

JANUARY 22, 1980

BRIEF TO THE ROYAL COMMISSION ON SEALING PRESENTED BY MR. PAUL OKITUK,
REPRESENTING MAKIVIK CORPORATION

HONORABLE MR. JUSTICE MALOUF, GENTLEMEN OF THE PANEL,
AND EVERYONE PRESENT, THANK YOU FIRST OF ALL FOR THIS
OPPORTUNITY TO EXPRESS THE DESIRES OF INUIT IN NORTHERN
QUEBEC. I AM PAULOSSIE OKITUK OF MAKIVIK CORPORATION; AN
INSTITUTION DULY ESTABLISHED UNDER QUEBEC LAW IN 1978.

IT IS WONDERFUL TO BE HERE. I KNOW EACH AND ALL
PRESENT HERE WOULD LIKE TO SEE BECOME A REALITY THE DESIRES
OF EACH ENTITY. WITH THIS IN MIND, I WOULD LIKE TO COMMEND
THE ANIMAL PRESERVATION SOCIETIES IN THEIR EFFORTS TO PRESERVE
SUCH LIFE. IT IS NORMAL HUMAN PRACTICE TO SAVE LIVES. SOME
OF US PRESERVE LIFE BY MAINTAINING A HARMONIOUS AND ECONOMICALLY
SOUND SYSTEM, OTHERWISE A LIFE OF DIRE POVERTY LEADS TO DESPAIR,
MISERY AND SOMETIMES DESTRUCTION. SOME OF US RECEIVE FULL
SATISFACTION THROUGH THE PRESERVATION OF ANIMAL LIFE, FOR THE
PRESERVATION OF LIFE IS THE STRONGEST INSTINCT WE POSSESS. WE
ARE NOT HERE TO CONDEMN THE EFFORTS OF THOSE PRESENT, RATHER
WE OFFER A SOLUTION FROM WHICH ALL PRESENT WILL BENEFIT. WE
ALL KNOW FOR A FACT THAT WE WOULD SINCERELY LIKE TO SEE EVERYONE
GO AWAY SATISFIED, KNOWING WE HAVE ACCOMPLISHED SOMETHING
TOGETHER. THE BRIEF PRESENTED HERE TODAY REFLECTS UPON THE
CONCERNS OF INUIT IN QUEBEC. IT DEALS WITH THE ISSUE IN THREE
PARTS: 1. THE SEALING SITUATION IN NORTHERN QUEBEC PRIOR TO
THE BOYCOTT OF THE SEAL PELTS AND BY-PRODUCTS MARKET; 2. THE
PRESENT STATUS: THE SENSE OF HOPELESSNESS DUE TO THE LACK OF

OF OTHER MEANS TO COMPENSATE FOR THE LOSS OF REVENUE GENERATED BY THE SEAL MARKET; 3. THE FUTURE AND WHAT IT HOLDS FOR THOSE OF US WHO HAVE THE DESIRE TO SEE LIFE BETTER.

TO SUM UP THE WHOLE BRIEF CLEARLY, IT ESSENTIALLY SAYS THAT THE INUIT COULD LIVE OUT THEIR LIVES IN THE QUALITY THEY DESERVE, THE NEWFOUNDLANDERS COULD PRACTISE THEIR ANNUAL HUNT WITHOUT THE FEAR OF DECIMATING THE ENTIRE SEAL POPULATION, AND THE ANIMAL WELFARE AGENCIES COULD HELP MONITOR TO ENSURE THE CONTINUED EXISTENCE OF SEALS. I SAID EARLIER THAT I WOULD PRESENT THIS BRIEF IN THREE PARTS. THE FIRST PART DEALS WITH THE LIFE THAT WAS PRIOR TO THE BOYCOTT OR BAN. LIFE WAS NOT ALL THAT DIFFERENT FROM THE DAYS WHEN THE INUIT WERE IN HARMONY WITH THE LAND. WHAT THEY HARVESTED WERE NOT ONLY SEALS AND YET, TO A LARGE EXTENT, IN SOME COMMUNITIES, SEALS WERE THE MAIN CRUX OF THEIR DIET AND THEIR PROSPERITY. SEAL MEAT AND BY-PRODUCTS SUCH AS SKINS TO MAKE MUKLUKS OR WINTER CLOTHING WAS VERY IMPORTANT AND CONTINUES TO BE. NOW SINCE THE BOYCOTT, THERE ARE AREAS WHERE THERE HAS BEEN A DECLINE IN ACCESS TO CASH WHICH HUNTERS NEED TO KEEP HUNTING. HUNTERS VERY MUCH NEED THE CASH GENERATED FROM THE SALE OF SEAL SKINS TO TURN BACK INTO THE HUNTING ECONOMY - AN ECONOMY THAT HAS STRONG CULTURAL INTEGRITY AND WHICH WE WISH TO MAINTAIN. AT THE SAME TIME AS THE BAN ON SEAL PRODUCTS, BY COINCIDENCE, THE CARVING MARKET HAS HAD A SERIOUS DECLINE. THIS IS JUST ONE MORE EXAMPLE OF DIFFERENT PARTS OF OUR CASH ECONOMY BEING DWINDLED AWAY. OUR OPTIONS FOR GENERATING CASH TO KEEP HUNTING ARE BEING REDUCED. WHEN YOU DO YOUR STUDY YOU WILL NOTE THAT THE PEOPLE IN THE RED ARE THE

MAJORITY IN NORTHERN QUEBEC AND THE PEOPLE NOT IN THE RED ARE THOSE OF US WHO HOLD JOBS - PERMANENT JOBS. NOW IN ORDER TO ALLEVIATE THE WELFARE STATE, WE WOULD HAVE TO INTRODUCE NEW WAYS OF GENERATING REVENUE.

ONE POSSIBLE WAY OF DOING THIS - AND I HAVE THOUGHT ABOUT IT NOT ONLY FOR THE INUIT BUT THE NEWFOUNDLANDERS AS WELL - IS THAT IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE TO ESTABLISH NEW MARKETS WITHIN OUR OWN SYSTEM. THE CANADIAN AND AMERICAN COUNTRIES HAVE NOT TO ANY GREAT EXTENT BENEFITED FROM THE SEAL MARKET BY GENERATING REVENUE AMONGST THEMSELVES. WE COULD LOOK INTO THAT AND WE COULD ALSO LOOK INTO OTHER COUNTRIES, LIKE CHINA. CHINA IS A HUGE COUNTRY AND THE PEOPLE THERE - AS I UNDERSTAND IT - HAVE A GREAT INTEREST IN NEW FOODS. THAT'S ANOTHER AREA THAT WE COULD LOOK INTO. THIS COULD HELP STABILIZE THE NEWFOUNDLAND ECONOMY AND IT COULD ALSO LEAVE OPEN OTHER OPTIONS FOR NORTHERN QUEBEC TO USE.

THE OTHER SOLUTIONS THAT WE COULD PROBABLY LOOK INTO FOR NORTHERN QUEBEC IS THAT WE COULD PUT OUR EFFORTS, OUR ENERGIES, INTO THE COMMERCIALIZATION OF CARIBOU OR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF OTHER INDUSTRIES BASED ON RENEWABLE RESOURCES SUCH AS TOURISM. THE STUDY ANNEXED TO THE SUMMARY OF THIS BRIEF INDICATES THAT THERE IS POTENTIAL FOR NORTHERN QUEBEC. IT HAS ALREADY BEEN INDICATED THAT THERE IS POTENTIAL. NOW, IT WOULD BE UP TO US TO GET THAT POTENTIAL ON THE GO. THE ONLY WAY THAT WE WILL FIND OUT IS TO GO OUT AND DO IT AND IF WE COULD ALWAYS EXPECT THE BEST AS OPPOSED TO THE WORST, I AM SURE THAT WE WOULD RECEIVE THE BEST.

WHAT I FEEL OPTIMISTIC ABOUT IS THAT HISTORY SHOWS THAT PEOPLE ARE VERY FORGIVING. WITH THE SEAL PELT MARKET, ALTHOUGH THE BAN IS IN PLACE RIGHT NOW, THE WORLD WILL NOT REMEMBER THE PAIN WHICH IT CAUSED AND THE PAIN THAT STARTED THE CHAIN REACTION WHICH LED TO THE BOYCOTT, AND I BELIEVE THAT IN A FEW YEARS FROM NOW, THE BAN ON THE SEAL PELT MARKET WILL BE LIFTED AND NEWFOUNDLAND WILL BE MADE RICHER, THE INUIT WILL BE MADE RICHER, AND CANADA AS A WHOLE WILL BE MADE RICHER, ECONOMICALLY AS WELL AS CULTURALLY.

WITH THIS NOTE, AGAIN, I THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR TIME AND I HOPE THAT EVERYONE HERE WILL WORK WITH AN OPEN AND CONSTRUCTIVE MIND TO HELP SOLVE THESE PROBLEMS.

IF THERE ARE ANY QUESTIONS WHICH ARE IN MY CAPACITY TO ADDRESS, I NOW WELCOME THEM, BUT LET ME EMPHASIZE THAT THERE MAY BE SOME WHICH I MAY NOT BE ABLE TO RESPOND TO AS PROMPTLY AS I WOULD LIKE.
