

TELEGRAM FROM COPPERMINE CONFERENCE - JULY 16, 1970

TO: PRIME MINISTER PIERRE E. TRUDEAU, OTTAWA

COPY TO HON. JEAN CHRETIEN, MINISTER OF INDIAN AFFAIRS & NORTHERN
DEVELOPMENT, OTTAWA

FROM: COPPERMINE CONFERENCE

THE ESKIMO PEOPLE OF SACHS HARBOUR BANKS ISLAND UNANIMOUSLY AND STRONGLY OBJECT TO ANY OIL OR GAS EXPLORATION ON BANKS ISLAND. YOUR GOVERNMENT HAS ISSUED LEASES FOR SUCH EXPLORATION WITHOUT ANY PRIOR CONSULTATION WHATSOEVER WITH THE ESKIMO PEOPLE. THESE ACTIONS ARE AN EXAMPLE OF YOUR GOVERNMENT'S CONTINUING COMPLETE DISREGARD FOR THE RIGHTS OF THE ESKIMO PEOPLE AND ARE CONTRARY TO THE STANDARDS OF COMMON HUMAN DECENCY.

THE ESKIMO PEOPLE OF BANKS ISLAND ARE SELF SUFFICIENT TRAPPERS AND HUNTERS ANNUALLY ACHIEVING THE WORLD'S RICHEST WHITE FOX HARVEST AND HAVE SO USED THESE LANDS SINCE TIME IMMEMORIAL.

BANKS ISLAND HAS A VERY DELICATE ECOLOGICAL BALANCE WHICH WILL BE DESTROYED IF EXPLORATION IS ALLOWED AND THE LAND SURFACE DISTURBED, AS YOUR GOVERNMENT WILL READILY UNDERSTAND IF IT WILL ONLY CHOOSE TO CONSULT WITH THE ESKIMO PEOPLE AND HAVE BIOLOGISTS CONDUCT THE NECESSARY RESEARCH. IN CONTRAST TO THE ACTIONS OF YOUR GOVERNMENT, THE ESKIMO PEOPLE HAVE ALWAYS PRACTISED SELF IMPOSED RIGOROUS CONSERVATION MEASURES TO MAINTAIN THE ECOLOGY OF BANKS ISLAND. THE ESKIMO PEOPLE CANNOT UNDERSTAND WHY YOUR GOVERNMENT HAS AUTHORIZED SUCH EXPLORATION WHEN YOU CONTINUALLY PROFESS TO HAVE CONCERN FOR THE ENVIRONMENT OF THE NORTH.

THE PEOPLE OF SACHS HARBOUR URGENTLY REQUEST THAT YOU DIRECT THAT NO FURTHER EXPLORATION TAKE PLACE UNTIL CONSULTATION CAN BE MADE WITH THE ESKIMO PEOPLE IN THESE MATTERS. YOUR GOVERNMENT'S FAILURE TO DO SO CAN ONLY BE INTERPRETED AS CONSCIOUS CONSENT TO THE DESTRUCTION OF THE PEOPLE OF SACHS HARBOUR.

SO THAT YOUR GOVERNMENT APPRECIATES THE SERIOUSNESS OF THIS SITUATION, THE PEOPLE OF SACHS HARBOUR HEREBY GIVE CLEAR WARNING THAT THEY ARE QUITE

PREPARED TO TAKE WHATEVER ACTION IS NECESSARY TO PROTECT THEIR COMMUNITY AND ENVIRONMENT.

ALL OF THE ESKIMO PEOPLE OF THE NORTH AS EVIDENCED BY THE REPRESENTATIVES' SIGNATURES HERETO COMPLETELY SUPPORT THE PEOPLE OF SACHS HARBOUR IN THIS URGENT PLEA TO YOU.

WE ALSO REQUEST THAT YOUR GOVERNMENT ALWAYS HAVE PRIOR CONSULTATION WITH THE ESKIMO PEOPLE IN RESPECT TO ANY SERVICE, EXPLORATION, OR ANY OTHER ACTIVITIES INTENDED TO BE UNDERTAKEN.

WE ALSO ASK THAT YOUR GOVERNMENT RECOGNIZE OUR RIGHTS AS ABORIGINALS IN THE LANDS OF THE NORTH AND GIVE US FAIR COMPENSATION WHERE THERE IS EXPROPRIATION OF OUR RIGHTS IN THE LANDS. WE BELIEVE THAT THE NATIVE PEOPLE OF THE NORTH SHOULD RECEIVE DIRECTLY A FAIR SHARE OF THE RESOURCES OF THE NORTH SIMILAR TO THE PROPOSED SETTLEMENT BEING CONTEMPLATED BY THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT FOR THE NATIVE PEOPLE OF ALASKA.

SIGNED: PETER ESAU SACHS HARBOUR, NWT
PETER SIDNEY "

AND THE FOLLOWING SUPPORTING SIGNATURES.

VICTOR ALLEN	INUVIK, NWT
AGNES SEMMLER	INUVIK, NWT
CHARLIE GRUBEN	TUKTOYAKTUK, NWT
ED NAZON	ARCTIC RED RIVER, NWT
JOHNNIE CHARLIE	FORT MCPHERSON, NWT
GARRET RUBEN	PAULATUK, NWT
PETER ERNERK	FORT CHURCHILL, MAN
ED BERTHE	FORT CHURCHILL, MAN
DAVID AMARJUAK	WHALE COVE, NWT
WALLACE GOOSE	HOLMAN ISLAND, NWT
PETER KOMINGOAK	COPPERMINE, NWT
CASMIR KRITERDLUK	CHESTERFIELD INLET, NWT
CYRIL NANAAUT	CHESTERFIELD INLET, NWT
LUCIEN TAPARTI	RANKIN INLET, NWT
PETER KAPKAR	REPULSE BAY, NWT
JOHN KAUNAK	REPULSE BAY, NWT
ANDREW	RESOLUTE BAY, NWT
CALEB APAK	IGLOOLIK, NWT
MARKOSIE	GRISE FIORD, NWT
MARY COUSINS	FROBISHER BAY, NWT
SIMEONIE KINAINAK	PANGNIRTUNG, NWT
DAVID TUKUTUK	GREAT WHALE RIVER, QUE.
PETER NOWRA	POVUNGUNITUK, QUE.
JACOB OWEETALTUK	PORT HARRISON, QUE.
NOAH QUMAK	SUGLUK, QUE.
PADLI ILUSUTUK	SUGLUK, QUE.

To: Councillors Trimble, Pryde, Simionie, Searle, Fairbrother, Williamson and Stewart

RESOLUTION #2

Whereas the Native people of the North and their communities only hunt and trap for their livelihood and subsistence, and have always practised conservation measures necessary for the preservation of wildlife,

And Whereas there must be some flexibility from community to community in the rules followed in the hunting and trapping of game,

And Whereas the whiteman's rules do not have the necessary flexibility in this regard, and therefore neither provide the necessary protection for the wildlife nor provide sufficiently for the sustenance and livelihood of the native people and communities,

Now Therefore Be It Resolved That the Native Community Council or Trappers' Association for each area should be able to make their own rules and regulations regarding the hunting and trapping of game birds and for fur bearing animals, including all big game,

And Be It Further Resolved That to accomplish the above that the Territorial Council immediately consult with the Native Community Councils and Trappers' Associations.

To: Premier Ed Schreyer - Government of the Province of Manitoba

RESOLUTION #3

In view of a situation becoming more serious each year and which resulted in the terrible death of one student last winter, this conference urges the Manitoba government to take all necessary measures to protect the people of Manitoba in the Churchill area from polar bears, to allow the people to exercise all necessary measures for self-protection, and to immediately consult with all people concerned, in particular, the native people of Churchill, to accomplish the above.

Copies to: (Manitoba Indian Brotherhood
(Manitoba Metis Federation

To: Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau
Jean Chretien, Minister, Indian Affairs and Northern Development

RESOLUTION #4

Whereas the Federal Government is following a policy of transfer of its constitutional responsibility for Eskimo people resident in Northern Quebec to the Quebec provincial government without any meaningful consultation with the Eskimo people of Quebec,

And Whereas the Eskimo people of Quebec have raised strong objections to the proposed transfer,

Therefore this conference strongly supports the concern of the Quebec delegation and urges that the Federal Government cease at once implementation of this ill-advised policy. Surely the government has learned during its recent attempts to turn over its responsibility for the Indian people of Canada to the provinces without real prior consultation with the native people affected that no satisfactory progress is possible through the use of such undemocratic approaches.

Copy to: Hon. John G. Diefenbaker - Ottawa

To: B.C. Gillie - Director of Education, Government of N.W.T., Yellowknife
R.F. Battle - Deputy Minister, Social Development, Department of Indian
Affairs and Northern Development, Ottawa

RESOLUTION #5

Whereas the Arctic communities represented at this conference are greatly concerned about the present school systems of the Northwest Territories and Arctic Quebec in that they fail to provide our children with a meaningful education suited to their environment, fail to preserve our native cultures and fail to produce useful Canadian citizens, we demand that action be taken now to implement the following:

- that each community council have a voice in the curriculum content so that native history, culture and skills be included as full credit courses;
- that each community council determine what vacation months during the year will apply to a community. The Southern Canadian standard of July and August is almost universally unsuited to the wishes of Arctic Communities;
- that more schools be provided as rapidly as possible to eliminate the absences from home of ten months per year for our children;
- that instruction in native language dialects in the primary grades be implemented now and not talked about for another ten or twenty years. We are decades behind the educational systems of Greenland and Siberia in this regard;
- that the program to utilize native teachers and teaching aides be greatly expanded immediately.

To: Robert Stanbury

RESOLUTION #6

This conference acknowledges with thanks the financial assistance provided toward the cost of the meeting by the Federal Government through its Minister the Hon. Robert Stanbury and the Citizenship Branch, Department of the Secretary of State. We also thank Mr. Paul Lumsden, Citizenship Branch, Ottawa for his assistance during the Conference as a resource person.

RESOLUTION #7

This Conference thanks the following resource people whose assistance throughout the meeting has made it a most successful conference:

Peter Cumming - Professor of Law, York University, Toronto

Norm Dunne - Western Associate Director, Indian-Eskimo Association, Edmonton, Alberta

Wally Firth - Executive Secretary, N.W.T. Division, Indian-Eskimo Association, Inuvik, N.W.T.