

ARCTIC FUTURE

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In this issue...

- Going Home Can Cost a Fortune
- Sticks, Carrots and a Bicycle to the Future
- The Social Impacts of Uranium Mining on Northern Communities
- Dealing with the Effects of Abuse Constructively: From understanding to action
- Hope and Resilience in Suicide Prevention Seminar
- Old Indifferences

Going Home Can Cost a Fortune

By Callista Morrison

When I think about the North, what often comes to mind is how isolated it is from the South. We are physically isolated by limited infrastructure, but the costs of travelling to and from the North—and even within the North—are obstacles in themselves.

I've driven across Canada and up to Whitehorse twice now, and as you make the journey northward you see the landscape change from being dominated by people, be it infrastructure or agriculture, to being dominated by what it should be: nature. As you leave southern Canada you notice this point, a line drawn in the sand, where I believe you enter the North—a place that is different from everywhere else, and a place isolated from everywhere else.

There are two highways leading into the Yukon from British Columbia: the famous Alaska Highway and the Stewart-Cassiar. When you reach Fort Nelson you had better fill up because it may be several hundred kilometers before you see the next gas station. Sorry, there won't be any more Tim Horton's along the way for those of you addicted to French vanilla cappuccinos. While driving the winding Alaska Highway and catching a glimpse of the occasional abandoned building and the rare vehicle, I actually asked myself "Where the hell am I going?" You can drive for hours without seeing any sign of life, other than wildlife of course, and you feel as though you are driving on a winding road to nowhere.

Cities, towns and villages in the territories are often more difficult—and more expensive—to get to than most cities in the South. Aside from the limited number of roads in the North, it costs more to fly in and out of the North than across the entire country, or even to other countries. You feel this overwhelming

suspicion that airlines are trying to keep northerners isolated or keep us captive in the South once we happen to "escape." I was born and mostly raised in Whitehorse, Yukon. I always get frustrated when looking at prices to get home—and getting to Whitehorse

continued on page 2



Cold weather testing in Whitehorse, Yukon.

Sticks, Carrots and a Bicycle to the Future

By Robin Urquhart



A little girl riding her bike sets an example we should all follow.

Current climate change discourse is all stick and no carrot. Daily, Canadians are besieged by new information on how bad the climate situation is and how bad humans are for having created it. Various dire statistics are banded around—1 metre, 2 degrees, 350 ppm—with the aim of terrifying the population into action. Unfortunately,

it seems to have the reverse effect. COP 15 is a good example of the wave of apathy that seems to have swept over the North American political realm. It is a psychological phenomenon that human beings, or any animal for that matter, will avoid pain and seek pleasure.

The discourse surrounding climate change is focused on producing pain, without much recourse to pleasure. As a result, our society is becoming increasingly apathetic to the issue, and even unapologetically hostile in cases involving climate change denial. I would posit that the term *climate change* has been so infused with negative emotions that it should be avoided whenever possible. It is time for climate change advocates to take a new tack, to start using carrots to inspire action rather than sticks to punish inaction. What we really need is a bicycle to the future.

Well, okay, a bicycle might be a bit fanciful, but I use the analogy as a vehicle (pun intended) through which to discuss a new discourse on climate change. The point is to discuss actions or institutions that will positively benefit the world and, as a by-product, combat climate change. An example is walking to work instead of driving. Past discourse would say “don’t drive to work because you are increasing CO₂ emissions that are responsible for

continued on page 6

Going Home Can Cost a Fortune

continued from page 1

is hardly the worst of it. Flights from Ottawa to Iqaluit are thousands of dollars despite planning months in advance. I personally have never had to take this financial plunge, but I have friends who call Iqaluit home and family who have worked in Nunavut. When the costs are so incredibly and horribly inflated, how can travel between the North and South be even remotely economically feasible for the average person? Quite frankly, it is not. People who call the North home will always have to think twice about leaving in the first place, and consider if they can even afford to return home once they do. Travel agencies will never

have seat sales to the North. Why is the North targeted for this inflation? I cannot explain this, can you?

When going home costs a fortune, youth can find themselves stranded in the South, and isolated from family and friends. This isolation from home and familiar grounds can lead to or worsen depression or substance abuse, and youth are finding themselves in vulnerable positions with few options. It is a tragedy to be physically or emotionally upset with home out of reach. This financial hurdle separating the North from the South does not just affect our pocketbooks. It affects our youth, our families and our communities. The difficulty of getting in and out of the North has been

dividing and isolating families for years and continues to do so.

I have two sisters living in Ottawa, and my mother is constantly worried that she will never see her grandchildren if she stays in the Yukon. So she always asks me, “Where will you settle? Will it be in the North or in the South?” I do not have answer for her. If I stay in the Yukon, I will be struggling with its isolation for the rest of my life, but the idea of leaving my home for the ease of the South seems like a lie I am not willing to make. A benefit of the North’s isolation is that those who live there actually want to be there. That or someone else is paying for their trip.

The Social Impacts of Uranium Mining on Northern Communities

By Jesse Tungilik

Canada was the first country to mine uranium, with the industry launching in the early 1930s. In 1943, when uranium demand increased due to military interest, the Government of Canada took over the Eldorado Gold Mining Company and turned it into a Crown corporation called Eldorado Mining and Refining Limited. Canada's uranium was in demand, notably for the infamous Manhattan Project, which led to the development of the first Atomic Bomb.

Interestingly, the uranium that was used in the nuclear warheads that were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki came from Port Radium, Northwest Territories. This is a legacy that few Canadians are aware of, and yet Canada remains the largest producer of uranium in the world. Only Australia has larger known deposits of the radioactive ore, though, in 2008, Canada contributed 20.5 per cent of the world uranium output compared to Australia's 19.2 per cent.

The lion's share of uranium mining in Canada has occurred primarily in communities in northern Saskatchewan. There has been a renewed interest in the uranium industry, spurred by price spikes in the stock market, which has led to increased pressure on northern communities to open new uranium mines. In particular, there has been strong interest in deposits around Baker Lake, Nunavut, Happy Valley, Labrador (Nunatsiavut) and in northern Saskatchewan.

In 1990, the people of Baker Lake voted in a plebiscite, which banned the exploration of uranium in the area due to concerns about its impacts on human health and on the Beverly and Qamanirjuaq Caribou herd. Similar moratoria were put in place in Labrador, Nunavik and Greenland.

However, the large increases in the stock prices for the mineral have put



Barren ground caribou.

those moratoria to the test. In 2007, the spot price of Uranium soared up to a peak of \$136/lb from \$7/lb in 2000. The economic pressure was so great that in 2008, Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, the official land claim organization for Nunavut, actually became stakeholders in a new uranium exploration company called Kivalliq Energy Corp as part of a deal with the Kaminak Gold Corp. The newly-elected Inuit Ataqatigiit party in Greenland has been mulling over lifting the moratorium on uranium exploration and, in 2008, the Greenlandic Parliament created a loophole that allowed for the extraction of uranium as a by-product where other minerals are the primary target.

Many northerners feel like they are in a catch-22 situation when it comes to mining. Jobs are desperately needed in the north, but mining also erodes traditional hunting lifestyles and destroys the environment. The boom and bust

nature of mines also puts considerable social stress on northern communities. They provide jobs and some physical infrastructure, but mines are temporary. Most mines last no more than 10 to 15 years, and after the ore is gone, the communities are left with nothing. The locals that received training and employment while the mine was open are forced to either get trained in another field, or move to other communities after the mine has shut down.

The Nanisivik lead-zinc mine is a good example of this. The Nanisivik mine lasted much longer than most people anticipated, but once the deposits were depleted, the people of neighbouring Arctic Bay were left to fend for themselves. They did not even get to keep the infrastructure from the community of Nanisivik because it was contaminated with lead.

continued on page 4

Dealing with the Effects of Abuse Constructively: From understanding to action

By: Elizabeth Zarpa

The Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada's *National Strategy for Preventing Abuse in Inuit Communities* states that: "Violence and abuse are serious problems in Inuit communities. Far too many children, adults and elders are living in violent and abusive situations today. Many others have deep and traumatic memories of abuse. Those who are knowledgeable about the issue say that most Inuit have been victims of sexual, physical or emotional abuse or have witnessed a close family

member being abused, assaulted or killed. Abusers are often survivors of abuse themselves—abuse that occurred in the community, in the residential schools, or in their own families. Abuse creates a cycle of fear, shame, anger, addictions and violence that passes from one generation to the next, from man to woman and from adult to child." (2006, p. 6).

This statement provides insight into the impacts of abuse over multiple generations. The intergenerational effect

of abuse continues when one generation fails to deal with its effects constructively. This cycle can continue until an abuse victim moves past the trauma he or she has experienced, and develops a healthy and safe relationship with his or her own children. The abuse can originate from many different experiences and it can be influenced by a family's history. The legacy of residential schools has contributed greatly to the cycle of abuse throughout Inuit communities.

continued on page 5

The Social Impacts of Uranium Mining on Northern Communities

continued from page 3

Even when a mine is in operation, considerable social stress is placed on northern communities. The nature of mining work means that locals employed by the mine often spend a few weeks in the mine and have a few weeks off. During this off time, miners have more money than they know what to do with and often it leads to alcohol being brought into communities.

The lure of jobs and infrastructure also leads to politicians and business leaders making decisions that ultimately bring long-lasting negative effects to communities and the environment.

Take the Baker Lake case for example. Uravan Minerals has been exploring for uranium in the Baker Lake area, but has been butting heads with the Nunavut Impact Review Board (NIRB) over environmental impact assessments and permitting. Uravan's Garry Lake project lies within the calving grounds of the Beverly and Qamanirjuaq caribou herd, which is already under stress. Because of this, NIRB asked Uravan to do a full environmental impact assessment for the project. Uravan responded saying that the review board's demands are

"too onerous and impose an unfair financial burden on the company."

An unfair financial burden on the company? What about the unfair environmental burdens on the locals that have to live next to these mining developments? The tailings from uranium mines retain 85 per cent of the ore's initial radioactivity and emit radioactive gasses for thousands of years.

These are serious intergenerational impacts that must be examined thoroughly. Much has been said about how far industry has come with regard to innovation and technological advancement in mining, but when you look at the ground level, the fact of the matter is that mining is an extraordinarily destructive process.

Uravan's initial activity in the Baker Lake area has not inspired much confidence in their commitment to environmental stewardship. In August 2009, an inspector from Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) visited the Sandy Lake project operated by Uravan and found that up to 1,000 litres of diesel fuel may have leaked into the soil.

INAC ordered a cleanup of the site by September 30, 2009 and then extended the deadline to May 15, 2010. Uravan has said that they will not likely meet this extended deadline.

Concerned by the lack of transparency and one-sided arguments in favour of mining, a group called Nunavummiut Makitagunarningit has emerged to ask tough questions about uranium development and to disseminate information about uranium mining to northern communities so that informed decisions can be made on the issue. Nunavummiut Makitagunarningit has launched a petition calling on the Legislative Assembly of Nunavut to hold a public inquiry into uranium mining in the territory.

Regardless of whether you are for or against uranium mining, it is safe to say that more transparency and information about the long-term impacts is a positive thing.

The long-term social and environmental impacts of uranium mining must be taken into serious consideration to ensure that we are not short-selling the legacy of future generations. Any mining operation brings social and environmental impacts, but uranium mining can be particularly impactful. Northerners must take this issue seriously and ask themselves if the short-term benefits of uranium mining outweigh the long-term impacts on their communities and environment.



An Inuk mother and her children walk along the road in Cape Dorset.

Dealing with the Effects of Abuse Constructively: From understanding to action

continued from page 4

In 1884 the federal government made an amendment to the Indian Act of 1867 that made it mandatory for all aboriginal Canadian children under the age of 16 to attend residential school. Inuit Nunangat (where Inuit live) consists of four land claim governments: Nunatsiavut, Nunavut, Nunavik and Inuvialuit. These land claim governments did not exist during the 1884 amendment to the Indian Act, though the North was in the making when Northwest Territories became Canada's first territory in 1870. The Yukon became its second territory in 1898.

According to the Aboriginal Healing Foundation's (AHF) *Directory on Residential Schools in Canada*, there were a total of 15 schools across the Northwest Territories, Nunavut and the Yukon. The first residential schools, Fort Providence Indian Residential School and the Fort Resolution Indian Residential School (both located in the NWT), opened in

1867. Fort Simpson Indian Residential School and Fort McPherson Indian Residential School in the NWT, Yellowknife Indian Residential School in the Yukon and the Chesterfield Inlet Indian Residential School in Nunavut were the last of the residential schools to shut down in 1970. From 1867 until 1970, aboriginal children in the northern regions of Canada had no choice but to attend residential school, where they bore witness to countless experiences and stories of child abuse.

The cycle of abuse continues throughout Northern communities today. As an Inuk healer expresses it on the Pauktuutit website, "It is all about your upbringing. If a child was abused at a very early age, sexually or physically, then that's all they know and they will continue to abuse. And it's up to the community to stop that abuse with education and awareness. The root cause comes from shame, guilt and what you've learned from a young age."

According to the *Inuit Statistical Profile 2008* published by Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK), suicide rates among Inuit are 11 times higher than

the national rate. Fifty-one per cent of Inuit women and men (ages 25–64) do not have a high school diploma and the life expectancy is approximately ten years below that of the average Canadian. These indicators are a reflection of the difficulties that northern communities are experiencing in the twenty-first century.

Many argue that the root cause of these statistics is the residential school legacy, while others may believe that it was caused by other factors. The reality is that these unfortunate circumstances do exist and it is up to the current generation to handle these issues constructively. National Inuit Organizations such as Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada and ITK have and continue to advocate for funds to create programs that help deal with social issues. One such program is the Somebody's Daughter program, led by the Kivalliq Inuit Association, an experience that brings Inuit women out on the land. Mothers, daughters, grandmothers, sisters and nieces from the seven Kivalliq communities gather together for two weeks on the land. Each gets the chance to experience time with other women and elders while learning the traditional lifestyle once lived by Inuit.

The signing of the Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement between the Government of Canada and aboriginal leaders has also provided some healing opportunities. Through it, survivors and family members of survivors have access to programs that are geared towards holistic approaches to healing.

The ongoing dedication of individuals, organizations and governments will continue to foster funds that can continue to provide programs for individuals dealing with problems caused by abuse. The importance of providing programs to help individuals dealing with abuse is clear. The next step is learning how to inform the population about what is available to them and how to access it.

Sticks, Carrots and a Bicycle to the Future

continued from page 2

climate change and its associated devastating impacts.” The new form says: “walking to work will positively benefit your health.” Climate change is not mentioned at all. The secret of the new discourse rests in the fact that current activities may not only be detrimental to the environment in the long term, they may have more direct detrimental effects in everyday life. And changing these activities or behaviours can make people feel good. In a sense nothing is changing but the way it is discussed.

A good example was a speech delivered by Dr. Ole Henrik Magga, the Sami People’s representative, at the Melting Ice conference in Tromsø, Norway in 2009. He managed to talk for half an hour about climate change without actually mentioning climate change. Instead, he discussed two things that will benefit the future of humankind and incidentally,

though unmentioned, combat climate change. In essence he described a bicycle to the future. The front wheel on a bicycle is the wheel that steers; in this analogy, the front wheel is the Arctic Council—a high-level, multinational scientific and discussion forum for the Arctic region. The Arctic Council is unique in a number of respects. It provides a non-binding forum for Arctic Nations, indigenous organizations and other countries (observers) to meet and discuss issues and ways to resolve them. The Arctic Council is predominantly a research coordinating body, but with a little push, the kind of push a little girl’s dad might give her to start the bicycle moving, the Arctic Council could take on more of a policy-making role. With its history in environmental protection and intergovernmental coordination, the Arctic Council is without a doubt the most suitable and hopeful institution for increasing circumpolar cooperation.

The second wheel is the recently-established United Nations

Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). The declaration is a tacit recognition of the important contribution indigenous peoples have made and will continue to make to our world. Indigenous peoples have been living in the Arctic for millennia and have the understanding and experience of this dynamic system that only such a long history can create. Incorporating traditional knowledge stemming from the experience of indigenous peoples will help the world community understand a different way of viewing nature and the environment, and provide invaluable insight into how their lives are being affected by a host of changes in the recent decades.

It is possible to reinvigorate the issue of climate change and inspire people to action. It requires a new way of discussing the issue—one that focuses on inspiring new actions, rather than terminating old ones. And who doesn’t like riding bikes?!

Hope and Resilience in Suicide Prevention Seminar

By Napatsi Folger

From November 7–8, 2009, I attended the Hope and Resilience in Suicide Prevention Seminar in Nuuk, Greenland. The seminar opened with a performance by the Greenlandic Choir and a speech by Agathe Fontain, the Minister of Health for the Government of Greenland. Minister Fontain expressed her hope that the participants would be able to build a strong foundation for a circumpolar network that focuses on early suicide prevention rather than intervention when it may already be too late for people. She also expressed her hope that research would be shared across the Arctic regions.

continued on page 7



IISD Intern Napatsi Folger (left) poses with Minister for Health for the Greenland Government Agathe Fontain (right) at the Hope and Resilience in Suicide Prevention Seminar November 7, 2009.



Overlooking the bay in Nuuk, Greenland.

Hope and Resilience in Suicide Prevention Seminar

continued from page 6

Presentations began with Henning Herrestad, from the University of Oslo, who discussed suicide

prevention in terms of hope and hopelessness. One approach stated that “hope is a positive motivational state that is based on an interactively derived sense of successful (a) agency [goal-directed energy] and (b) pathways [planning to meet goals]”

(Snyder, 2002). Vincent, *et al.* observed in 2004 that when comparing a group of parasuicidal patients with a control group, they both had similar goals, but the control group had more pathways to accomplish those goals. He also noted that Snyder suggested that suicide might be the final act of hope, as a goal to be accomplished, but this is widely contested since many suicides are not planned ahead of time and are considered impulsive acts.

Commissioner William Hogan of the Department of Health and Social Services for Alaska noted that major contributing factors for suicide in Alaska include substance abuse (predominantly alcohol) and mental health issues. The social programs that deal with these issues were not integrated until 2003. Other factors that affect Alaskans are the fact that there are extremely high unemployment rates, isolated communities and easy access to guns and alcohol. Hogan felt that the best solutions come from the community, where people know what they need.

Another presenter from Alaska noted that aboriginal communities in Canada and the United States were particularly affected by residential schools because it created a generation of people who never learned proper parenting skills. They were pulled from the bonds in their families at a young age, placed in an often abusive environment and brought up without learning their traditional values and languages. Vicarious trauma continues to affect younger generations because the dysfunction is carried on throughout residential school survivors’ lives into the lives of their children.

There is little scientific evidence looking at the root causes of suicide. People tend to try to find one root cause for a suicide, like a break up or fight, but more often than not, suicide is an amalgamation of many issues. People need to start looking at where things are getting better, and why. What is working? Focusing on the negative does not help, especially with

continued on page 8



The sunset sparkles off the windows of the colourful buildings of Nuuk, Greenland just before 4pm.

Hope and Resilience in Suicide Prevention Seminar

continued from page 7

prevention programs. The Embrace Life Council of Nunavut takes a life-affirming approach as opposed to a suicide-prevention approach. They aim to improve wellbeing in the community. Everybody has to struggle in life at one time or another, and they teach people coping skills. People are less likely to seek help from a suicide intervention hotline or group when they are able to find help from people close to them, like teachers,

family or friends. How can we better equip frontline people like teachers and community counselors to deal with situations where suicidal people are reaching out to them? And how do we ensure that those same people are supported enough that they do not burn out and leave the profession or community because of the stress of these highly emotional and stressful situations?

Jack Hicks, a PhD student from Nunavut, stated that Western medicine and practices are not necessarily failing in the Arctic. You cannot prove that

something is a failure if all you have ever experienced is a low-quality version of that system. Western practices might very well work in the Arctic, but until high-quality services are offered consistently and in measure with demand, it is not accurate to say that they are a failure. People are too willing to give up on things that do not work right away; they are not able to see that sometimes you need to try the same thing a few times to work out the problems.

Members of the Association for Greenlandic Children believe that encouraging young people to have trust in themselves is a key step to ensuring that they are strong enough to fight the impulse to commit suicide in the future. They run an extra-curricular program where young children can learn how to be independent and how to recognize their strengths and weaknesses in a safe, comfortable environment. The program has mentors who make it a point to allow children to learn through self-directed activities. The environment is meant to build the children's confidence and to establish trust. They also encourage children to continue on in school after their mandatory years are over (currently, less than 50 per cent of Greenlandic students move on to post secondary).

The group gathered at the seminar concluded that the root of the problem is complex, and to really make a difference in suicide prevention, people have to work on preventing the sources frequently related to childhood abuse, substance abuse and emotional isolation. Improving health and education systems will ultimately lower suicide rates. When people are informed and supported, the chance of successful suicide is greatly decreased. The closing discussion was centred on how important it is for each participant to take action and move things forward with their own initiatives because suicide prevention needs to include both short- and long-term action to be effective.

Old Indifferences

Lyrics by M.O. from the album Eskimocentricity

Inuit existence was dependent
partly on each member of the encampment being able to
at the very least get up on their own two feet
walk across the jagged tundra to follow the moving caribou
so everyone could eat

So we adopted an effective means of excising
inefficient limbs from the family tree
that saw the aged floating on ice pans and
insolent sons turned away to find their own path
through the cruel Arctic days

This isn't a tradition we should reprise
as it slides snugly into its place
in the still mostly unwritten Inuit histories but
it has a related convention that's made its way down into
unofficial modern Inuit custom

If you've walked downtown Montreal you've seen it
and in Ottawa the spring thaw brings about
the re-emergence in earnest of the panhandling Eskimos
downtown between the mall and King Edward
on Rideau Street

Whether these people are a nuisance isn't a question to me
because I have to ask if they're
friends of the family maybe a second cousin
and do I have to follow protocol stop and ask a few
inconsequential questions

I try to avoid having to do that by changing up my Inuk stride
and remembering that from a distance
I could look Thai
but Inuit we could never fully ostracize
so when I meet one I stop say hi and try to be polite

I ask about my friend their son despite the likelihood that
I was the last to see their child
and it pains when they ask and I have to tell them
I hadn't seen their kid in a little while but at least
I knew he wasn't going to trial

It takes a certain distance to watch these lives
with blood that courses from the same point as mine
float away on slabs of concrete ice
but disease strikes
and existence has always insisted on a little bit of
indifference

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