

Preliminary Report on the Inuit Qaujimajatuganit
Regarding Areva's "Road Options"

Prepared for the Baker Lake Hunters and Trappers Organization

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This report is the result of research commissioned by the Baker Lake Hunters and Trappers Organization and conducted in the community of Baker Lake between February 20th and February 27th, 2011. In this time period, 10 individual interviews were conducted with hunters and Elders familiar with the Kiggavik area. Additionally, a meeting with 16 people (all 8 members of the HTO board and 8 other hunters and Elders familiar with the Kiggavik area, 6 of whom had been interviewed previously) was held on February 27th, 2011. The design of the study and the agenda of interviews and the meeting were developed in conjunction with the Hunters and Trappers Organization and other participants in the research. The focus of these interviews and the meeting was the potential impact of Areva Resources Canada Inc.'s different "road options" on wildlife and Inuit harvesting practices. However, space was made for people to voice other concerns, and the conversations often drifted to other topics. Cumulative impacts on wildlife and issues that Inuit are having with the review process came up repeatedly. Additionally, many hunters and Elders voiced concerns with uranium mining in general. We firmly believe that Inuit concerns about Areva's different "road options" cannot be understood in isolation from other social, economic, political and environmental issues at play in the community of Baker Lake. Accordingly, we have made some space in this report for the other issues that hunters and Elders discussed during the interviews and meetings.

We should begin by saying a few words about the relevance of this study to the review of the Kiggavik proposal. The limited number of people involved makes it difficult to interpret this study as either "community support" or "community opposition" to the Kiggavik proposal. Ultimately, only a community plebiscite could be used to assess the level of community support or opposition to the Kiggavik proposal. However, as the study is based on information provided by experts on the Kiggavik area and representatives elected by local hunters, it remains an important contribution to the discussion of the Kiggavik proposal that cannot be ignored or taken lightly.

We should also emphasize that this is a *preliminary* report. It has been compiled to ensure that as much information as possible is communicated with the Hunters and Trappers

Organization and Nunavut Impact Review Board in a timely manner, as this review seems to be progressing quite quickly. A map and more comprehensive report detailing caribou migration routes and land use in the area are in the works. Furthermore, there are hopes that we can continue to work with the Baker Lake Hunters and Trappers Organization to document land use in the area and provide more detailed and specific accounts of the concerns hunters and Elders have with the Kiggavik proposal.

CONCERNS WITH ROADS IN GENERAL

Throughout the interviews and workshops, hunters and Elders referred repeatedly to their experiences with the all-weather road connecting the Meadowbank gold mine (operated by Agnico-Eagle Mines Limited) to the community of Baker Lake. It should be emphasized that the information provided to us was sometimes contradictory. Different hunters and Elders had different perspectives on the impact the Meadowbank road has had on Inuit harvesting activities and wildlife populations.

Some hunters and Elders discussed the positive implications the road has had for Inuit harvesting. They highlighted the fact that the road has made travel easier and faster for many hunters, enabling them to travel further in pursuit of wildlife. Some emphasized the benefit this has for the safety of younger, less experienced hunters. One recounted a story of a young hunter who became lost in a blizzard and was able to find his way home by following the road.

However, some hunters and Elders complained about the restrictions placed on road use. Many of their complaints had to do with the way they were consulted about roads during the approval process for the Meadowbank gold mine. They claimed that they were told that they would have unrestricted access to the road for harvesting purposes. However, Cumberland Resources (the original proponent of the Meadowbank mine) obtained permission from the Nunavut Impact Review Board to construct a private, not public, access road. While this restriction was not initially enforced, Agnico-Eagle Mines (the proponent that obtained the rights to the Meadowbank mine from Cumberland

Resources) later constructed gatehouses along the road. Subsequently, a series of events led the Hamlet of Baker Lake and Agnico-Eagle Mines to submit a joint request to the Nunavut Impact Review Board to have the issue of road access reconsidered. The Nunavut Impact Review Board subsequently approved of limited and controlled public access to the road.¹ Public access to the road is limited to All Terrain Vehicle traffic for “traditional Inuit activities”. Furthermore, Inuit wishing to use the road must first obtain a pass from the Baker Lake Hunters and Trappers Organization.

Hunters and Elders complained that they were initially told that they would have free access to the road, and only found out much later (once the mine was built) that their use of the road would be restricted. While they seemed to accept the compromise involving a gatehouse and passes from the HTO, hunters and Elders still found this system an annoyance. They complained of the need to act quickly when caribou are in the area, and the hassle caused by the need for a pass. Some felt that it was unfair that companies are making profits off of land that Inuit feel belong to them, yet Inuit are not allowed to freely use the roads that are built.

Other hunters and Elders highlighted the problems the road is causing for snowmobile travel during winter months. Some recounted stories of having difficulties crossing the road by snowmobile due to a buildup of snow on either side of the road, especially in the winter of 2011. In addition to being an annoyance, some hunters and Elders felt that they waste a great deal of fuel trying to find acceptable places to cross the road. Others emphasized the time that is wasted trying to find a crossing point. This was raised primarily by Inuit with wage-labor jobs (often necessary to fund harvesting activities). This may be due to the fact that their time on the land is already controlled and cut short by work schedules and environmental conditions. It should be stressed that the impacts roads have on snowmobile travel must be considered in light of these types of cumulative impacts on Inuit harvesting.

¹ For more information, see NIRB file No. 03MN107: “Hearing Report for the NLCA 12.8.2 Reconsideration of Condition 32 of the Meadowbank Gold Mine Project Certificate (No. 004)”

Most hunters and Elders expressed a concern that fewer caribou have been seen near Baker Lake in recent years. However, different hunters and Elders had different perspectives on what was causing this decline in caribou. A small number of hunters and Elders felt that the decline in caribou was a result of an increased number of other animals in the area. They felt that increases in wolf and muskox populations were driving caribou out of the Baker Lake area. They felt that the Meadowbank road has had a minimal impact on caribou, and that caribou have adjusted to the noise, dust and smell associated with the road.

However, the majority of hunters and Elders expressed opinions that seemed to contradict this explanation. They felt that the Meadowbank road has had a direct impact on wildlife. They felt that the noise, the smell of exhaust, and the large amount of dust that becomes airborne when the road is in use are connected to the low numbers of caribou in the area in the recent past. One hunter suggested that it appears as if, after a number of years, caribou now know that the road is there and have adapted by avoiding the area. As a result, some suggested that the construction of more roads would mean that hunters would have to travel further to catch game. Some were concerned that this would mean they would have to spend more money on gasoline, stove fuel and other supplies.

Some other concerns were expressed regarding the prospect of more roads in general. Some hunters and Elders were concerned that, in addition to caribou populations, wolf, wolverine and fox populations would also move further away from the area, making it more difficult to harvest these species. All four species are important sources of income for many hunters in Baker Lake. Others were concerned with the impacts dust from the proposed roads would have on vegetation in the area. Others raised concerns that dust from roads might impact fish populations in nearby lakes, rivers and streams.

Other concerns included the potential impact of spills (of petroleum or yellowcake) on fish, plants and terrestrial wildlife. For some, the concern with spills was related to concerns regarding the ability of employees from the south to operate vehicles in Northern weather conditions. The recent accident and related fuel spill on the

Meadowbank road² has reinforced some people's concerns with the potential for spills of fuel, uranium ore and other chemicals used in the mining and milling of uranium. While there are mitigation and cleanup plans for spills, some hunters and Elders claimed that they could still smell the fuel spill on the Meadowbank road months after cleanup efforts.

Some hunters and Elders were also concerned with the manner in which more roads might impact their land use. They were curious if hunting would be restricted near new roads as a safety precaution, because this would likely have a negative impact on their ability to harvest wildlife. Many were also concerned with whether or not they would be permitted to use the road for hunting trips.

AREVA'S ROAD OPTIONS

Attempts were made to document the areas harvesters utilize most in the area where Areva is proposing to build roads, mines and other infrastructure. Many hunters and Elders found this question difficult to answer. Some claimed that while they have cabins and regular camping spots, they "hunt all over", and change their land use regularly. One person interviewed connected the fact that Inuit now regularly change their hunting grounds to the centralization of Baker Lake's population into the current settlement. Some conveyed the sense that making Inuit describe their specific hunting territories was problematic because it seemed to imply that if the road was not located near their cabins or common travel routes it would not impact their harvesting practices. They felt that, due to the many different areas they hunt, fish and trap in today, any road would have impacts on their harvesting activities.

Regardless, it is important to note that the majority of Inuit interviewed hunt and travel regularly in the area where Areva is proposing to build roads mines and other infrastructure. Further work organizing data from interviews needs to be done and more interviews need to be conducted before an accurate picture of Inuit land use in the area

² For more information, see: *CBC News North*, October 8, 2010, *Fuel spilled near Nunavut mine*. Available online: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/story/2010/10/08/meadowbank-mine-fuel-spill.html>

can be provided. However, for now it must suffice to emphasize that the interviews and meetings made it quite clear that many Inuit continue to hunt, fish and trap throughout the area where Areva is proposing to construct infrastructure. A large number of Inuit travel up the Thelon River to Aberdeen Lake, Qamanaajuk Lake and Shultz Lake, especially in the summer months. They fish and hunt caribou at water crossings near these lakes, and hunt caribou and fish in areas near the shores of the Thelon River. Many also travel to this area in the winter, hunting caribou, wolves, wolverine and fox along the way. Others travel further south to Pitz Lake in the summer and Mallery Lake and Princess Mary Lake in the winter. Again, we must emphasize that this is only a partial description of land use in the area, and more analysis and interviews need to be conducted.

During the interviews and meeting, hunters and Elders discussed the manner in which the different proposed road options might impact harvesting activities and wildlife. Specific concerns related to each road option have been organized into lists below. These specific concerns should be understood as being an addition to the more general concerns about roads discussed above.

NORTH ALL-WEATHER ROAD

- One hunter suggested that this road option might help hunters travel further on the land during the summer months.
- Several hunters and Elders highlighted the fact that caribou are in the area year-round where the north all-weather road is being proposed. Many were concerned with the fact that caribou cross the area where the road would be built during migrations.
- One Elder was concerned that this road option might negatively impact Inuit hunting in the fall when caribou furs are suitable for making winter clothing. As caribou fur is only suitable for clothing-production during a short period of time, this could have a substantial negative impact on the ability of Inuit to obtain furs to produce clothing, which is necessary for hunting and other land-based activities

in the winter months. Furthermore, not having access to caribou skins when they are just right for making outdoor clothing would negatively affect the Inuit culture.

- Two hunters were concerned that this road option might impact wolf hunting west of the Thelon River.
- Several hunters and Elders were concerned that the bridge over the Thelon River would disturb caribou migrations, as caribou cross the Thelon River near the proposed bridge location.
- Several hunters and Elders were concerned with the impact this road option might have on fish spawning and migration areas in streams west of the Thelon River.

SOUTH ALL-WEATHER ROAD

- Several hunters and Elders highlighted the fact that caribou are in the area where the south all-weather road is being proposed during the spring, summer and early fall. Some were concerned with the fact that caribou cross the area where the road would be built during migrations. It is unclear as to the location of the actual caribou crossing these hunters and Elders were referring to, in relation to the proposed road location.
- Some hunters and Elders highlighted the fact that the area where the south all-weather road is being proposed is used by muskox. They were concerned that muskox might be driven further away from Baker Lake.
- One hunter was concerned that this road option is being proposed near wetlands that geese utilize as habitat. He was concerned that this habitat might be destroyed during construction and was worried this might make goose hunting more difficult.

WINTER ROAD

- Some hunters and Elders highlighted the fact that the area where the winter road is being proposed is used by muskox. They were concerned that muskox might be driven further away from Baker Lake.
- Some hunters and Elders highlighted the fact that, while fewer caribou are in the area during the winter and that dust would not be as big of a concern during the winter months, the caribou that do stay in the area during the winter are more sensitive to disturbance and easily startled.

PERSPECTIVES ON ROAD OPTIONS

Throughout the interviews, hunters and Elders had different opinions regarding which road option, if any, would be preferable. Additionally, at the meeting, no consensus was reached on the matter. Some expressed distaste with being asked which road option would be ideal, because they were unsure if they wanted any roads built at all. Some were outspokenly opposed to the construction of more roads anywhere near Baker Lake. Regardless of the varied opinions, the majority of people who spoke at the meeting indicated that they did not want any all-weather roads constructed. The question of whether or not a winter road would be acceptable was discussed, with some hunters and Elders open to the idea and others opposed.

It should also be emphasized that those who were not necessarily opposed to the construction of roads were offering a very conditional form of support. They felt that roads would be acceptable if traffic and construction activities were stopped when caribou were migrating in the area. Furthermore, some stressed that these means stopping traffic in time to allow the first caribou in a herd to cross, because disturbing the “leaders” can disrupt the migration of an entire herd. They also felt that all fuel and ore transports should be accompanied by local Inuit familiar with the area. Some hunters and Elders’ support of more roads would be contingent upon whether or not hunters would be

allowed free access to the new roads. Some hunters and Elders seemed quite confident that Areva would implement these types of firm conditions on road use.

CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

A variety of activities that are currently having an impact on wildlife and harvesting practices were discussed during the interviews and meetings. In addition to the impacts of the Meadowbank road, some hunters and Elders related the Meadowbank mine in general to the recent declines in caribou in the area. Some highlighted the fact that the mine is relatively new, and that the impacts of it are only beginning to be observed. Some Elders who worked at the Rankin Inlet Nickel Mine argued that the mine in Rankin Inlet had negative impacts on caribou and marine mammals, and that similar impacts will likely be felt in Baker Lake.

Many hunters and Elders also discussed the impacts exploration activities are having on wildlife and harvesting. Some expressed concern with the exploratory drilling for uranium, and had heard that the texture of the flesh of fish in Judge Sissons Lake had changed, possibly because of chemicals related to exploration. A very common concern with exploration had to do with low-flying aircraft. Some hunters told stories of helicopter traffic disturbing caribou while Inuit were in the process of hunting them, therefore ruining their hunt. Others had witnessed caribou being disturbed while they were crossing water. Many felt that this was having a negative impact on caribou. Some discussed the fact that they have been instructed to record the serial numbers of aircraft that they see disturbing caribou, but are often unable to do so.

It should also be emphasized that many hunters complained of aircraft other than those used for mining and exploration. Complaints were made about aircraft used by commercial airlines, sport fishing outfitters and researchers.

COMMUNITY CONSULTATIONS

Some hunters and Elders expressed frustration that they still have not been informed which “road option” Areva has selected. They feel that they have been discussing these roads for years and that at this stage they should have more information about what Areva is actually proposing to do. Furthermore, while they have expressed a great deal of opinions and concerns to Areva over the years, they are unsure as to which of their opinions and concerns are actually being taken into consideration or which suggestions they have made will be put into practice. While we acknowledge that many of these decisions will be contingent upon licensing processes and stipulations made by the review board, we are highlighting these frustrations because they help explain the perspective some people share on the review process in general. In this situation, local hunters and Elders share their opinions and concerns with mining companies and regulatory boards. These companies and boards then decide, at a later date, which opinions and concerns are to be taken into consideration. Some also felt that when they express concerns at meetings, they are often provided with answers that are clearly biased in favor of the mining industry. Other times, they feel that representatives from the mining industry evade their questions by failing to answer questions directly or by shifting the conversation to positive aspects of the proposed mine. We feel that these issues may be the root of the conflict that took place over the access to the road connecting the Meadowbank gold mine to Baker Lake. Accordingly, these issues should be dealt with immediately to avoid a similar conflict from developing surrounding the proposed Kiggavik uranium mine.

Hunters and Elders also had a number of concerns related to their ability to understand Areva’s proposal and the review process. Some felt that the review process was moving forward quite quickly, and that they do not fully understand what is being proposed and the process for reviewing the proposal. Most hunters and Elders discussed a need to translate documentation into Inuktitut. Some felt that, at the very least, highly detailed, plain-language summaries should be made of all important documentation and then subsequently translated into Inuktitut. Some also suggested that these plain language

summaries be discussed over community radio to ensure that everyone in town understands them. Other suggestions included providing written information well in advance of meetings (agendas and relevant background information) so Inuit have the opportunity to consider the issues that will be discussed prior to meetings.

Hunters and Elders felt it was especially important to involve Elders, who are often unilingual, in the review process as much as possible. Some felt it was an issue of respect. Others highlighted the fact that Elders have important insights due to the richness of the Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit they possess. Because of this, they felt it was important to involve Elders in the discussion of the particular details of the proposed mine. For this to become a reality, Inuktitut translations of important documentation was seen as vital.

In some interviews hunters and Elders expressed a desire to have the review process put on hold until all relevant documentation could be translated into Inuktitut. Furthermore, at the meeting, all hunters and Elders voted unanimously to seek to have the review process paused until the Revised Draft Guidelines for Areva's Environmental Impact Statement could be translated into Inuktitut. A request by the Hunters and Trappers Organization to have the review put on hold until the Revised Draft Guidelines are translated was subsequently denied by the Nunavut Impact Review Board.³

INUIT QAUJIMAJATUQANGIT STUDIES

During interviews, hunters and Elders were asked who should be involved in Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit studies related to the Environmental Impact Statement for the Kiggavik proposal, in part to help us design our study for the Hunters and Trappers Organization. All emphasized the fact that Elders who grew up in the area and hunters who currently use the area regularly should be the focus of the study. However, while these hunters' and Elders' knowledge is particularly relevant, many felt that the entire

³ See NIRB File No. 09MN003: "RE: Baker Lake HTO Request to Suspend NIRB's Review of the Kiggavik Project Proposal"

community should be interviewed. Some emphasized the fact that everyone's knowledge is partial, so using Inuit Qaujimaqatugangit in a meaningful way necessitates involving the entire community. Others discussed the fact that, following the centralization of Inuit in the Hamlet of Baker Lake, Inuit have changed their hunting territories and travel routes considerably, and that many people now hunt and travel "all over".

COMPENSATION AND ROYALTY PAYMENTS

A theme that was repeatedly raised during interviews and the focus group was that of compensation in the event of an accident or substantial negative impacts on wildlife. Some wanted a plan for community compensation in place before the Kiggavik proposal is approved. Also discussed was the fear that royalty payments for the minerals mined near Baker Lake would be used to fund projects elsewhere in the Kivalliq region, while it is the hunting grounds of Inuit *living in Baker Lake* that are most likely to be negatively impacted. They requested some framework to ensure that royalties from Kiggavik be used to fund projects relevant to the community of Baker Lake.

URANIUM MINING

The topic of uranium mining in general was discussed during interviews and the meeting. Most saw great opportunities for jobs, and stressed the need for a source of monetary income to be able to hunt today. However, many also voiced very serious concerns that they do not feel have been sufficiently dealt with. Many of these concerns were related to radiation and other forms of contamination, possibly from an accident. Many hunters and Elders emphasized the fact that, regardless of what safety precautions are taken, accidents still happen. Some drew attention to the recent oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico to make their argument. Others pointed to the accident and spill on the Meadowbank road to demonstrate the fact that accidents do happen. Some were particularly concerned because the water bodies that the Kiggavik mine would be located on eventually flow into Baker Lake, thus threatening their supply of drinking water.

In a reference to the fact that Areva has taken many Inuit from Baker Lake on tours of their Northern Saskatchewan mines, some hunters and Elders emphasized that Baker Lake is “not Northern Saskatchewan”. They were concerned that the extreme blizzards and extreme cold temperatures would have an impact on mining activities and machinery, and might result in some sort of accident. Additionally, some interviewees were aware that this is the first attempt to build a uranium mine in a continuous permafrost environment. One hunter expressed extreme distaste with having his hunting territory used as an “experiment”. For one Elder, the concern with permafrost was related to climate change and tailings management. He was concerned that radioactive tailings might leak into nearby ground and surface water if the permafrost in the area eventually melts.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As a result of these interviews and meeting, we have prepared six recommendations that are relevant to this phase of the review of Areva’s Kiggavik proposal. Many of these recommendations may seem usual and unprecedented for Nunavut Impact Review Board reviews of mining projects. However, from the perspective of the many of the hunters and Elders in our workshop, the Kiggavik proposal is not a “usual” proposal. Given the high degree of controversy and concern this proposal seems to be generating, it would make sense to give special consideration to concerns and requests from the Inuit of Baker Lake.

1. The full implementation of the requests made by the Baker Lake Hunters and Trappers Organization in their comments on the Revised Draft Guidelines for Areva’s Environmental Impact Statement.
2. A system should be designed to ensure that Inuit are informed, in a timely manner, which concerns and opinions they have expressed are actually being dealt with and incorporated into the regulatory process and (if it should be approved) the Kiggavik uranium mine.

3. The Review Process should be slowed down considerably to allow hunters and Elders time to absorb and process what is being proposed and the process by which it is being reviewed. If hunters and Elders do not fully understand the proposal or the review process, it seems highly unlikely that their concerns will be dealt with in a meaningful way.
4. If the Nunavut Impact Review Board will not translate the Revised Draft Guidelines into Inuktitut: compile detailed, plain-language summaries of documentation, including the Revised Draft Guidelines, and eventually the Draft Environmental Impact Statement and Final Environmental Impact Statement, which can be translated into Inuktitut. These summaries should subsequently be distributed to the community and discussed over community radio.
5. Written material (agendas and background documentation) should be translated into Inuktitut and made available well in advance of meetings.
6. More intervener funding should be provided and use of that funding should not be restricted. The Kiggavik proposal is generating a great deal of concern among many hunters and Elders in Baker Lake. Given the small amount of intervener funding available and the firm restrictions on its use, the Baker Lake Hunters and Trappers Organization lacks the resources and flexibility to properly address issues and collect community concerns as the review progresses.