



# Study on Social Impacts

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Research on the consideration given to social impacts under the impact assessment processes applicable in Nunavik

Study conducted by Gilles Côté, SIFÉE



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Comité consultatif de l'environnement Kativik  
Kativik Environmental Advisory Committee

# Presentation outline

- Introduction
- Background information on environmental assessment processes in Nunavik
- Research methodology
- Results: Main problems
- Areas for improvement

# Introduction

- In 2017, the KEAC initiated an examination of how social impacts are considered in the impact assessment processes applied to development projects in Nunavik:
  - What is the scope of social impact studies?
  - What are the strengths and weaknesses of each process?
  - How can the processes be improved?
- In 2018, the KEAC commissioned the director of the Secrétariat international francophone pour l'évaluation environnementale (SIFÉE) to conduct a comparative review of the environmental and social impact assessment processes applicable in Nunavik.



Mary A. Pilurtutut

# Definitions

**In this document...**

**Environmental assessment (EA):** A generic term referring to assessment processes.

**Environmental impact assessment (EIA):** A process that preventively assesses the environmental impacts of a specific project.

**Environmental and social impact assessment (ESIA) (Dumarcher, 2018):** Term that emphasizes the importance of the social perspectives of EIA, and employed predominantly in the current study.

**Strategic environmental assessment (SEA):** An approach that promotes the integration of environmental considerations into policies, plans and programs developed by governments.





# Background information on environmental and social impact assessment in Nunavik

# Background information

- Four environmental and social impact assessment processes can be applied in Nunavik:
  - Provincial process, Section 23 under the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement (JBNQA);
  - Federal process, Section 23 under the JBNQA;
  - Article 7 under the NILCA;
  - CEAA 2012\*.
- According to the development project, more than one process may be carried out simultaneously and sometimes the processes are harmonized.

\* The *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act*, 2012 (CEAA 2012) was replaced in 2019 by the *Impact Assessment Act*. Notwithstanding, at the time of the study, no project had yet been subject to assessment under the new law. Analysis in the study therefore focuses on the CEAA 2012.

# Background information

- The four processes provide for social considerations to be studied through environmental impact studies.
- Although the Supreme Court of Canada<sup>1</sup> has determined that social impacts must be taken into account in environmental impact studies, the consideration of social impacts poses many challenges.
- The goals of the current study were therefore to assess actual practices, identify challenges, and propose tentative solutions to improve the integration of social considerations into environmental impact studies in Nunavik.

<sup>1</sup> *Friends of the Oldman River Society c. Canada (Ministre des Transports)*, (1992) 1 R.C.S 3, JE 92-180



# Research methodology



# Research methodology

- The current study was conducted in two phases:
  - Phase I: Aimed to compare social considerations actually taken into account under the four environmental and social assessment processes in Nunavik. Difficulties accessing relevant documentation made it impossible to reach this goal. Only eight projects were analyzed, and none of these had been applied under the NILCA or the CEAA 2012.
  - Phase II: Added to the analysis of Phase I, a review of literature concerning social impact assessment in the north and semi-structured interviews with resource persons involved in the Nunavik processes.
- Results of the two phases are combined in the following slides.



# Results: Main problems

# Results:

## Main problems

### **a) Poor access to information:**

- No centralized database exists for data generated through different impact studies. Even for a same project, it is currently impossible to access all the information held by the various stakeholders and their related recommendations.
- Poor access to data undermines the accuracy of forecasts, sometimes produces conflicting impact findings and delays the completion of ESIAs, limits the quality of follow-up, and prevents adequate cumulative impact assessment.

# Results:

## Main problems

### **b) Limited scope of social impact analysis:**

- The economic benefits of development projects are normally well documented (job creation, wages, contracts for local businesses). Other social impacts are less well documented (impacts on traditional lifestyles and economies).
- Impact studies give undue importance to quantitative indicators.
- The scope of study areas is limited, covering only communities that are directly impacted.
- The means for ensuring public participation are generally inadequate.

# Results:

## Main problems

### **c) Poor consideration given to cumulative impacts:**

- Cumulative impacts should be taken into account in impact studies, however:
  - There is standardized methodology of assesment. Analyses are based on the information available at the time of the study and vary greatly from one project to another.
  - Analyses are conducted by project proponents and limited to the areas covered by the projects' activities.
- Analysis of cumulative impacts on the biophysical and human environments requires a comprehensive assessment of the region, which the current approach does not permit.

# Results:

## Main problems

### **d) Absence of a theoretical framework and standardized methodology:**

- Without any standardized methodology in place, inconsistencies are observed in the development of indicators, in follow-up reports, and in the structure of the analysis approach used.
- The descriptive method of impacts by environmental component is the most commonly used methodology. This method considers the impacts of the project according to the components of the environment, without contextualizing them by issue, which makes the value attributed to these impacts arbitrary.





Photo: Émilie Bouchard

## Areas for improvement

# Areas for improvement

- Improve the practice of ESIA and cumulative impact assessment
  - The issue-based analysis approach was adopted by the Ministère de l'environnement et de la lutte contre les changements climatiques (MELCC) in 2021. Application of this method in all ESIA processes and of multi-criteria decision support methods would improve the overall transparency of the ESIA processes.
- Apply strategic environmental assessment so as to integrate environmental and social considerations into regional and sectoral development
  - Systematic strategic environmental assessment of plans, programs and policies specifically applicable in Nunavik would permit upstream assessment of cumulative impacts.

# Areas for improvement

- Improve the quality of information on the biophysical and human environments at various levels, including in the communities
  - Identifying key regional development issues that must be taken into account in individual project analyses and ensuring long-term follow-up on these would alleviate some of the shortcomings currently observed.
- Improve the quality and relevance of project information at impact analysis, monitoring and follow-up stages
  - An issue-based impact analysis approach would facilitate follow-up and the synthesis of knowledge, as well as ensure consistency with issues from project to project.

# Areas for improvement

- Improve the performance of joint assessment and review committees so as to involve Inuit in project analysis and decision-making
  - Joint committee analyses should be systematized through the use of multi-criteria decision support methods, such as the issue-based multi-criteria grid, to facilitate the work and enable the joint committees to achieve their full representativeness.

# Areas for improvement

- Improve coordination between public ESIA processes and private impact and benefit agreement negotiations
  - Impact study directives should explicitly require the following:
    - Consolidation of all the components and dimensions of the environmental and social management plan in a document separate from the impact study;
    - A declaration that environmental impact management is non-negotiable;
    - That the project proponent make known its intention to enter into an impact and benefit agreement, the timing of this, and the broad non-financial parameters of its participation.

# Conclusion

New development projects are expected to take place in the region in the coming years, particularly in the mining sector. Proper consideration of social impacts will be critical to mitigate negative effects and optimize project spin-offs in an equitable manner for the entire population. To this end, the SIFÉE study is intended as a starting point for dialogue among ESIA stakeholders in Nunavik with a view to implementing its recommendations.



Photo: Nancy Dea



# References used for the presentation

Dumarcher, A. 2018. (PDF) L'évaluation des impacts environnementaux. Revue de littérature critique. (researchgate.net)

MELCC, 2021. Guide sur la méthode d'analyse des impacts structurée par enjeux (gouv.qc.ca)

Brisson, 2019. Exploration conceptuelle de la notion d'enjeu et de quelques termes apparentés (uqar.ca)



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# Appendix

# Background information

## Comparison of the four ESIA processes applicable in Nunavik

Process	Type of development project	Subject to assessment (or screening)	Impact study contents (or scoping)	Decision
Section 23 - JBNQA, provincial	Projects under provincial jurisdiction, as listed in the schedules of Section 23	KEQC	KEQC Provincial administrator	KEQC*
Section 23 - JBNQA federal	Projects under federal jurisdiction, as listed in the schedules of Section 23	FSC/COFEX-North Federal administrator	FSC/COFEX-North Federal administrator	COFEX-North Federal administrator
NILCA	Structures, development or activities situated in a land or marine zone of the Nunavik Marine Region	NMRIRB Minister	NMRIRB Minister	NMRIRB Minister or NMRIRB and FEAP Minister
CEAA 2012	Projects on Crown land or under federal jurisdiction and likely to cause significant adverse environmental effects	IAAC	IAAC	Minister responsible or Governor in Council

### KEQC

Kativik Environmental Quality Commission

### FSC

Federal Screening Committee

### COFEX-North

Federal Environmental and Social Impact Review Panel

### NMRIRB

Nunavik Marine Region Impact Review Board

### FEAP

Federal Environmental Assessment Panel

### IAAC

Impact Assessment Agency of Canada

Violet print: Advisory role

Green print: Decision-making power

(\* The provincial administrator may override KEQC decisions.)