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Type of Study: Analysis/review

Date of Report: 1990

Author: S. Nickels

Catalogue Number: 11-32-23

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DEVELOPMENT - THE CASE OF CLYDE RIVER,
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Sector: Tourism
11-32.33
Analysis/Review

E. Y. A. + key

INUIT PERCEPTIONS OF TOURISM DEVELOPMENT:
THE CASE OF CLYDE RIVER, **BAFFIN** ISLAND, **N.W.T.**

Earthcoming - Inuit Studies

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ABSTRACT

We examine the attitudes and perceptions of local Inuit toward tourism development in the small arctic community of Clyde River, Baffin Island. The research reveals that Inuit support the growth of tourism as long as its development is gradual and the community maintains control of the industry. Residents look positively on the economic benefits associated with tourism, and appear reluctant to attribute social and environmental costs to its development. In conclusion we point to a series of management issues that should be considered if the potential negative impacts of tourism are to be reduced in this remote arctic community.

INTRODUCTION

In this paper we study the attitudes and perceptions of Inuit residents faced with potential tourism development in the Baffin Island community of Clyde River, Northwest Territories (NWT), Canada. The Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) views tourism as one of the main economic hopes for the Baffin region's depressed economy. Indeed the industry appears to be one of the few viable alternatives for small arctic communities seeking to gain a degree of economic independence. Unfortunately little is known about the potential impacts, both positive and negative, that the industry will have on the region's communities.

In order to avoid the worst effects of tourism development the first step must be to gain an understanding of Inuit concerns and attitudes about the industry's growth. Studies conducted over the last decade have shown that host communities usually welcome tourism's economic benefits (Keogh 1982; Liu and Var 1986), but are wary of the social and environmental consequences of its growth (Allen et. al. 1988; Belisle and Hoy 1980; Pizam 1978; Liu, Sheldon and Var 1987). If these negative impacts are not addressed local attitudes towards tourism may become increasingly hostile. If sustainable forms of tourism are to be set in place it is vital to involve residents in the planning process and to keep them informed and consulted about the scope of any development (Keogh 1990).

To date, most resident attitude studies have been conducted in the wake of tourism development. Researchers have generally been concerned with reactions to existing levels of tourism activity and

opinions on the desirability of the industry's further expansion (Murphy 1985; Ritchie 1988). Few studies have examined resident impressions where little or no tourism exists; fewer still have studied these aspects in arctic communities.

The research presented here is drawn from a broader project dealing with the impacts of tourism development in the eastern NWT. Data collection was conducted during the summers of 1990 and 1991, under Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, Northern Scientific Training Grants. Detailed interviews, using open-ended questions, were conducted for a period of 64 days in the community. Seventy-three inhabitants (14% of the total community population) were interviewed. Representatives of all age groups, both male (52) and female (21), Inuit (69) and Qallunaat (4) (white) were included.

STUDY AREA AND BACKGROUND

Clyde River (pop. 530) is situated on the east coast of Baffin Island (Figure 1). In the early 1950s the Canadian government began relocating Inuit from their traditional family camps - Creating the present community (Wenzel 1983). In response to the need to search for wildlife at ever greater distances from their community, Clyde Inuit began to rely on mechanized transportation technology, and the sale of commercially viable seal furs (Smith 1971). Innovative harvest adaptations were developed combining imported technology and money with traditional skills and knowledge (Wenzel 1989). Thus, by the mid-1960s, Clyde hunters were not only dependent upon

animals for food and income but also on money for the continued harvesting of wildlife. It was the sale of the byproducts of food production, most notably the skin of the ringed seal, which largely provided the capital and operational funds needed for hunting with minimal diversion of hunter time and labour to non-subsistence pursuits (Wenzel 1989: 8).

In 1983 the European Economic Community advised its member states to ban the importation of immature seal products (Malouf et al. 1986, Wenzel 1989). This ban all but ended the sale of sealskins by Canadian Inuit, and hit communities like Clyde River particularly hard (Wenzel 1989: 16). Without wage employment or hunting, many residents of northern communities are forced to rely on social assistance payments from the federal government. About three quarters of Clyde residents receive housing and pay low welfare rent, which is equivalent to \$35 per month.

Social assistance is not suitable to the minimum cash-flow needs of the Inuit harvesting economy. It's intent is primarily to allow the consumption of foodstuffs brought in from outside markets rather than to sustain the harvesting of food from local resources. In other words welfare has the tendency to erode cultural values linked to the subsistence harvesting economy (Tungavik 1989: 18) .

In the face of these economic pressures and with concerns growing over the ability of Northern communities to maintain their subsistence systems there has been much attention paid to the potential role that tourism can play as an engine of economic growth. The industry is strongly promoted by the GNWT as part of a

broad strategy to improve economic conditions and job opportunities in the wake of the ECC's sealskin boycott (RT and Associates 1989).

To date Clyde River Inuit have had only limited contact with tourists. Due to inconsistent air service Clyde was one of the more isolated communities in the Baffin Region until 1973, and tourists rarely visited the community. The first large group to visit was in 1973 when about 20 members of the Alpine Club of Canada arrived to conduct a series of hikes and climbs in the Sam Fiord area (Wenzel and Milne 1990). Since then a small number of hunters, climbers and kayakers have visited the community. Although accurate statistics are not available our interviews reveal that on average fewer than 10 tourists per year visit Clyde River.

Despite these small numbers the potential for tourism development in the community has been the focus of a great deal of discussion in recent years. Clyde River, has many of the natural and human resources that attract tourists. Spectacular scenery, bird watching, hiking, hunting, and boating are all available in near vicinity to the community. Clyde River also offers basic services and facilities with a small hotel, a grocery store, crafts cooperative, and a number of trained guides and outfitters.

The community has the potential to cater to many tourist types including: consumptive (hunting, fishing); adventure (mountaineering, hiking, kayaking, skiing); and, nature/cultural (bird watching, art collecting). Our interviews reveal that while Clyde residents have a variety of definitions of what constitutes a 'tourist', most believe tourism to involve visitors who travel

the community with the specific objective of enjoying the scenery, wildlife and culture of the area. For this reason we do not consider short or long-term workers from the South or Inuit visiting from other communities to be tourists for the purposes of this study.

Interest in tourism has been stimulated recently by the possibility that a whale reserve will be established near to the village. In 1990, the community, in co-operation with the World Wildlife Fund Canada (1990), recommended the establishment of the first arctic whale sanctuary at Isabella Bay to protect the critical habitat of the endangered eastern arctic **Bowhead Whale** (*Balaena mysticetus*). It is recommended that a Biosphere Reserve called Igalirtuug be established around this site under the UNESCO Man and Biosphere program. The reserve would also protect many archaeological finds and historic European whaling **sites**. It is hoped that cooperation between the **local** community, scientists, and government will stimulate increased international recognition of the area and **it's** urgent conservation needs.

The proposed reserve has stimulated a great deal of interest in **"whale watching"** tourism as a means of providing a boost for Clyde's diminishing economy. The first community wide discussions about tourism began in early 1985 shortly after research into the **bowhead** population began (Finley, 1990). Several public call-in programs on the subject were aired over the community radio and a Tourism Committee, a small group of residents who meet to discuss tourism issues, was formed. Growing public awareness of the reserve

in southern Canada also attracted the attention of a number of tour wholesalers who wish to establish tours to the region (Hume 1990) .

TOURISM IMPACTS - AN OVERVIEW

Tourism is an important development option for many isolated, scenic, but economically depressed regions. The **industry, being labour intensive**, can create a range of employment opportunities, while **tourist expenditures** can contribute directly and indirectly to the local economy (Lindberg 1991). Thus the industry can aid communities and regions in diversifying the structure of their economies, and aid in reducing disparities in income and employment (Milne 1990: 16) .

A series of factors can, however, mediate these benefits. The goods and services required by tourists often cannot be provided from within the community or region concerned, forcing a reliance on imported commodities and **skills**. In this **way**, some tourist expenditure leaks from the economy, leaving only a small amount in the **hands** of local people (Wilkinson 1989:164). Tourism **may also** generate only semi-skilled jobs for locals, **leaving** the managerial positions filled by outsiders (Milne 1987:120).

Local residents can also experience difficulties in gaining a stake in the ownership of the industry because they often lack access to the requisite capital and skills. The close linkages between travel wholesalers, airlines, and accommodation networks can **also** make it difficult for local people to become **directly** involved in the industry, with **"outside" operators often retaining**

the bulk of the profits. The opportunity costs of resident involvement in the industry must also be considered. In Clyde for example, a tour guide's investment of time and money may hinder his ability to hunt (Wenzel and Milne 1990).

As an 'exploiter' of natural resources tourism is intimately linked to the environment. Increasingly, the preservation of the physical environment is viewed as an investment when planning tourism development (Farrell and Runyan 1991; Innskeep 1987; Romeril 1989). As a result tourism can increase local awareness of the importance of conservation, and lead to the establishment of environmental protection legislation, while at the same time producing the economic means to put such measures in place (Boo 1990; Milne 1990:17; Travis 1982).

Unfortunately the industry is also associated with environmental costs. Trampling of plants, soil erosion, and pollution are just some of the impacts commonly associated with its growth (Farrell and Runyan 1991:31). Architectural 'pollution' is also apparent where culturally accepted and aesthetically pleasing designs have not been taken into consideration when constructing facilities (Milne 1990).

Tourism also leaves socio-cultural impacts in its wake. Positive impacts include the revival of 'traditional' social and material culture, an opportunity for local residents to experience new cultures, and the development of infrastructure and facilities which will also benefit local people (Milne 1990:18). Most of the impacts, however, are generally viewed as either ambiguous or

negative (Mathieson and Wall 1982) . Tourism inevitably impacts upon community value systems, individual behaviour, family , relationships, moral conduct, and creative expressions (Milne 1990:19) . All these factors have the potential to alter or destroy a community's way of life. The industry has also been blamed for bringing drugs, crime and inflation to host populations (Belisle and Hoy 1980; Keogh 1990:450; Liu and Var 1986).

The type of tourist visiting a community **plays** a major **role** in determining the degree of impact. Some tourists will want limited interaction with local residents while others will seek contact. Some tourists will expect high quality services and amenities and will not adjust to local conditions while others find such adjustments appealing. Most authors show concern about the effects of 'outside' domination of the tourist industry and the impacts of the 'demonstration effect'. As **Milne states**, "heightened economic expectations among the local population who aspire to the **material** standards and values of the tourist may lead to the **copying** of consumption **patterns**" (1990 : 19) . The inability of some local communities to achieve western-induced desires by **socially** accepted means creates tension. Increased employment of '**outsiders**' in the industry, along with changes in the economic roles of women and community social organization, can also intensify local resentment towards tourists (Milne 1990:19) .

Clearly not all of these impacts **will** affect **small** arctic communities such as Clyde River. **Travel** to the **Baffin** region has always been hampered by high costs and a harsh climate (Keller,

1987) . Despite the fact that tourist flows to the region have doubled during the past decade annual arrivals still only number approximately 3,000. Nevertheless the recent growth of ecotourism and increasing interest on the part of tour operators indicates that flows will continue increase considerably in the next decade. This growth will be supported by ongoing **infrastructural** development and the recent introduction of discounted flights to the area. While tourism to the region is unlikely to ever be classified as 'mass' in nature it is important to note that the small size of the communities will magnify potential impacts.

RESIDENT ATTITUDES TO TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

Socio-cultural, environmental, and economic factors cannot realistically be treated **in isolation** when **planning** tourism. In attempting to plan the optimal development path for the industry it is essential that local people be involved in the planning process. The first step toward achieving this goal **is** to gauge resident perceptions of proposed developments before they commence. The following discussion focuses on community attitudes toward the current and potential impacts of tourism development in Clyde River.

Over ninety per cent of the residents asked whether they wanted to see tourism in Clyde responded affirmatively, with 93% stating that economic benefits would stem from the industrys growth (Table 1). When discussing who would gain economically, 30% commented that they felt tourism would bring employment

opportunities t. **everyone** in the community. One quarter of the respondents felt that guides/outfitters and carvers would benefit most. Only 11% thought the hotel would benefit because it presently caters to temporary maintenance and construction sector workers and is usually full during the **summer** months leaving **room** for tourists.

While approximately **half** of the respondents **thought there** would be no **socio-economic** costs associated with the growth of tourism many were worried that the community would **lose control** of its ownership. **Clyde residents** fear that this will lead to outside competition for local **labour**, capital, and land resources, as well as a loss of power in policy and decision making=

Nearly three-quarters of those **surveyed** felt that cultural benefits **would** stem from tourism development in their **community** (Table 2). Over half mentioned that some form of **cultural** exchange between tourists and community members **would** be a benefit= **Many** elders in the community feel that cultural revitalization may help "the younger generation to **learn** more about their traditions and culture. One **Inuk** had much to say on this topic **stating:** "**once** the community knows what to expect [from tourism], the Tourism Committee will know how to preserve our own culture... for example, building a **sealskin tent display would teach** tourists as well as reinforce our own **culture.**"

Asked whether they thought **tourism** development in Clyde would bring any cultural costs, **61%** thought there would be none **while** 23% were **uncertain of the impact** (Table 2). Most negative impacts

mentioned related to fears that tourists may break community rules. In particular there were worries about alcohol and drugs. All alcohol entering Clyde must be cleared through the communities Alcohol Committee, and of course drugs are illegal, although they do find there way into the community. Other fears included the possible increase in sexually transmitted diseases brought to the community by visitors, and also a decrease in traditional hunting activity due to time spent guiding tourists.

One resident felt that, "stress Will be added to the community by tourists. . . there is already a cycle of stress which ends in a few social catastrophes per year". She fears increased problems of spousal assault, and drug and alcohol abuse due to the additional stress caused by the arrival of tourists. Another believed there will be cultural costs if tourists do not show respect towards the indigenous culture. He explained the feeling of being on display, and the problems that can arise when tourists take pictures of residents without their permission.

Over half of those surveyed thought that there would be no lifestyle change as a result of tourism development. Many said they are not worried about changing their lifestyle because they are adapting to new circumstances everyday, and they are still Inuit in the way they think about the land. Some see it as an unavoidable part of life; as one resident responded: "it [tourism] is part of our life whether we want it or not". Another stated, "we might loose a little of our culture but that is expected, every culture changes a little". Some believed they would experience a lifestyle

change but that the extent and Pace of any shifts would be difficult to gauge. Others thought that changes would only effect , the younger generation.

A limited number of residents stated that tourists should accept Inuit the way they are and not expect a change in lifestyle. One member of the community stated:

" Inuit should not have to change their lifestyle to suit the tourists: Tourists should experience the Inuit way of life the way it is, how the Inuit really are, as Inuit have to experience southerners when they go south. If I go south as a tourist you can't expect me to tell you to get rid of all the cars and pollution for me. You wouldn't do it. so why should we Inuit change our lifestyles for the few tourists that come up here?"

Over eighty percent of those surveyed said they did not believe tourism would bring any environmental problems as long as the community controlled the industry (Table 3) . Several residents did, however, raise concerns over the possibility of garbage problems at both Clyde and Isabella. While rules state that all garbage from camping trips must be brought back to the community and put into cans bound for the hamlet dump there were worries about how these would be enforced.

One resident said that the degree of negative environmental impact would depend upon the scale of tourism= He felt that if only a few tourists went to Isabella Bay to watch whales from the land no environmental impacts would occur. On the other hand if numbers started to grow he believed impacts would occur because trails would be formed and plants trampled. On the other hand if all tourists went straight to Isabella by boat they would have a higher probability of scaring the whales in the water. It is difficult to

say what is best, he added.

The majority agreed that there should be restrictions on the number of tourists coming to Clyde (Table 3). Most residents felt small parties of tourists were better than large as the latter may overwhelm the community's facilities. Some residents stated that crowding at Clyde, as well as **Isabella Bay**, would pose a **problem** for the community. Many felt that the Tourism Committee should set guidelines on the numbers of tourists that enter Clyde at one time. As one community member stated, "**we can always** increase the numbers who arrive but it may be difficult to decrease the number if we start too **high**".

Of those who felt a '**ceiling**' was not necessary, the majority believed that the tourist season is already short and that restrictions would decrease the amount of jobs and money entering the community. They were confident that the community could take care of a large number of tourists as arrivals tend to be staggered throughout the season.

"When asked whether there should be restrictions on the numbers of **people** traveling to **Isabella Bay**, 60% of the fifty two respondents said yes (Table 3) . Many said there **should** be a restriction on the number of tourists but not on the number of Clyde residents. Some **Inuit** mentioned that no large crowds should be allowed to go to the Bay at one time, and that restrictions should only apply to the months when the whales are actually present. A number of respondents stated there should be restrictions on the numbers of boats, not the number of people, who

go to the bay. Others thought there should be restrictions on the number of tourists because there are no facilities for them at Isabella Bay.

Most residents who stated that restrictions were not needed felt that it was still too early to tell what types of impacts tourism would bring. These people believed that if a problem developed the separate committees could then make regulations restricting tourist access. Other comments included: "number restrictions would depend on what tourists do, we need to be concerned with the type of activity," and; "if the tourists don't use helicopters, or motors, and just whale watch from kayaks, then no restrictions will be needed". Still other residents said that they would like to see a well organised industry where small groups of tourists would go in to Isabella Bay, while at the same time another group would be returning to Clyde. Finally, some residents thought that if too many tourists went to Isabella Bay, the regulations would start to erode, even if they were in place.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this study suggest that Clyde River residents have a positive attitude toward tourism development with the industry's potential to bring economic benefits clearly being seen as a major drawcard. In the absence of any other viable means of economic stimulation such a response is perhaps to be expected. Less expected, however, is the high level of agreement in the cultural benefits of tourism and the ambivalence towards the

environmental costs.

It appears that residents are reluctant to attribute socio-, cultural and environmental costs to tourism but are, nevertheless, able to point to some specific negative impacts that tourism development might have on their village. The main fears of residents 'revolve around the potential lack of community involvement in the industry and the possibility that tourists 'may break local rules. For the people of Clyde, local involvement in the planning and control 'of the tourist industry is of paramount importance. At the same time community members support gradual tourism development; allowing the potential **impacts** to be monitored on a regular basis. It is also clear that residents" want to have priority over the use of traditional hunting and camping areas.

The large proportion of ambiguous (**don't** know) answers reveals a lack of community understanding of tourism **itself** and is a reflection of the lack of information available to community members on the subject. Tourism at this point **is** just a perception in the minds of the community. **Unless** residents have had contact with Inuit from villages where tourism is underway, it is **unlikely** that they will have much understanding of the detailed workings of the industry (**Wenzel** and **Milne** 1990). Nevertheless, Clyde residents show a wealth of local knowledge that is indispensable to the future development and management of their community's tourist industry.

Our findings support the theme that tourist planning should **be based on the priorities and goals of community residents** (**Cooke**

1982; Murphy 1985) . sustainable tourism development requires local input and involvement and it is imperative that local people have , continual access to information about the industry, starting from the earliest stages of **it's** growth. We believe that every effort should be made to inform the community as thoroughly as possible about the impacts of tourism development. This will aid in building local competence in the planning and management of the **industry**.

While several arctic settlements have found themselves dealing with the growth of **tourism**, **Clyde** River is unique in that the attitudes and perceptions of **its'** residents are being studied before the industry's development really begins. By identifying the major issues at stake within the **community** a better understanding of the informational needs of residents can be 'cached and subsequent guidelines prepared to allow them to be met. It is **to** be hoped that the citizens of Clyde River will continue **to control** the development of **local** tourism and that they will be provided with sufficient information to allow them to make informed decisions about their community's future.

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Table 1. Resident Response to Economic Issues.

Overall attitude to Tourism Development	Percentage Responses			Total Number of Responses ^a
	Yes (%)	No (%)	Don't Know (%)	
General Support for Tourism	92	7	1	72
Perceived Economic Benefits	93	0	7	70
Perceived Overall Problems	29	52	19	65

a. N = 73. Not all questions were answered by respondents.
Source: Clyde River fieldwork.

Table 2. Resident Response to **Socio-Cultural** Issues.

Overall attitude to Tourism Development	Percentage Responses			Total Number of Responses ^a
	Yes %	No %	Don't Know %	
Perceived Cultural Benefits	72	12	16	58
Perceived Cultural Problems	16	61	23	57
Perceived Lifestyle Change	31	64	5	42

a. N = 73. Not all questions were answered by respondents.
Source: Clyde River fieldwork.

Table 3. Resident Response to Environmental Issues.

Attitude to Tourism Development	Percentage Responses			Total Number of Responses ^a
	Yes %	No %	Don't Know %	
Environmental Impacts (Clyde)	12	81	7	57
Tourist Restrictions (Clyde)	52	31	17	65
Tourist Restrictions (Isabella)	60	23	17	52

a. N = 73. Not all questions were answered by respondents.
Source: Clyde River fieldwork.

