

BEAUFORT SEA STRATEGIC REGIONAL PLAN OF ACTION
WORKSHOP ON SOCIAL, CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC
IMPACT ASSESSMENT
MIDNIGHT SUN RECREATION CENTRE
INUVIK, NT
MARCH 28-30, 2006

PRELIMINARY PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

Background

To date, the assessment of social, cultural and economic (SCE) components in impact assessment in the NWT has stayed at a rather rudimentary level, focusing largely on data collection and the review of statistics, with qualitative and speculative predictions made regarding potential effects of proposed projects. Project-related assessment of SCE effects has turned into a forum for the examination and debate of wide-spread socio-economic change, some of which is the result of events and broader social and cultural change forces beyond any individual project, or even development activity as a whole.

During community consultations and previous workshops, the SCE effects of a development were commonly identified as a gap in impact assessment. The expectations with respect to both the limits, as well as the potential, of SCE to more fully contribute to decision-making in the environmental impact assessment (EIA) process need to be pragmatic and sustainable.

This workshop, to be held on March 28 to 30 in Inuvik, will provide participants with fundamental core knowledge, as well as some alternative perspectives on the more conventional approaches to SCE effects assessment. The intent is to be 'practical' rather than theoretical in approach. On the morning of March 31, the SCE sub-committee will meet to discuss the implications of the workshop in terms of development of the Beaufort Sea Strategic Regional Plan of Action (www.strepa.nt.ca).

The BSStRPA workshop participants will include community members as well as government, regulators and industry. The SCE workshop is intended to provide support to the BSStRPA in developing strategies, including recommendations and actions, for future oil and gas development in the ISR and potentially other renewable and non-renewable resource development. While the discussion may be informed by past or current activities such as the MGP, the focus will be on future development,

Purpose of Workshop

The purpose of the workshop is to bring together representatives from the six communities in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region (ISR), Inuvialuit organizations, regulators, governments and industry to review and discuss how social, cultural and economic aspects (including human health) are currently being addressed in impact assessment; to evaluate how effective SCE impact assessment is in meeting community, government and regulator needs; and to identify ways in which SCE impact assessment could be carried out in more effective ways.

Expert practitioners from the North and others with extensive experience in the North in the fields of social, cultural and economic impact assessment will be consulted or participate in the workshop. The SCE workshop is intended to provide support to the BSStRPA Steering Committee in developing strategies, including recommendations and actions, for future oil and gas development in the region (not current activities such as MGP), and potentially other renewable and non-renewable resource development.

Workshop Objectives

The objectives of the workshop are:

1. To provide workshop participants with a better understanding of SCE impact assessment activities; and
2. To provide insights from the workshop participants to the Steering Committee for developing its plans for the second/final year of the BSStRPA initiative (2006-2007).
3. Build awareness of the BSStRPA initiative in general, as well as the activities of the SCE sub-committee.

The workshop will:

1. Provide an applied (non-academic) overview of SCE in impact assessment: what it is/what it is not.
2. Present models and techniques for applying SCE in impact assessment.
3. Discuss the relationship between project-specific and broader SCE changes.
4. Discuss the information required for SCE baseline studies in the region: information that is currently available; existing gaps; and that issues need to be understood to fulfil the objectives for obtaining baseline information in impact assessment.
5. Describe SCE analytical frameworks/approaches, methods and techniques, including quantitative and qualitative methods, modeling, prediction and scenario development
6. Reference reports/documents / tools of practical value to the practice of SCE assessment in the ISR. This will include illustration of “best practices” and methodologies.
7. Discuss mitigation and adaptation to SCE changes (individual, family, community and regional levels of adaptation).
8. Present selected current work on SCE impact assessment by researchers and practitioners (in the ISR and elsewhere in the North) – related to both the effects of development and other factors that are resulting in social, cultural and economic changes.
9. Evaluate the extent to which SCE impact assessment is producing appropriate results for communities, governments, regulators and industry, and develop potential ways to re-think how to carry out SCE more effectively in impact assessment.
10. Discuss how project-specific SCE assessment can potentially contribute in a more substantive and pragmatic way, as well as be more relevant and useful to all of those involved – regulators, reviewers, proponents, communities, and others. What are some of the gaps to be addressed in SCE impact assessment? What are some of the solutions to the ‘typical problems’ encountered with SCE? How can SCE inform the decision-making processes regarding proposed development?