
Finding What Works: Mining in Inuit Nunangat

Frances Abele, Carleton University

Objectives: This project was suggested by Natan Obed when he worked at Nunavut Tungavik Inc. Acknowledging the length of time during which mining has been an aspect of economic life in Nunavut and other Inuit territories, he drew our attention to the need for thinking through what worked well, from the perspective of Inuit communities and workers, and why it worked well.

Inuit have participated in the mining industry and worked to change the conditions under which resource development takes place for over 60 years. Modern treaties have been signed, land has been leased, and exploration has yielded great financial wealth for investors, landowners, and to a lesser extent, workers. In the process, Inuit have shaped the mining industry just as their societies have been shaped by it. This complex relationship, which began in Rankin Inlet in mid-1950s, is now a central feature of life across Inuit Nunangat. Within this context, we are asking where, why, and how resource development is being done “right.” Given the magnitude of recent interest and investment in northern resources, the costs of poor industry performance should not be underestimated.

Research Findings: This project is organized as a meta-analysis of existing research findings, and government and industry reports, checked against selective key informant interviews and available records of investment returns. Our work is still in progress. An example of an early finding: the experiences of people at mines such as Rankin Inlet, Polaris, Nanisivik, and Meadowbank suggest that what matters most is the *quality* of employment offered: people prefer fair wages and workplaces, flexible schedules, and skills that are transferrable (Bowes-Lyon, Richards, & McGee, 2010; Brubacher & Associates, 2002; Gibson, 1978; McPherson, 2003; Williamson, 1974). Other examples of project components we are investigating include: Socio-economic monitoring; development partnerships (IIBAs); direct Inuit investment; infrastructure development; and returns to Inuit and public governments (fiscal benefits). We are continuously examining what appear to be successful aspects of each mining project in Inuit Nunangat, measuring success against the goals the architects of each project set, how these goals have been met, and whether there is evidence of positive long-term impacts on communities.

Potential Policy Implications: The boom and bust resource cycle will continue to shape mining industry opportunities. Inuit governments and organizations, and all Canadian governments, must develop plans for benefiting from industrial activity that take these cycles into account, but that are also based upon the best available research on how successful projects should be shaped.

Future Research: Climate change driven by global warming is rapidly changing the conditions of human life in the Arctic. As existing science has established, it will affect communities, workers, and mining companies. Research on community-based adaptation has hardly begun, but it will be needed urgently over the remaining decades of the 21st century. Research to date indicates that there are practical limits to the effectiveness of land use planning and monitoring programs; northern populations are small and it is easy for the demands of large projects to overwhelm available human resources. There is a need for problem-solving research to find innovative ways to deal with this circumstance, while preserving the democratic decision-making principles embodied in the modern treaties.

Augmenting the utility of IBAs

Ben Bradshaw, University of Guelph

Objectives:

Indigenous communities' exercise of authority around mineral exploration and mine development in northern Canada has unquestionably evolved over the past two decades. This is especially manifest in cases where communities have used regulatory review to alter or halt mine proposals, and more numerous cases where communities have established Impact and Benefit Agreements (IBAs) with mining firms to limit project impacts and ensure local capture of project benefits. While IBAs certainly reflect an evolution of standards and are enabling opportunities that previously alluded mine-impact communities, there is a growing sense among analysts and many signatory communities that IBAs are failing to meet expectations. Of particular concern is:

- the uncertain position of IBAs in mine permitting, especially relative to regulatory processes like Environmental Assessment (EA) and the execution of the Crown's consultation obligations;
- the fear that Aboriginal community well-being is declining rather than increasing through IBA-enabled mine developments, especially given limited use of adaptive management to address social impacts as they emerge within IBA-signatory communities; and
- the worry that IBAs represent a partial measure that allows the Crown to avoid its obligations and thereby perpetuate ongoing injustice.

Given these and other concerns, applied research was completed to augment the utility of IBAs.

Summary of Results / Governance Implications: The project has generated multiple findings, which are best manifest in three key recommendations for augmenting the utility of IBAs:

1. *Acknowledge and integrate IBAs within the permitting landscape:* IBAs are clearly a part of the evolved permitting landscape for mines, and need to be acknowledged by the Crown as such. Though IBA negotiations need not be formalized in the permitting process, there is an opportunity to integrate negotiations with EA in terms of findings/inputs, monitoring and ongoing adaptive management.
2. *Treat IBAs as one strategic element of larger community vision and governance:* As exemplified by the Taku River Tlingit FN and Nunatsiavut Government, IBA negotiations will ideally follow from the development of, and be consistent with, an inclusive and well expressed community vision, and/or integrate with other elements of community governance (e.g. land use plans, mining policy, etc.) to maximize authority.
3. *Monitor community well-being and practice adaptive management:* For communities, the decision to support a proposed mine is challenging. A key part of the challenge is the lack of knowledge of the likely impacts of a mine, especially with respect to community well-being, and the lack of faith in regulatory systems to mitigate impacts as they emerge. Given these concerns, communities are developing well-being indicators of relevance to their members and pressing for their use in both EA and post-approval monitoring. Efforts like these are critical if IBA benefits - beyond mere wealth generation - are to be realized and observed impacts to community well-being adaptively managed.

Future Requirements:

There is still much to be done to make IBAs work better for Indigenous community signatories. From a research perspective, the questions are many – e.g.:

- How do communities understand their legal rights? Are IBA negotiations recognized as de facto replacements for the Crown's Duty to Consult and Accommodate? If so, what are the implications?
- Is there potential to harmonize EA and IBA processes? Is there interest?

- Do communities feel pressured to negotiate an IBA? Are community members aware of IBA negotiations when they happen? Do they have sufficient opportunities to contribute?
- What are constraints to effective IBA negotiation and implementation, and how can they be addressed?
- Are IBAs a counterbalance to historical injustices or do they perpetuate them? Is autonomy from the state welcome? What are alternatives to IBAs that might create greater opportunities for communities in terms of both economic development and social justice?

Reconsidering the integration of health and well being into impact assessments and IBA's
Jen Jones, University of Guelph

Objectives: Considering and addressing, in the governance of the extractives sector, the impacts of colonialisms on the health and well-being of Yukon First Nations (YFNs) aims to document legacies of colonialism that persist or are reproduced through the contemporary governance of the extractives sector in Yukon. Furthermore it aims to conceptualize how on-going legacies of colonialism might be understood and addressed in the assessment of health and well-being of Indigenous populations. The research benefits from a partnership with the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation and has engaged in conversations with other First Nation government officials, consultants, and Yukon Government and assessment body staff.

Research Findings: The research is still in progress but it is anticipated research will identify how on-going colonialism within the context of the governance of the extractives sector can be understood and translated into language for use in current governance mechanisms as well as identify alternative frameworks for addressing impacts of colonialism on health and well-being.

Potential Policy Implications:

Future Research:

Lessons learned from a Northern Mining Town, a case of Rankin Inlet, Nunavut

Andrew Muir, Carleton University

The presentation is based on Andrew Muir’s PhD Thesis in Public Policy at Carleton University, to be defended in late 2016 or early 2017.

The thesis aims to provide insight into the structure of the economy of Rankin Inlet, Kivalliq Region, Nunavut, from its inception (1953-1957) to the period following the creation of the Territory of Nunavut in 1999. Its method of analysis is informed by the work of Karl Polanyi, who makes the case that commercial activity can devastate the social and cultural existence of a population when it becomes a dominant form of economic activity.

The thesis reviews the history of (Kivalliq Region) Inuit interaction with non-indigenous commercial actors (e.g., fur traders, whalers) between the 1700s and World War II. Prior to the entry of non-indigenous commercial actors to region, Inuit economic activity was non-commercial and was governed by societal institutions, principally the extended family. The settlement at Rankin Inlet was founded in 1953 when several Inuit families moved there to participate in wage labour associated with the early development of a nickel mine. From 1953 to the present-day, Inuit in Rankin Inlet have participated combination of traditional and cash (often commercial) based economic activities, a dynamic referred to as a “mixed economy”. Inuit participation in Rankin Inlet’s “mixed-economy” can be viewed as the latest phase of a centuries-long process of strategic involvement in locally available economic opportunities.

The Government of Canada’s strategic, economic, and social involvement and interests in Canada’s Arctic increased in the post-WWII period, a development which afforded new opportunities for Inuit to represent their interests at the federal level. Private sector interest in the region also grew, particularly in terms of its potential for profitable non-renewable resource development. A key goal of Inuit political actors over this period was to achieve “self-determination” through the creation of new political institutions which would provide Inuit with sovereign powers similar to those of Canada’s provinces, as well as by securing for Inuit the ability to set the terms by which prospective large-scale resource development projects could proceed (if at all). Inuit efforts in this regard were largely successful, as represented by signing of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement (NLCA) in 1993 and (as per the NLCA) the creation of the Territory of Nunavut in 1999. Through the various provisions of NLCA (including the creation of Nunavut) Inuit have won the ability to influence the balance of commercial and traditional economy activity which occurs in the territory over which it controls, including the power to regulate and/or commercial projects which could impact this balance.

The thesis is not yet complete. Its conclusions and suggestions for future research will be completed shortly and be made public.