

Joint Review Panel
Suite 302, Professional Building
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To whom it may concern,

I am writing this letter in support of the development of support services that can support youth and their families when the pipeline is developed. I do understand that the Government already has existing support services like mental health and addictions services in the territories. I as a social worker having worked for the government systems feel that many of our indigenous community members will not access these support services because of the people that are delivering these services.

Many of the workers are non-aboriginal, lack cultural understanding of northern issues and lack the experience to work directly with intergenerational trauma survivors. Although they have degrees, some have not had direct experience working with the needs of the family; instead they provide poor quality services to communities that need quality health and social services.

What can be expected with the development of the Mackenzie Pipeline can best be understood with the current state of affairs in the N.W.T and Northern Alberta. There is a high rate of addictions, family violence and abuse that continues to grow within the N.W.T and Northern Alberta. All of the strategies that have been implemented to date have not been able to curb the continuous intake of these chemical, especially increased access and use of crack cocaine and crystal meth.

Although there has been years spent talking about an "on the land program", there has been few communities able to provide a consistent year round type of program. Instead of supporting these types of initiatives, most social services and mental health services will not provide funding or support for these types of programs, which is not acceptable.

Something needs to happen, what will the Gov N.W.T do with the issues of addictions, abuse and family violence when the one treatment center in the N.W.T is on strike and there is no youth treatment centers on the N.W.T, what happens to these at risk youth and their families that are in need.

What is needed is a holistic wellness program that can promote active living, healthy lifestyles and personal development. Many of our first people have issues that result from accelerated development of industry, residential school systems and continual cultural erosion.

The rates of illiteracy are higher amongst the residents of the N.W.T, then anywhere else in Canada, and that needs to improve.


Industrialization brings many conveniences to the people of the North but is also increases the risk for the community members to access harmful self defeating behaviors, which is some ways replace the connection that they may have had to the land prior to moving and working in the built up areas. It is like the trapper that has been trying to get to his trap line for years but hasn't the transportation or money to trap year to year. All of a sudden he has money to purchase skidoos, trapping equipment but know cannot go on his trap line because he no longer has a trap line that is some of what we have to face as Indigenous people.

What will need to be understood by everybody is that something will need to be done for the communities that are in the impact areas, these are areas where you can expect to see a lot of traffic, places like High Level, Alberta, Hay River, Fort Simpson, Yellowknife, Inuvik and Norman Wells. These bigger centers will fill the blunt of the development and will see more at risk behaviors (at least a higher concentration).

What can be done to educate, prevent and treat the family may be achieved through the implementation of a mobile treatment program. Although this has been tried in the past in the N.W.T and was shown to have little success. I feel that had it included community development work, it may have been better received. Treatment trends have changed and like other places, the N.WT needs wellness programs that can meet the immediate needs of the people, have after care and encourage independence.

Our communities will need to maintain the bond that exists with the land and we need to encourage our youth to access the elders to learn how to respect themselves and begin to heal from their problems. Having worked in many of the communities that will be affected by the pipeline in both the N.W.T and northern Alberta, I only ask that all parties involved with the development of the Mackenzie Pipeline, think of the future of the people that will be most affected, the youth, Elders and their families.

Yours Respectfully,


Clinton Digness

B.I.S.W, Masters Candidate

(Email me at Cdigness_2@hotmail.com, with any further comments)