

WOLFDEN RESOURCES INC.

ULU GOLD PROJECT, NUNAVUT

NTS 76L 14/15

CULTURAL ORIENTATION REPORT



Introduction

This component deals primarily with circumstances arising out of interactions between project personnel and Inuit and their communities when doing work. Depending on the region where work is to be carried out, the likelihood of field activities involving interaction with Inuit people will vary. Field personnel will be supported through a specific program to assist in addressing cross-cultural issues – including community profiles and communication protocols in addition to access to advisory personnel. At the same time, field personnel must undertake to prepare themselves through acquiring a basic awareness of the physical and cultural settings, as well as the socio-economic and linguistic issues they may encounter in their work.

Community Setting

Northern Canada is predominantly populated by Aboriginal¹ people. Of the almost 27,000 people in Nunavut, 22,000 are Inuit (81%).

Employees should familiarize themselves with the geographical regions of Nunavut: Kitikmeot, Kivalliq and Qikiqtani.

The physical setting of many communities is in relatively remote, non-urban areas. Many households depend on a combination of the so-called “bush” economy – which relies on the harvesting of country foods including fish, game, berries and other edible plants – and the modern “mainstream” economy, including goods and services purchased through monetary exchange. The hybrid economy is reflected in the complementary reliance on modern technology (e.g., trucks, snowmobiles, cellular phones) and more traditional methods of trapping, hunting, gathering, and food preparation.

The socio-economic setting in many of the communities includes: a high rate of unemployment, low levels of academic attainment, and a high incidence of social problems. All these conditions are related and stem from generations of neglect and lack of access to economic resources, infrastructure and public services that the remainder of Canadians take for granted.

Although the particular physical and socio-economic settings will vary from community to community, employees should take the time in advance to sensitize themselves to the type conditions they may encounter and the constraints these conditions may impose.

Culture

Although it is a generalization to designate an “Inuit” worldview, employees must be aware that there are significant differences between traditional cultural values, practices and assumptions, and those underlying southern North American culture. While important differences exist, it is crucial that personnel become familiar with the basic elements of the Inuit worldview in order to be able to interpret and demonstrate respect for behaviour arising from traditional beliefs.

¹ First Nations, Metis and Inuit

The traditional worldview strongly influences Inuit relationship to the land. They do not view the land as a resource to be developed: they have a culturally ingrained sense of stewardship towards the land. Today, this attitude to natural resources is tempered by the pragmatic goal of economic development. Nevertheless, personnel should be aware that, especially among the older members, they are likely to encounter this view of the world.

The attitude to time may also be different. Historically, the pattern of activities revolved around the seasons, and in many communities today this is still the case. Awareness of the clock is low in these communities.

Employees should also be aware that decisions in Aboriginal communities are made on the basis of consensus. This mode of reaching decisions involves all interested members of the community, and can require long periods of time. It is unrealistic, in most cases, to expect that events will take place on a schedule that would be typical in non-Inuit societies. Personnel should anticipate this, and strive to demonstrate respect for individuals' and communities' requirements for time to reach consensus on decisions.

Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (Traditional Knowledge) and Local Knowledge

Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit means, "that which is long known by Inuit". It is the collective knowledge of lands, resources and peoples. It is primarily an unwritten compendium that has been "documented" through the oral tradition of a multitude of generations leading to the present day. On the other hand, non-aboriginal people typically view knowledge, particularly scientific knowledge, from an ethno-centric western perspective that is based on written documentation and the rigor of the "scientific" process.

Local knowledge is the knowledge that comes with living in an area for a long time i.e., best fishing holes, when to hunt caribou, etc. If there are local hires on a project, they may have local knowledge that can be useful to the understanding of the biophysical world.

Communication

To varying degrees in communities, people speak their traditional language. In most cases, this is in addition to English. However, in more remote communities and among older people, command of English may be low. In these cases, employees may be required to rely on the assistance of a bilingual interpreter. It will also be of great help if the employee exercises patience in reaching understanding with the traditional language speaker.

Other tips: Community trips

The information in this package is intended to provide practical information on holding community meetings in Nunavut.

Weather, weather, weather

Winds of 15 to 20 kilometers per hour are common year around throughout Nunavut. Winds are stronger from late summer to early winter and can reach extremes of over 100 kilometers per hour very quickly. Beware of blowing sand in summer and white out conditions when there is snow.

Know the signs and symptoms of hypothermia and how to treat it. Prevent hypothermia by staying warm, dry, well fed and hydrated. Carry plenty of water with you year around to avoid dehydration.

Freezing temperatures and snow are possible at any time of year. Think carefully about the clothing that you will bring. Windproof gloves, over-mitts, a warm hat, scarf, balaclava or neck gaiter and wool socks are standard gear year round. Varying temperatures and vigorous outdoor activity require layered clothing.

Start with long underwear bottoms and tops followed by additional upper and lower layers. Depending on the weather, cover up with either windproof or breathable waterproof jackets and pants. Do not wear cotton. When cotton gets wet from rain, snow or perspiration it cools your body temperature, potentially leading to hypothermia. Bring a warm parka with a hood.

Wear footwear appropriate to freezing temperatures.

Protect your eyes with high ultraviolet filter sunglasses.

(Adapted from http://www.nunavutparks.com/visitors_centre/safety.cfm).

As the weather can be extreme and uncertain, please be prepared for delays including layovers of a day to a week. I would recommend bringing extra clothing. It is also advisable to bring reading material (i.e., books, work, crossword puzzles, etc.) or other things to amuse yourself.

In the event of a layover, be prepared to share your room. If you are held up so are others. Depending on the demand, you may be asked to share your room with someone else if the beds are needed.

Conditions in Community Halls

It is often the custom in community halls or other meeting spaces to remove your outdoor footwear so as not to track in mud or snow. It is recommended that you bring footwear that you can wear indoors such as running shoes, moccasins, or a thick pair of socks.

The temperatures in these halls tend to verge on either overheating or near freezing. It is recommended that you dress in layers.

Food

There may only be one restaurant in the community with fixed hours of operation. Determine this in advance and be prepared to bring in your own food.

Accommodation

Accommodation is very limited in most communities. Be prepared to share your room with one of your colleagues. Likewise, it is advisable that at least one if not more of you also pack a sleeping bag in the event that only the floor is available. Please note, rooms often don't come with phones and you will share a pay phone in the hall. Be prepared with calling cards.

Shopping

In each community, there will be a Northern Store™ or equivalent where you can get food, clothing and other sundries. This is also likely where you will find an ATM.

If there is an interest in Inuit carvings or other handicrafts bring CASH or sometimes purchases can be made through the Northern Store. Carvers and other artisans may come by the restaurants, community meetings, etc. and ask if you are interested in buying the carving they have in their hands.

Cell Phones, Internet access

There is no cell phone coverage in any Nunavut community except for Iqaluit. Internet access will be dial-up to your ISP. Please note that phone lines can be slow and unreliable.