

Developing Inuvialuit Baseline Indicators System for (Self)Monitoring Community Well-Being and Impacts of Resource Development

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The Inuvialuit Baseline Indicators project is a collaborative effort between Resources and Sustainable Development in the Arctic (ReSDA), Arctic Social Indicators (ASI) projects and the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation (IRC). The goal of the Inuvialuit Baseline Indicators (IBI) project is to develop a set of measurable, reliable and accessible indicators to monitor socio-economic conditions in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region (ISR) with an emphasis on tracking impacts of resource development. This effort is focused on creating a framework to be used by local actors to collect, manage and analyze community-based data.

The Inuvialuit region has been affected by a number of resource boom cycles associated with the resource activities in the Mackenzie Delta and more recently in the Beaufort Sea. The IRC created as a result of the Inuvialuit Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement has been collecting and publishing selected socio-economic data to aid in decision-making process and provide public access to IRC members. Given a growing interest in Arctic resources within the ISR, IRC engaged in collaboration with a social impacts monitoring team of polar scientists to develop a system of indicators based on past experiences in ISR and across the Arctic, local relevance and data availability.

The objectives of the IBI project include (1) using ASI circumpolar framework of social indicators provide a background baseline analysis of IRC socioeconomic characteristics in comparison with Northwest Territories (NWT), Inuit regions of Canada/USA, and other circumpolar jurisdictions; (2) using ASI experience and community consultations identify more relevant domains that are to be included in to the socioeconomic monitoring system (3) define baseline indicators suitable for monitoring socio-economic conditions and impacts of resource development in ISR; (4) develop procedures that will enable community-based collection, management, and analysis of data by local actors; (5) collect necessary data and expand IRC database; (6) develop and disseminate Inuvialuit Baseline Indicators data and analysis to inform region's stakeholders and aid in IRC's decision making and ensure community awareness.

The first stage of the project was to analyze of ISR socio-economic well-being using established indicators framework developed by the ASI under the auspice of the Arctic Council. The assessment was conducted for six domains: health and population, material well-being, cultural vitality, closeness to nature, education, and fate control. The analysis revealed considerable internal differences within ISR, especially between Inuvik and other communities. On most indicators IRS was better off than other NWT regions (unemployment, engagement in traditional activities, land claim status and fate control) or close to average (incomes, dependency on government transfers, consumption of county food, education). IRS fared worse than other NWT regions in respect to language retention and out-migration rates. In comparison with Inuit communities in Nunavut, IRS had generally higher level of material well-being, but demonstrated very low language retention, low on consumption of traditional food, and inferior fate control status. The long-term trends (between 1986 and 2010) were positive for several indicators, such as participation rate, educational attainment, housing, teen birth, engagement in hunting and fishing, and negative for crime, ability to speak mother tongue, and dependency on income support, among others. The analysis shows that although ISR appears to maintain relatively high levels of socio-economic well-being across most of the six domains, it still faces considerable social challenges and has to deal with severe interregional inequalities.