



COMMITTEE for ORIGINAL PEOPLES ENTITLEMENT

Post Office Box 2000

Inuvik, N.W.T.

XOE 0T0

January, 1976

Concerns - Mackenzie Delta Communities

These concerns have been taken from the transcripts of the Berger Community Hearings in the Delta Communities as well as the field notes of COPE's field workers, the testimony of Sam Raddi and Nellie Cournoyea in the formal hearings, the brief presented to the Honorable Marc Lalonde in 1975 on health care by COPE, and the follow-up study done for COPE by George Wentzel entitled Resident's Perceptions of the Health Delivery System in Six Settlements in the Inuvik Region, NWT.

This is surely not a complete list nor does it outline solutions but it does outline problem areas people themselves thought important enough to tell to Berger in considering their present situation and some of the things they wish for their future. Many of the concerns outlined below overlap the artificial headings I've put them under. They also deal with social, health, cultural, education, local government, etc. areas. The concerns expressed about the land, areas of importance, environmental protection, etc. I leave to those with the expertise in those areas. These are not in order of importance or priorities to the people who expressed them.

Education and the hostel system

1. The school and hostel system was identified as the single most important factor in the loss of language, culture, traditional skills and values by both young and old alike.

Education is seen as very important and wanted so that young people have the skills and knowledge to take advantage of the jobs and opportunities of "development" but also wanted is an emphasis on the values, culture, language and skills on the land

Kids come out of school and fit nowhere - can't get a job and don't stick with jobs in the white man's world but cannot survive off the land either. Don't obey their parents or pay attention to them, think their elders don't know anything.

In school I lost everything - language, culture: could not express myself as an Inuit and when I returned home I couldn't communicate with my parents and grandparents.. The elders called me "stupid" as I couldn't communicate with them. But I couldn't stand Inuvik, the school, the hostel and quit. Took me a long time to re-learn language, skills.

High school in Inuvik is no good. Parents want their children home and when kids go there in the 8th-9th grades (or Yellowknife), they get lonely and quit. We want our children home so they can go out to the bush with us. Inuvik is a bad place and where kids get into trouble

Need high school in our own communities (Aklavik and Tuk) and training centers nearer to home. Ft. Smith is no good - too far away and alien environment

Lanuage - Emerged again and again as something people wanted for their children and young people spoke of their loss of lanuage in the schools as a key factor in their inability to communicate with their own families and their loss of identity as belonging anywhere

2. Control of land and "development" upon it.

The land is our bank on which we can always depend. Can't trust the temporary jobs of government-industry and their lies.

Development must slow down because it is happening too fast and we don't understand what is going on. Further, we lack the skills and education to gain advantages from it.

Many people won't be able to work in the new developments: lack education, lack skills and do not want to participate. Want the choice to continue on the land and this option for our children because it is a good life.

Need programs to aid those who want wage employment but also aid to those who want more of a traditional life.

Fear of "outsiders" - whites, coming in and "spoiling" kids: liquor, dope, taking advantage of young women. Basic fear of the loss of their land, destruction of their communities, families, way of life.

Land claims seen as the only way to control unwanted development but people need the time to work it out also.

Fear of being ripped off by "development" from the outside based on past experience. Promised jobs which never materialized and never received compensation for destroyed traps, trap-lines, camps, etc.

DEW-line experience: temporary jobs and people lost equipment to live off the land. The jobs ended and people left with nothing. Whites have the good steady jobs

3. Political control

Fear of outsiders coming in and outnumbering us and controlling everything, schools, government, etc.

But there is also the recognition and sense of powerlessness that Inuit control nothing now. Government came in and "spoiled" us - government decides everything without ever asking us and people now are dependent upon government.

Government and industry are together. They try to fool people, put them on boards as tokens. Try to scare people saying if there is no "development" on their terms, people will be poor and services will be taken away.

We can't trust the government because it has always has ripped us off. Fooled us too many times.

Before government we did alright and managed ourselves but now the government is running everything. If they continue like this and pay no attention to us Inuit won't last long as a people and a culture.

"Consultation" means nothing. We are given incomplete information or misinformation. We have freely given our knowledge but in the final outcome of decisions, our information is used against us or not considered. The decisions always goe against us. Our only hope is land claims with control legally, politically and economically.

3

Residence voting requirement: 10 years for local and Territorial elections.
(Terms and Conditions in final Berger Submission)

It is so hard or impossible to get funding for our own programs such as Ingamo Hall and recreation programs

Culture and Society

Things have changed and for the worse. People don't share or cooperate as we used to. Nobody does anything unless he is paid

People have been spoiled and no longer do anything for themselves. Government which controls and regulates everything.

Sure, I work 5 days a week but weekends and holidays it's to the bush. I am Inuk even tho I work steadily and I have to have that freedom to leave and go on the land.

People depend on country food even if they live in Inuvik and work part-time or full-time for wages. Couldn't live on store food because it costs so much and it doesn't taste very good. And country food makes you feel good and strong.

Many people are going back to the land. They use their wages to buy equipment which costs alot. Wage employment does not substitute for life on the land and alot more people would do it if they had the capital to buy equipment.

Y outh (Inuvik): We want to participate in Canadian society but we cannot do so without our culture and pride. We need alternatives including life on the land.

Inuit Youth

We need jobs here in the community for our kids. They won't be able to go outside and live.

Y outh: Inuvik: Holman: Paulatuk: will there be anything left for us after "development"? We want our land and the opportunity to go out on it and pass this opportunity onto our children.

We want to give our kids our knowledge, understanding, the things we enjoy and are good to do

Housing

Poorly built and unfair in how new houses get distributed. No assistance to build the kind of houses we want and which we own

Social and Health Services and Problems

1. People do not reject social and health services but they are inadequate, unsuited to Inuit needs, carried out without Inuit involvement. Inappropriate and ineffective

2. Solutions and treatment need to be here in their own communities, not sending people out to Edmonton and other places where they are alone

3. Money and jobs are not the answer to social and health problems: with more money and wage employment you see also more alcohol consumption, violence, child abuse, family breakdown.

4. Welfare system is spoling people: it is given to those who don't need it and used for liquor, gambling

5. People don't understand much of what happens to them in the hospital: doctors and nurses don't explain and talk in English which people can't understand for complicated instructions and explanations.
6. Lack of alcohol treatment, rehab, education programs; lack of mental health programs
7. Division of social and health services: warring empires of government jurisdiction in which Inuit (and Indian-Metis) are caught in-between.
8. Environmental Health: adequate and safe water, sewage and garbage disposal. Whose responsibility between Territorial and federal jurisdictions?
9. Specific complaints of Delta communities over health and social services: the absence of any control over programs, personnel, priorities of health and social needs.
10. Aklavik and Inuvik: quality of health care perceived as inadequate - "go south if you want decent care".
11. Lack of visits by specialists: poorly timed visits when families out on the land: inappropriate hours of nursing stations: negative attitudes of doctors and nurses

Research

We never know why it is being done and we never see the results. Often we find afterwards that our words are used against us.

We must be involved in any research taking place and involved in the decision if it is to be allowed in the first place.

We need more research into alcohol problems and what are effective ways to treat it among native people. All people are not alike and we may need different programs. We also need to know why education is not working for the Inuit

Land Claims

1. It is seen as not only land but the only means to control, protect and develop our communities, culture, families, society

Economic Development

People participate in both the wage and traditional economy, even in Inuvik.

Most native adults and many young people are not seeking lifetime careers: they want to live in their home communities with families and continue to hunt and fish. Most are not interested in long-term training or jobs which take them away from their communities

Inuit people want to take part in business opportunities but lack of experience, education and differing culture. Combined with inappropriate government rules and regulations and often poor assistance and technical advice.

Been no adequate inventory of stock and productivity of renewable resources nor any study of economic potential of these resources.

Transportation and communications

Concern of the lack of native content into radio and T.V. programs.

Justice and Legal System

Need for legal education and assistance both civil and criminal.

Problem of correctional facilities for adults and young people.

Welfare

A complex mess. A very strong hostility to the current welfare system in Dene communities but I am not that familiar with what Inuit think of the present system except for alot of hostility against how it is handled in Tuk and Aklavik. Also seen as inequitable in how it is distributed.

July 1982