program for First Nations, a similar program should be made available to Inuit beneficiaries of the JBNQA.

At the Dispute Resolution Mechanism meeting in July 1999, Canada finally recognized that they had an ongoing obligation under the JBNQ to Nunavik Inuit regarding social housing. Canada, Quebec, KRG, the KMHB (Kativik Municipal Housing Bureau) and Makivik therefore began to develop a new social housing program. Their work culminated in the Housing Agreement of September, 2000. Under this Housing Agreement, Canada agreed to contribute \$10 million annually, and Quebec also agreed to contribute \$10 million annually, for the costs of constructing

Inuit Housing in Nunavik from 2000 to 2005. As the first 5-year phase draws to a close, a second 5-year phase is now being negotiated. With half of the total funding of \$100 million coming from Ottawa, Nunavik is thus the only Inuit region participating in a federal Aboriginal housing program.

Money from the Housing Agreement flows to Makivik's non-profit construction division which builds approximately 60 social housing units per year (usually about 25-27 two-bedroom duplexes) in up to 7 communities across Nunavik. Upon completion, ownership of each housing unit is transferred from Makivik to the KMHB (for one dollar) which then administers the housing units.

In the next phase of house construction, Makivik plans to address the need for three bedroom units. In total, Makivik and the KMHB have determined that 500 more houses are needed to meet Nunavik's social housing shortfall, with 45-55 houses per year required after that to address the growth of new families in the region.

## **IX. "Makivik's Concentrated Construction": Economies of Scale and Expertise from Repetition**

Arctic communities tend to experience a lack of economies of scale in virtually every aspect of housing construction and renovation, compounded by the lack of local industry competition that would spur greater efficiency and innovation.

Long-term, comprehensive housing programs, such as Makivik and KMHB's in Nunavik are the best solution in the Arctic. Such programs allow long-term construction planning in allocated communities each season. In turn, this approach increases efficiencies, levels of local activity, and yields significant cost savings. With the leverage afforded through long-term, stable funding comes opportunities to achieve economies of scale through negotiation of bulk purchasing and volume discounts from suppliers. An estimated 15 – 20% cost savings may be achieved under this scenario.

"There is so much overhead cost in mobilizing to set up a construction site, if you do it for just one or two houses it's too expensive; so we concentrate construction in four or five communities... Plus, we've built the same model for four years, so the learning curve is over: the workers know what to cut and how to cut it—they build faster... Makivik has the lowest cost per square foot—we've compared them to all the other Northern contractors... They are cheaper because of economies of scale and their expertise in building that model."

--Watson Fournier, Kativik Municipal Housing Bureau

"In 2004, the Kativik Regional Government (KRG) built four staff houses using the Makivik design for duplexes, exactly the same size materials, same pad size, built in the same village that Makivik was building in (Kuujuak)... The KRG went out to tender. It cost them \$500,000; Makivik construction paid \$325,000 to build exactly the same duplex (and we had to pay the extra cost of the gravel pad--\$10,000)... Why were we cheaper? Economies of scale. But also, Makivik is a non-profit; the southern contractor who won the bid wanted a 15% profit margin."

--Oneil Leger, Makivik Construction

Makivik Corporation is licensed as a contractor and has created a Construction Division to build social housing. As a non-profit promoter-builder, Makivik has more flexibility in negotiating with contractors and in assuring the maximization of Inuit labour. Oneil Leger estimates that Inuit account for 70-80% of labour on the Makivik-contracted housing sites. Instead of using its own trucks and graders, Makivik enters into contracts with Hamlets to use their municipal heavy equipment to prepare pads and move material; this contributes to keeping economic benefits in the communities.

## **X. House Construction: An Engine of Economic Growth and Job Training**

Makivik's example points to the enormous capacity-building benefits associated with a long-term comprehensive house building program. Addressing the housing in crisis in the Inuit regions of Canada should be seen as a major economic and educational benefits program.

During the October 2004 meeting between Kowesa Etitiq, Inuit board member of National Aboriginal Housing Association (NAHA) and Joe Fontana, Minister of Labour and Housing, Minister Fontana agreed that "housing construction is economic development". Fontana also emphasized the education and training inherent in a housing construction program. NWT MP Ethel Blondin-Andrew also referred to housing as economic development during a recent meeting with Inuit.

Any project designed to address the backlog of social housing in the north presents tremendous opportunities in the areas of employment, apprenticeship training, and management training, along with benefits associated with the business side of the project – the development of an array of Inuit firms to handle the needs of the project from conception through to ongoing management and maintenance.

A comprehensive Inuit housing intervention should form the basis for a major skills-upgrading program across the north, based on culturally appropriate training curricula, linked to Federal Aboriginal training programs, and organized and delivered in partnership with Inuit organizations and companies. Culturally appropriate trades training programs would reference Land Claims obligations and involve territorial and provincial Apprenticeship Boards and Construction Associations. Training for Inuit carpenters, electricians, plumbers, and other trades people, as well as for small business managers and entrepreneurs develops Inuit capacity and is transferable to non-residential projects. At the urging of Makivik and KMHB, for example, the Construction Association of Quebec has put in place a special card for Inuit workers, recognizing their skills developed through building in northern environments (but without the 'transferability' of other trades certifications).

***INUIT SPECIFIC FOLLOW-UP to CANADA -ABORIGINAL PEOPLES ROUNDTABLE******INUIT  
ENVIRONMENT  
SESSION******March 9 & 10, 2005******Lord Elgin Hotel******OTTAWA, ONTARIO***

---

**Session Objectives:**

To provide a forum for the participating environmental experts and service providers to engage in a discussion that:

- Follows from the seven (7) earlier “Sectoral Sessions” in the six (6) Sectoral areas mandated by the Prime Minister at the Canada – Aboriginal Roundtable of April 19, 2004 in the additional sector of the environment which is of key concern to Inuit.
- Fosters new ideas and pragmatic solutions to improve the quality of life of Inuit, and protect Canada’s arctic environment.
- Attempts to close the gap between Aboriginal Peoples and other Canadians - Inuit feel that addressing Arctic environment is essential to this end.
- Provides policy perspectives and specialized knowledge on broad arctic environmental matters which will be used in ITK’s ongoing Inuit specific initiatives.
- Applies seven (7) cross cutting lenses (i.e. Inuit Knowledge and perspectives; Human and environmental health; International considerations; Inuit women; Inuit youth; Inuit living in urban circumstances; and Inuit living with disabilities).

**Day One – Wednesday, March 9, 2005**

<b>7:30 am</b>	<b>Registration and Breakfast</b>	<b>Lady Elgin Room</b>
<b>8:30 am</b>	<b>Opening Invocation</b> <i>Elders            Mark Kalluak – Opening Prayer</i> <i>Mary Matu – Lighting Qulliq</i> <i>Children</i>	<b>Ontario Room</b>
<b>8:45 am</b>	<b>Welcoming Remarks</b> <i>President Jose Kusugak,</i> <i>The Honourable Minister Andy Scott, Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada</i>	
<b>9:05 am</b>	<b>Introduction to the Session Agenda</b> <i>Harold Tarbell, Facilitator</i>	
<b>9:15 am</b>	<b>Health Break</b>	<b>Lady Elgin Room</b>

**9:30 am      Issue #1:      *Climate Change*      **Ontario Room****

*Objective: To examine how climate change is being addressed as well as adjustments and new approaches for adapting to the impacts of climate change.*

- Clarifying Critical Issues
- Recommended Actions
- Cross Cutting Lenses
  - Inuit knowledge & perspective, human & environmental health, and international considerations;
  - Challenges facing Inuit women & youth, urban Inuit, & Inuit living with disabilities

**12:30 pm                      Buffet Lunch                      Lady Elgin Room**

**1:30 pm      Issue #2:<sup>1</sup>      *Environmental Management*      **Ontario Room****

*Objective: To explore Arctic-specific approaches (e.g. models, policies and information sharing, etc.) for managing the environment (i.e. land, wildlife, marine, water, food security, etc.).*

- Clarifying Critical Issues
- Recommended Actions
- Cross Cutting Lenses
  - Inuit knowledge & perspective, human & environmental health, and international considerations;
  - Challenges facing Inuit women, youth and urban & Inuit living with disabilities

**4:00 pm      **Defining Success on Climate Change and Environmental Management****

*Objective: To explore how we would determine that progress is being made on these issues and ideas.*

**4:30 pm      **End of Day One****  
*Facilitation Team*

**5:00pm – 7:00pm      **Reception**                      **Lady Elgin Room****

Cash bar & hors d'oeuvres (including Inuit country foods)

MC: Jose A. Kusugak, ITK President

Speakers: Nancy Karetak-Lindell, MP for Nunavut and Chair,  
Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs

Sheila Watt-Cloutier, Chair, Inuit Circumpolar Conference

---

<sup>1</sup> Health Breaks will be incorporated into each of the breakout sessions





**3:30 pm      Defining Success on Sustainable Development & Cumulative Effects, and  
Research & Monitoring**

*Objective: To explore how we would know we are making progress on these issues  
and ideas.*

**4:00 pm      Session Wrap-up      *Facilitation Team***

**4:15 pm      Closing Invocation**

***Backgrounder on the Environment***

**For Discussion at the Environment Sectoral Meeting, March 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>, 2005, Ottawa, Ontario**



**ᐃᐅᐃᑦ ᑕᐱᓃᑦ ᑲᐱᑕᑦ**  
**INUIT TAPIRIIT KANATAMI**

**Prepared by Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami**

**March 3, 2005**

**Ottawa, Canada**

# Backgrounder on the Environment

## Table of Contents

I. Introduction .....	2
II. Inuit Environmental Priorities.....	3
1. Climate Change .....	3
2. Environmental Management (terrestrial and marine zones) .....	6
3. Sustainable Development and Cumulative Effects.....	9
4. Arctic Research and Monitoring.....	11
III. Cross-Cutting Issues .....	13
1. Inuit Knowledge and Perspectives.....	13
2. Human/Animal and Environmental Health .....	14
3. The International Arctic.....	14
IV. Conclusion: Some Next Steps .....	15
A New Relationship.....	15
An Ongoing Presence within the Machinery of Government.....	15
Practical Actions .....	16

# Backgrounder on the Environment

## I. Introduction

Minister Paul Martin committed to close the gap between Aboriginal people and other Canadian at the Aboriginal Roundtable in April 2004. Progress was to be achieved through key areas as health, lifelong learning, housing, economic opportunities, negotiations and accountability. Inuit welcomed this initiative and are committed to working with all the relevant governments and organizations to develop positive new relationships and strategies that will guide substantive actions on a wide range of issues.

It is for this reason that Inuit have called for a session on the “environment”. Inuit understand intrinsically the need for a “holistic” or ecosystem-based approach. The Arctic is the homeland of the Inuit. The Arctic environment is inseparably joined with Inuit existence. ‘Nuna’ (Inuit homeland) provides Inuit life, health, psyche and spiritual balance. The health of humans, animals and the natural environment are tightly and profoundly connected in the Arctic.

We have created organizational systems through legislation and land claims agreements in an effort to find better ways to manage human activities in the natural world. Some structures and processes have become “stovepipes” which frustrate coordination and cooperation, and often result in *ad hoc* or short-lived solutions, or more worrisome, dismal failures that generate new categories of problems. Inuit believe we need to apply a more “holistic” or ecosystem-based analysis and discipline to these structures and processes.

Canada’s federal policy and research landscape is presently in a state of flux. From a policy perspective, discussions about the full implications of a more “holistic” or ecosystem-based approach are timely given the commitment to prepare the “first-ever” integrated Northern Strategy. Several major policy initiatives are currently underway which can affect Arctic environmental issues, some of which are:

- the development of the “first ever” integrated Northern Strategy
- the evaluation of the Northern Dimension of Canada’s Foreign Policy and its implications for Canadian priorities in the Arctic Council
- the Foreign Policy Review
- the development of a Kyoto Implementation Plan
- the Defense Policy Review
- Canadian participation in the International Polar Year.
- Inuit Secretariat

Due attention must be paid to Inuit interests and perspectives in a holistic approach as these and other policy and research initiatives are advanced.

Inuit agree with the Prime Minister’s view that the only way to change the current system is to set clear targets and measure results. This paper is intended to facilitate discussions that will lead to practical and measurable solutions to improve the quality of life of Inuit and protect Canada’s Arctic ecosystems. Are the structures and processes in legislation and land

# Backgrounder on the Environment

claims agreements achieving the desired goals and objectives? It is with that question that this background paper introduces Inuit environment priorities.

Inuit have identified four Arctic environmental priorities for this Sectoral Session.

- **Each of the priorities is presented in a manner that urges examination of existing programs or policies to be applied to Arctic or Inuit realities.**
- **A later section of the paper identifies three crucial cross-cutting issues which need to be addressed throughout discussions of each of the priorities.**
- **The conclusion of this background paper suggests next steps that need to be taken in an evolving relationship between the Inuit and the federal government.**

## II. Inuit Environmental Priorities

Inuit have identified four priority issues for discussion that need to be discussed for this Sectoral Session:

- 1) Climate change in the Arctic;
- 2) Environment Management (on terrestrial and marine zones);
- 3) Sustainable Development and Cumulative Effects of Development;
- 4) Arctic Research and Monitoring.

### 1. Climate Change

*"The whole planet will feel the effects of climate change, but it is happening in the Arctic right now. We have to deal with the consequences - our future depends on it."* -- (Jose Kusugak)

For Inuit climate change is an urgent issue. All but one of Canada's Inuit communities are located in coastal areas which are already affected by environmental changes.

Inuit have been observing and reporting change for years. Weather and season fluctuations are becoming unpredictable. In the western Arctic, for example, observed changes include the melting of permafrost, affecting ice-roads, making travel on land difficult and effecting food caching practices (meat spoilage). Land-slides have been noticed due to permafrost melt and coastal lines have changed in some communities endangering buildings and infrastructure.

Inuit have been reporting changes in animal behaviour as well. Musk oxen and other species are giving earlier births, caribou migrations have changed and polar bears are emerging earlier from hibernation and suffering from under-nourishment. Species such as Pacific salmon have now arrived to the Beaufort Sea. Increased open water is making marine mammal harvesting more difficult.

## Backgrounder on the Environment

Additional evidence of arctic warming has come recently from an international study, the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment (ACIA) Report. This comprehensive regional climate change assessment is the first of its kind and outlines findings Inuit have known for decades: that the climate and environment in the Arctic is changing at an alarming rate and that communities and the Inuit way of life will be inevitably severely affected.

The ACIA overview document has released the key findings of four years of scientific studies on climate impacts (ACIA 2004) – the scientific reports are expected to be published in fall 2005. Inuit were involved through the Inuit Circumpolar Conference's International Office membership in the Indigenous Peoples Secretariat (Watt-Cloutier et al. 2005).

The Arctic climate is changing at a rate almost twice as fast as that experienced in the lower latitudes. The ACIA concludes that unexpected and even larger shifts and fluctuations in weather patterns are possible. The implications of climate change for Inuit are serious. The speed of change is threatening Inuit livelihood and requires immediate action.

### **Vulnerability of Inuit communities**

Vulnerability entails three elements, the nature of climate change, the climatic sensitivity of a region and the capacity to adapt to the resulting changes.

*“Climate change has real and serious implications for Inuit life because much of the traditional knowledge is based on the times of seasons and not traditionally on temperatures. In other words, one does ‘this’ at ‘this time’ of the year rather than when the temperature gets ‘like this’.”* (Jose Kusugak)

### **Socio-economic impacts**

Degradation of permafrost, rising of sea-levels and mud-slides are examples of direct impacts on infrastructure and housing. The discussion of infrastructure does include discussing waste disposal, waste sites, road building and waste water technologies, housing and transportation.

Dietary problems associated with availability of food sources are among the indirect health impacts of climate change. Increased risk of human diseases (vector diseases), wildlife diseases and diseases transmitted to humans are among potential indirect health impacts.

### **Human induced climate change and the commitment to reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions**

There is a consensus among the scientific community that much of the present climate warming on Earth is due to human activities (IPCC 2001a). Scientists have realized that fossil fuel combustion and ecosystem disruption have triggered more rapid climate change and the effects of climate change are especially pronounced in Canada's North.

Increases in anthropogenic, i.e., human caused, greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions were measured to have increased global surface temperatures of more than 0.5C since the Industrial Revolution. According to the IPCC, Polar Regions were experiencing disproportionate levels of warming during the period (IPCC 2001b).

# Backgrounder on the Environment

Inuit urge Canada to take an international lead role in Arctic research and development. Significant reductions in emissions of greenhouse gas can be achieved with support for capacity building in housing and infrastructure technologies particularly for communities not connected to mainland power grids. Energy supply technologies and research and development are areas of great potential in Canada's Arctic.

## **Technology Development**

Decisions of whether current technologies are perceived as being sufficient or if new and more appropriate technologies are pursued will play an important role in how severe climate change will impact the social and economic life of Inuit. The availability of housing technologies, impacts on foundations and alternatives to current foundation technologies, the quality of existing housing-stock and the life-cycle of buildings will be important not only as economic opportunity but will determine the well-fare of many Arctic communities.

## **Arctic climate change and the international scene**

Reduced sea-ice is very likely to increase marine transport and access to resources. Changes are expected to impact on traditional activities and on the volume in sea traffic. The future use of the Northern Sea Route is likely to make trans-arctic shipping feasible during the summer. Cargo, exploration and military vessels will likely become a common presence during summers. Increased offshore extraction of oil and gas is expected as well. Environmental and political implications will need to be addressed.

## **Issues for discussion include:**

- Vulnerability of Inuit communities as a result of climate change
- Community capacity to respond and adapt to change
- Socio-economic impacts of climate change
- Health impacts of climate change
- Climate change and its effect on water quality and quantity
- Human induced climate change and the commitment to reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Energy and technology development as a result of climate change.
- Inuit and the Northern Sea Route
- Inuit contribution to the discourse on climate change
- Generation of base-line data
- Options for immediate action.

## **Areas for action:**

- Environmental health monitoring and monitoring of water quality and quantity in Inuit communities would support preventive measures to potential health impacts of climate change.
- An Inuit impact and adaptation strategy would be a first step to prepare for action.
- Leaders need to promote slowing down of the pace of climate change in the Arctic and elsewhere.



## Backgrounder on the Environment

- Resources and measures are necessary to improve the availability of information on climate change for Inuit. Inuit knowledge as well as scientific knowledge need to be brought to Inuit in all regions to enable an informed discussion and better participation by Inuit in federal climate change initiatives.
- Announce a Northern Climate Change Programme based on the highly successful Northern Contaminants Programme to assist in the coordination

### **2. Environmental Management (terrestrial and marine zones)**

Inuit are a circumpolar people that share a common language, cultural heritage, and archaeological record of settlement stretching from Siberia in the west, to northern Alaska and northern Canada in North America, and Greenland in the east. In Canada, the traditional Inuit homeland “nunangat” comprises almost one third of the land mass of Canada and includes fifty three communities primarily located along coastal areas that are only accessible by air and sea-lift on a seasonal basis and, in some cases, air alone on a year round basis.

The sustainable use and effective management of the Arctic land and ocean environment and the renewable resources living within these ecosystems are fundamental to the overall existence and future well being of Inuit. Inuit understand the critical need to preserve and sustain this integral relationship with the Arctic environment for health, nutritional, cultural, social, and economic well-being.

Not only do circumpolar Inuit today find themselves separated by international boundaries, the Inuit that live within the traditional homeland in Canada are also subject to different political, economic, and environmental management jurisdictions. Inuit in Canada are appropriately recognized as one “Aboriginal People” for constitutional and other purposes. Yet, as a result of the history of provincial and territorial boundary delineations and extensions, and the closely related process of the settlement of Inuit land claims agreements in Canada, the Inuit homeland in Canada is divided into four different Inuit “land claim settlement areas”. These, in turn, are located within three different territorial government jurisdictions (i.e., Nunavut, the Northwest Territories) and two provincial government jurisdictions (i.e., Quebec, and Newfoundland and Labrador).

Inuit want to hear a strong Inuit voice on environmental issues and see Inuit organizations take a more proactive role in dealing with Canada’s environment. Inuit Land Claim Agreements need to be seen as modern-day tools for upholding their perspectives and expressing their environmental concerns. There is a high degree of solidarity among Inuit in relation to environmental issues, both domestically and internationally. Action on environmental issues must be based on awareness that solutions require cooperation and collaboration among multiple domestic and international political jurisdictions.

Although the Inuit land claim settlement agreements have many different provisions, there are also many similarities when it comes to defining the rights for Inuit to participate in decision-making concerning the use, management and conservation of land, water and resources (including the offshore), and rights to participate in decision-making concerning

## Backgrounder on the Environment

wildlife harvesting. All of the agreements include provisions related to land ownership regimes, procedures for access to Inuit land, wildlife harvesting regimes, financial compensation, the review and assessment of development projects proposed for the settlement areas, and employment.

While Inuit have expressed this important linkage with their environment, they have also expressed concern about existing and future risks and impacts to their health and country food quality and security, especially in regard to the presence of persistent organic pollutants (POPs) and heavy metals throughout the Arctic environment and food chain. Inuit are aware of the fact that POPs is a global issue. However, the Arctic environment is especially sensitive and vulnerable to the accumulative and bio-magnifying effects in the Arctic food chain of these international and transboundary pollutants emitted into and transported by air and water from sources external to Inuit lands and Canadian borders. Research has linked other global level emissions as a causal factor in Global Greenhouse and Climate Change effects. Aside from international sources, Inuit are also concerned about the need to address pollutants arising from past and current domestic and local industrial activities and waste disposal that impact land and water resources and the health of communities and the overall health of the Arctic environment.

In regards to the connection of these Inuit local and regional structures to Federal Government structures, there is no single window for reporting Inuit issues, initiatives and programs within the Government of Canada. Many departments with clear and vital responsibilities and connections to Inuit issues, such as the Department of the Environment, Natural Resources, and Indian and Northern Affairs connect with Inuit National and International institutions from their Ottawa head office, and connect with Inuit Regional and local institutions through their regional offices. For example, the Inuit of the Western Arctic (Inuvialuit) and Eastern Arctic (Nunavut) are often engaged through a federal Prairie and Northern regional office, the Inuit of Nunavik through the Quebec regional office, while the Inuit of Labrador, come under the Federal Atlantic regional office. In this way, a united Inuit people often find themselves fractured in complex federal, territorial, and provincial jurisdictional relationships.

In Inuit eyes, however, a comprehensive Northern Strategy should not be restricted to a focus on the three territories but should include all Inuit living in the regions of NWT, Nunavut, Nunavik in Northern Quebec and Nunatsiavut in Northern Labrador. A Comprehensive Northern Strategy should seek to address and solve Northern challenges through inclusion and dialogue between Inuit, federal, territorial and provincial government jurisdictions that encompass these relationships.

A new Inuit-federal government relationship must embrace cooperation on local, regional, national and international environmental issues within the context of both the terrestrial and marine environments.

As stated earlier, Inuit are a coastal people. The effects of climate change, transboundary pollutants, increased arctic marine traffic, international marine research, and increasing exploitation of marine resources are all brought to the doorsteps of Inuit coastal communities.

## Background on the Environment

Federal legislation, land claims and self-government agreements with Inuit already provide some basis for improving the federal-Inuit cooperative relationship in respect of marine environmental issues in particular (e.g., the *Oceans Act*). Inuit land claims and self-government agreements give additional support to the need for Inuit-specific involvement in marine environmental issues.

On the international front, Canada collaborates with its circumpolar neighbours on a broad range of environmental issues which relate to the Arctic marine environment. For example, the Arctic Council's PAME working group (Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment) produced an Arctic Marine Strategic Plan which received Ministerial endorsement in November 2004. Other work in the Arctic Council in relation to pollution, emergency preparedness and response, shipping, biodiversity, marine protected areas and sustainable development is also of direct interest to Inuit.

Many international conventions and agreements involve issues important to Inuit: for example, the Convention on Biological Diversity, North American Free Trade Agreement, Commission on Environmental Cooperation, Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species, Marine Mammal Protection Act, United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Stockholm Agreement on POPs, Long Range Transport of Airborne Pollutants, and the Agreement on International Humane Trapping Standards. A formal review of such conventions and agreements where an Arctic perspective is lacking could be conducted under the soon to be released Canadian Foreign Policy Review to ensure Inuit concerns, perspectives and values are included.

To date domestic and international efforts have produced more words than action in Canada. Canada needs to significantly improve its internal processes for information collection and dissemination in relation to the Inuit and other residents of the Canadian north. Better domestic mechanisms are required to ensure that the positions Canada takes domestically, and in its Arctic Council and other international activities, are coherent, comprehensive, and coordinated.

In other words, not only does Canadian policy development in relation to Arctic marine issues need to be more integrated and comprehensive, Canada needs to implement its policies and act on its positions. Furthermore the action taken must provide substantive support for Inuit and Canadian interests in the Arctic.

### **Issues for discussion include:**

- Environmental monitoring
- Transboundary contaminants, mercury, and Persistent Organic Pollutants
- Conservation of biological diversity
- Country food quality and safety
- Fisheries management
- Oceans Management (Proposed Oceans Action Plan—2005 Federal Budget announcement committing \$28 million over 2 years)

## Backgrounder on the Environment

- Species Assessment and impacts on Inuit harvesting (Species at Risk Act 2003)
- Wildlife diseases (Zoonoses) transmitted to humans
- Water quality and quantity issues in Inuit communities.
- Land and Resource Management issues
- Parks and Conservation Areas
- The significance of the environment as a determinant of human health
- Domestic and industrial waste disposal and waste sites
- Nuclear Fuel Waste Disposal

### **Areas for action:**

- Inuit Land Claim Agreements need to be seen as modern-day tools for upholding their perspectives and expressing their environmental concerns. Their participation is vital in Arctic environmental management and monitoring.
- The Federal Government lacks an integrated approach and concerted efforts are needed to maintain a consistent relationship with Federal Departments with responsibilities for the environment (EC, NRCan, DFO, INAC, DFAIT).
- A united Inuit are often divided by a federal system that is defined by regional and sectoral approaches.
- Federal government desire for an Aboriginal “one-stop-shop” is problematic to Inuit as First Nations priorities override Inuit needs. First Nations issues are very different and many of them have no bearing on Inuit issues or structures, i.e. Land claims.
- The Federal Government must be prepared to commit funding for the implementation of legislative agreements which have good potential to address Inuit priorities (i.e., the Oceans Strategy).

### **3. Sustainable Development and Cumulative Effects**

Minimizing negative impacts on ecosystems while building economies is a sustainable development challenge in all regions of Canada – and even more so in the Arctic. Inuit agree with the view that *“Sustainable development meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”*

Environmentally, it is debatable as to how sustainable Arctic development is if we consider mega-projects and current infrastructures and their impacts on local eco-systems. The traditional Inuit economy of living off the land is thought of as a good example of a sustainable economy in the Arctic, when it comes to the environment, yet this is an economy that appears to be most threatened.

To make life sustainable in the Arctic, economic activities need to minimize negative impacts on local eco-systems. In order to do so, the current economic activities need to be reviewed in terms of scale, negative impacts, options in technologies, economic contribution to local economies and in the context of past and ongoing other activities.

## Backgrounder on the Environment

Large projects exploiting non-renewable resources are driven by global and/or Southern demand and have large impacts on local economies, environments and cultures. The impact of human actions is often described in terms of human ‘footprint’, which shows alterations of local ecosystems by activities associated with oil and gas exploration, settlement, road development, and recreation. Environmental assessments are intended to help eliminate or reduce a project’s potential impacts on the environment before a project begins.

When considering economic development and resource extraction, one needs to look beyond direct immediate impacts on the environment and rather at the cumulative effects of developments. **Cumulative effects** are changes to the environment that are caused by an action in combination with other past, present, and future human actions. Thresholds need to be identified to be able to assess at what time the number or the type of developments together reach a point where the impact will be irreversible (e.g., impacts on caribou herd populations, on freshwater quality/quantity). There is a need to identify when an additional development is one too many.

To minimize negative impacts, technologies can be, and are being, developed and applied. However, products, technologies, services are imported from the South – they are made by the South for the South and often do not work in the Arctic. Continuous importing of goods and services into one region creates dependencies if the flow of goods goes only one way and is not balanced by a stream of goods going out of the region. The lack of economic sectors in the Arctic, such as manufacturing and research and development, make this dependency even more pronounced.

Technology development and manufacturing is lacking in the Arctic. Federal policies support research and development but do not consider the specific characteristics of Arctic communities. Often, there is a “Northern” element to initiatives, such as under the National Research Council and Inuit are forced to compete with a region such as the Yukon for resources.

The federal government may well benefit to give Inuit the opportunity to participate in federal departmental reviews of sustainable development strategies.

### **Issues for discussion include:**

- Existing measure to assess cumulative effects.
- Relation between “Mega-projects”, the environment, and community capacity.
- In the context of community development, for example, elements for discussion would include ecological protection, maintenance of biological diversity, healthy local economy, sustainable transportation, affordable housing, livable community, low-impact sewage and storm-water treatment, water conservation, energy efficiency, etc..

# Backgrounder on the Environment

## **Areas for Action:**

- Cease “lumping” of government initiative into one “Northern” component.
- Ensure that land and resource management is carried out in ways that not only respects but also build on Inuit rights, views and interests. Such a development should promote meaningful sustainable development and minimizes cumulative effects.
- Economic opportunities should be created that sustain and supplement traditional economies of Inuit while minimize environmental impacts and maximize Arctic biodiversity.
- Evaluations and measures need to be established on effects of development so that Inuit are able to make critical decisions on the growth rate of development.
- Conduct further research and analysis of the cumulative effects of mega-project and other development activities.
- Identify “lessons learned” from previous cumulative assessments.
- Create regional biophysical/land use databases to assist in the identification of cumulative effects thresholds.

## ***4. Arctic Research and Monitoring***

Arctic research is fundamental and pivotal on all levels of Arctic governance, environmental understanding and protection. The results of good research are needed at the international, national, regional, and community levels. Arctic research has been, and continues to be, important to the industrial sector as well. During recent decades Arctic research, particularly by Canadians, has diminished tremendously until lately and new policies are needed to replenish Arctic research.

Canada is a Polar nation and other nations look for Canadian leadership in Arctic research. Inuit adhere to that outlook and support the idea that conducting research and monitoring of the Arctic environment is important, particularly research and monitoring initiatives that address Inuit priorities.

Rigorous base-line data and credible Arctic research results are a pivotal tool from which good decisions can be made. Decision-makers at all levels need a reliable source of information for the formulation of appropriate policy decisions and actions, and for the subsequent evaluation of those policies and actions.

The conduct of scientific research has been a source of contention between local communities and visiting researchers in the Canadian Arctic for many years. Inuit frequently complain that researchers do not adequately inform local communities about their work. Inuit communities also feel that they have lacked sufficient control over how their knowledge is obtained, interpreted, communicated, and applied by outsiders. Inuit and researchers alike are acknowledging these problems, and recognizing that there is a critical need to find new ways for both groups to work together.

## Background on the Environment

Clearly, there is a need for coordinated and credible research to be conducted on most of the issues for discussion expressed in this background paper. There is a need to promote these developing partnerships with Inuit at all levels and from the earliest planning stages in federal research initiatives and programs that effect the North. Good examples of best practices in the area of the environment include the Northern Contaminants Program (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada), the Northern Ecosystem Initiative (Environment Canada), and the Sustainable Communities Initiative (Natural Resources Canada). These programs have strived to develop meaningful partnerships with Inuit because of an honest belief that these important challenges are best addressed in this way.

The relationship between knowledge gained from research and policy can be reflected in the question, what is changing and why is it changing? It is in this way that environmental research is directly related to monitoring, which is the repeated observation of key variables over time and space and is intended to answer the previous question.

Inuit believe that any monitoring network should strive to provide the information that is relevant to the needs of decision-makers at the local, regional, national and international level – clearly this includes Inuit. The need for status and trend information is reflected in the number of independent initiatives that are emerging in the North (e.g., North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP), Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF), Circumpolar Biodiversity Monitoring Network (CBMN), Plant Watch, Ice Watch, GLOBE, EMAN- North, etc.).

Environmental monitoring is taking place in the Canadian Arctic on a case-by-case basis. Without a coordinated monitoring plan that compiles all available information from various monitoring projects and supplements monitoring activities already taking place, it will continue to be impossible to answer the question “What is the current state of the Arctic environment?” Moreover, monitoring projects and plans in the Arctic should take into account Inuit concerns at the community level and Inuit Knowledge generally. Steps need to be taken to ensure Inuit concerns and Inuit Knowledge are collected and influence the decision-making processes of current and future monitoring efforts.

The Nunavut Land Claims Agreement (NLCA) contains provisions relating to the development of a comprehensive environmental and socio-economic monitoring program for the settlement area. The Nunavut General Monitoring Program is intended to identify changes in the long-term state and health of the settlement area, and to act as an early-warning system for changes in the environment. The NLCA delegates the program to the joint leadership of the Nunavut Planning Commission and INAC. However, this program has not been developed by INAC or implemented by NPC.

There is a need for an inventory of current Arctic monitoring programs to be completed as the last comprehensive inventory of environmental monitoring programs in Arctic Canada was completed by the CAFF Canadian Network in 1998. A partnership between existing monitoring experts and Inuit with the expressed interest to begin designing a coordinated Canadian Arctic Monitoring Program would have a better chance of producing reliable sources of information for the formulation of appropriate policy decisions and actions.

# Backgrounder on the Environment

## **Issues for discussion include:**

- Increase participation in international research efforts such as the International Polar Year
- Support and increase the research capacity and use of existing Northern research centres and institutions
- Improve coordination of National and International research licensing processes and guidelines for responsible research (research coordination and control), to ensure more efficient and effective research and limit community impacts and elders exhaustion.
- Support links between Arctic and other research institutions
- Promote the training and education of Inuit in environmental fields, as well as research and monitoring conducted by Northerners.
- Need for better/more base-line data to inform policy at all levels

## **Areas for action:**

- Increase the appreciation of the value of Inuit Knowledge and encourage its use in the decision-making processes of governments and organizations working on environmental issues in Canada.
- Contribute to greater use of Inuit Knowledge in scientific research and studies.
- Ensure opportunities for children and youth to acquire Inuit Knowledge in new and evolving environmental circumstances.
- Develop an inventory of current Arctic monitoring programs and a strategy for coordinating all Arctic Monitoring initiatives.

## **III. Cross-Cutting Issues**

Three overarching, cross-cutting issues are identified as being critical in discussing the priorities. The first one is the Inuit Knowledge and perspectives; followed by the complex and all important human/animal/environmental health. The third concern is the fact that Arctic life and environmental issues are international in nature and many of the issues needs to be dealt with in global context.

### ***1. Inuit Knowledge and Perspectives***

With respect to the environment, Inuit Knowledge is based on the understanding that Inuit are an integral part of the environment and that land, water, air and wildlife issues cannot be considered without Inuit being part of the equation.

There is a general policy requirement in Canada, and in the North in particular, for Inuit Knowledge/TEK to be considered and incorporated into environmental assessment and



## Backgrounder on the Environment

management. However, there is virtually no guidance as to how to implement these policy measures. Nor is there sufficient understanding of the implications and practicalities for incorporating Inuit Knowledge into formal decision-making processes.

To reduce frustration for Inuit and environmental stakeholders in Canada there needs to be ongoing discussion and collaboration to develop the practices that are conducive to acquiring, understanding, and integrating Inuit Knowledge into decision-making in relation to the environment, ensuring opportunities for children and youth to acquire Inuit Knowledge in new and evolving environmental circumstances.

### **2. Human/Animal and Environmental Health**

Environmental issues surrounding food security, wildlife management, contaminants, pollution and waste are critically important as determinants of Inuit health and the health of the bio-physical environment. Inuit prefer to eat locally available foods; however, POPs, mercury and other pollutants have entered the food system creating anxieties among the Inuit about the very food they rely on for their health, culture and economy. What is being done about that fact Inuit food has become contaminated by contaminants? Moreover, what would be the reaction in southern Canada if beef or poultry contained levels of contaminants comparable to what has been determined in arctic areas?

It is Inuit who bear the immediate and long-term consequences of such substances. Similarly, if significant changes occur in the Arctic lands, air, waters, and animals as a result of greenhouse gas induced climate warming, it is Inuit and other northern indigenous peoples who will suffer the most immediate physical, spiritual, economic, and social impacts. Arctic Regions serve as clear and early indicators of such global problems. In this respect, Inuit are the ‘*human face*’ of the effects of environmental change. It should not be surprising, therefore, that Inuit take a very strong position in demanding a tough and effective Canadian policy related to the control of contaminants and greenhouse gas emissions throughout the world.

These matters are increasingly being studied in Canada and in other multinational forums like the Arctic Council. It is a vital interest of Inuit that this research and information be made available to local communities and health care authorities in understandable, culturally appropriate and context-sensitive ways. Inuit need to have appropriate information from which to make their own sound decisions.

### **3. The International Arctic**

The Inuit “nunangat” – Inuit homeland – is not only separated by provincial and territorial borders. In international context the borders are national ones. The Yupiat and Chukchi are residents of the Russian Federation. Other Yupiat and Inupiat live in the state of Alaska in the United States of America. The Inuit of Greenland exercise home rule under the Danish Crown.

## Background on the Environment

The Inuit Circumpolar Conference (Canada) has been one Inuit “watch-dog” organization that has acted as an advocate on behalf of Inuit in Canada to raise awareness and engage policy makers, (nationally and internationally) on environmental issues with circumpolar or international dimensions. The Inuit Circumpolar Conference (International) for many years have worked towards historic achievements such as the establishment of the UN Permanent Forum of Indigenous Peoples and the international agreement to eliminate persistent organic pollutants (The Stockholm Convention) where they called upon governments to enact domestic legislation and promote multi-lateral agreements that would reduce or eliminate harmful environmental damage and resulting human health problems in the Arctic. This Inuit international organization lobbied their respective governments to immediately ratify the Stockholm Convention and the Kyoto Agreement in Russia, USA, Canada, and Denmark. ICC participated in ministerial summits, Senior Arctic Officials (SAO) meetings, and Arctic Council working groups to promote circumpolar human and bio-physical health.

Organizations such as ICC (Canada) have insufficient resources to undertake the longer-term strategies and remedial actions necessary to address external threats from climate change, POPS and other pan-arctic environmental issues. These initiatives and others need to be supported and ICC has engaged in some capacity building activities in Russia and Belize and Canada. A broader strategy could be developed to allow Inuit governments and communities to contribute Inuit Knowledge to capacity building efforts in other regions of the world as part of a long-term strategy to address global issues like climate change.

The impacts of climate change on the sea-ice environment are anticipated to make the Arctic more accessible to cargo, exploration and military vessels. Ice-reduced or ice-free Northwest and Northeast Passages would be of particular concern to Inuit and internationally to Canada. This increased accessibility is likely to have environmental and political implications.

### **IV. Conclusion: Some Next Steps**

#### ***A New Relationship***

As recently as the budget address of February 23, 2005, the Government of Canada has stated its commitment to a new relationship with Aboriginal peoples based on partnership and respect, and rooted in economic self-reliance.

The Prime Minister has acknowledged the need to break away from Aboriginal policy under a First-Nation’s-on-Reserve umbrella: “It is of utmost importance that we recognize the unique culture, lifestyle and environment of the Inuit peoples – and their increasing contribution to the realization of our northern dream.”

#### ***An Ongoing Presence within the Machinery of Government***

In the 2005 budget the Government of Canada also committed to provide funding for an Inuit Secretariat. There needs to be ongoing transparent consultation with Inuit on the establishment this Secretariat within the Government of Canada. Among other things, its

## Backgrounder on the Environment

mandate and capacity need to be addressed in order to create a mechanism that can measurably improve our joint performance on the sorts of issues discussed in this paper and other Sectoral Sessions.

### ***Practical Actions***

Through a new relationship with Inuit and their institutions in the North, and through new federal government mechanisms such as an Inuit Secretariat, immediate attention must be focused in reforming policies and finding practical solutions in the context of an eco-system based approach to Inuit issues as described throughout this paper.

At the Roundtable, Inuit submitted to the Prime Minister three fundamental initiatives that could be a foundation for this new relationship.

- an Inuit Partnership Accord
- a new Land Claims Implementation Policy and
- Inuit-Specific Policies and Programs.

In addition to these actions, Inuit believe a concerted effort must be made to compile the outcomes of the Sectoral sessions in order to begin

- To Identify key short, medium and long-term goals and objectives for Inuit regions of Canada
- To Identify issues which require cooperative action by Canada and Inuit
- To assign some priorities to these issues
- To develop an integrated strategy for taking action on these issues
- To assign roles and responsibilities for carrying out actions
- To inform Inuit and the Canadian public of the measurable progress being made in restoring Inuit and Canadian leadership in Arctic affairs.

The Prime Minister has taken the beginning steps to seek solutions to challenges facing Inuit. Recommendations flowing from this session should be forwarded to the Cabinet Policy Retreat in the Spring of 2005.

Inuit acknowledge that solutions will not be found overnight, but we need to begin working together if we are to regain leadership in these fields and not be accused of simply paying lip service to processes and ideals for which we have no conviction.