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***The Tungavik Federation Of Nunavut's
Submission To The Royal Commission On
Seals And The Sealing Industry
Type of Study: Traditional Economy Wildlife
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TUNGAVIK FEDERATION OF NUNAVUT



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November 20, 1984

Ron Greendale
Royal Commission on Seals and the
Sealing Industry in Canada
Palais de Justice
Room 1725
1 Notre Dame St. East
Montreal, Quebec
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KP

Dear Sir:

Please find enclosed the submission of the Tungavik Federation of Nunavut to the Royal Commission on Seals and the Sealing Industry.

The Tungavik Federation of Nunavut is charged with the responsibility of negotiating an aboriginal rights settlement with the federal government on behalf of 17,000 of the central and eastern arctic. Of particular interest to the Royal Commission are the enclosed provisions of a Wildlife Agreement-in-Principle, initialed Oct. 27, 1981. These provisions upon implementation will govern the management of seals and other wildlife through the settlement **area**. The provisions also define the rights of Inuit with regard to wildlife.

Should you require additional information or wish clarification please do not hesitate to contact me at the above address.

Sincerely yours

D. Aglukark
David Aglukark
Co-chief Negotiator

NOV 23 1984

THE TUNGAVIK FEDERATION OF NUNAVUT'S SUBMISSION TO THE
ROYAL COMMISSION ON SEALS AND THE SEALING INDUSTRY

The Tungavik Federation of Nunavut (TFN) is charged with the responsibility of negotiating an aboriginal rights settlement on behalf of 17,000 Inuit of Nunavut (the Central and Eastern Arctic). Through its submission, the TFN wishes to bring three points to the attention of the Commission. One; the Wildlife Agreement-in-Principle initialed October 27, 1981, which when in place will govern the management of all wildlife in Nunavut. Two; the significance of the **seal** economy to the Inuit. And three; **the need for the Commission to hold its hearings in the communities where seal hunting takes place.**

The Inuit of the Central and Eastern Arctic are aboriginal peoples with unextinguished aboriginal rights. Their rights are protected under The Constitution Act 1867-1982 and certain of their rights are currently being defined through land claims negotiations with the federal government. These rights pertain, amongst other matters, to the lands, waters and resources, both living and non-living, throughout the **settlement area; an area of approximately 1.5 million square miles of which over half is located in the offshore.** Because of their occupation of the offshore and their longstanding dependence on marine resources Inuit claim rights to marine life, the water column, seabed and subsoil and the land fast ice. In practical terms their claims are of a proprietary and management nature.

Inuit dependence on the marine environment is undisputed. Seals, whales, walrus, fish, shellfish and birds are the components of the marine economy. Their dependence on marine resources is as great, if not greater than their dependence on terrestrial resources. All Inuit communities but one, are located on the coast. The coastal waters and land fast ice zones are their hunting territory. Because of their dependence on marine resources Inuit are acutely concerned that their rights to harvest be protected and that their ability to harvest not be compromised. To protect their rights Inuit are negotiating a comprehensive rights and management package to control the use of resources. Part of the package, which involves wildlife, has been negotiated and initialed by both parties, and subsequently ratified by the Inuit. The federal government, however, has refused to uphold its end of the bargain by failing to endorse the agreement. "

The agreement (see attached) is important because it defines Inuit rights, and the role Inuit are to play in the management, use and conservation of wildlife. It recognizes Inuit rights to harvest all wildlife resources throughout the lands and waters of Nunavut. Inuit are to participate as equals and in equal numbers to government on a wildlife management board. The board is to function as the main regulatory instrument of wildlife management and is to be the main regulator of access to wildlife resources.

Its management functions and responsibilities are broad and comprehensive and include amongst other matters; the establishment of harvest levels; the allocation of quotas; the development and operation of programs for habitat classification and protection; wildlife research; and the promotion of wildlife

education and the training of Inuit in wildlife management. All management decisions concerning harvest levels are to be undertaken according to the principles of conservation. The board also has a role in interjurisdictional wildlife" matters.

Apart from the recognition of Inuit rights the agreement is significant for a number of other reasons. Inuit participation on board with the federal and territorial departments responsible for wildlife, ensure the involvement of the primary resource users in the decision making process without which management of the resource base would be difficult. Also the involvement of all departments responsible for wildlife ensure that wildlife will be managed in an integrated and comprehensive fashion rather than by a species by species approach. And because the board has certain responsibilities for habitat protection, habitat management and wildlife management will be complimentary. The agreement further provides for a five year harvest study to determine harvest levels thereby providing managers with a data base on which to base decisions. For the first time then, there will be a comprehensive and integrated system of wildlife management that will protect Inuit rights and guarantee their involvement in the management of the resources on which they so greatly depend. It is hoped then that the Commission's recommendations will be consistent with the provisions of the Agreement.

To ensure there is wildlife around to harvest and therefore protect Inuit ability to hunt, the wildlife provisions of the agreement are complimented by a land (includes water) and resource management package that places land use planning and the **impact review** of development at the **centre** of policy and decision making. **The** system envisaged **will** ensure a rational and planned approach to resource use. Since these provisions are not central to the Commission's interest, they have not been appended to the submission but they could be made available should the Commission wish to examine **them**.

Hunting, trapping and fishing is the heart of the Inuit economy. These activities are supplemented from time to time by cash gained through part-time or seasonal employment, government assistance and from the sale of wildlife products such as ivory, fox and polar bear skins, arctic char and caribou meat and most importantly seal skins. The ability of people to earn cash through the sale of wildlife products is important because without it the purchase of equipment and supplies necessary to hunt is impossible. The present economy of the Nunavut area offers few alternative means by which to earn money.

Inuit are dependent upon a variety of wildlife resources both terrestrial and aquatic. The significance or importance of any particular species though is dependent upon its availability, abundance, and accessibility, which **varies** from seasons to seasons and community to community.

Seals, unlike many species, are abundant, are widely distributed through arctic waters, and are available to Inuit year round. Four species of seal are taken; the ringed seal, bearded seal, harp seal and harbour seal. Of the four, the ringed seal is the most important. It's habitat is the land fast ice zones in the winter and the coastal waters during summer. It is essentially sedentary in its habits and it's range falls within the range of ice and waters used by Inuit. It is an important source of food, clothing and cash.

It is also an important link in the trophic web and as such is important to the Inuit economy for other reasons. Polar bears, a source of food, clothing, and cash (derived from the sale of skins and sport hunting) relies mainly on the ringed seal for its food supply. Likewise, the arctic fox, the mainstay of the Inuit trapping industry is attracted to the fast ice areas because of the ringed seal. It scavenges the remains of polar bear kills and feeds on ringed seal pups during the pupping season. Thus, the economic importance of the ringed seal goes somewhat beyond the seal itself.

The second most important seal is the bearded seal. It is a bottom feeder which because of its diving limitations, is confined to the nearshore waters and is therefore within reach of Inuit hunters. It prefers open waters, polynias and pack ice in the winter to that of the fast ice, but because of its small numbers and solitary behaviour is not as readily available as the ringed seal for hunting. It is, though, widely distributed throughout arctic waters and when captured is prized for the water proof qualities of its skin.

The harp seal and the harbour seal figure more marginally in the Inuit economy of Nunavut than the ringed or bearded seal. The harp seal because of its migratory behaviour is only a summer resident of the arctic and its range is limited to the Hudson Bay region, Baffin Bay/Davis Strait and the more easterly portions of the Northwest Passage region. The harbour seal is a coastal and fresh water seal whose northern range is limited to the southern arctic and because of its small numbers and limited distribution is a minor component of the sealing industry.

The significance of the seal in the Inuit economy and the importance of the various species varies from region to region and community to community. But regardless of any regional variation in dependence, it is safe to say all communities have been hurt by the ban on the seal skin trade. How severe the economic effects and how far-reaching the impact can *only* be determined through discussions with the hunters and the communities themselves. The importance of holding hearings in the communities cannot be stressed enough. Areas of attention that bear investigation should include the following.

The area that bears primary consideration is the economic importance of the seal skin trade and the impact of the seal ban on the local economy. Investigation of this matter though should be seen within the larger context of the northern economy such as employment opportunities and other sources of income available to Inuit. And it should be recognized that depressed economic conditions increases demands on government for the provision of economic and social

assistance. The importance of the seal as a food source and the costs of replacing seals with store foods, as well as the nutritional value of seal meat and the replacement costs of its nutritional equivalent bears investigation. This area should also be examined within the context of health care costs to government which may escalate because of poor diet if access to country foods is to decline. A study of the purchasing power of scarce dollars in the North, and the cost of outfitting and operating the equipment necessary to hunt should be undertaken. And again, this should be viewed within the framework of the larger economy and the opportunities to make cash from employment and through other means. Other matters that bear consideration should include the importance of seal skins for clothing and their costs of replacement with store bought clothes. Also the socio-cultural importance of hunting should be investigated; the significance of the hunting partnerships; and the importance of the community systems of food distribution. Inuit society is based on hunting and the sharing of food, and the significance of the food distribution networks cannot be understated.

TFN wishes to thank The Royal Commission for its consideration of this submission, and in closing wishes to refer the Commission to the Wildlife Agreement-in-Principle as the substance of its submission, and to reiterate the need to hold hearings in the communities.