

WITNESS STATEMENT OF WILLIE NAKOOLAK

June 4, 2015

1. I am enrolled as an Inuk under the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement.
2. I am 52 years old. I was born in Coral Harbour and have lived there most of my life.
3. Between 1996 and 2012, I was on the Board of the Aiviit HTO. I was Chair for approximately 12 of those years. While I was a Board member or Chair, the HTO Board dealt with issues regarding the Coral Harbour abattoir operation many times. In 2015 I became an HTO Board member again.
4. Between 2007 and 2011, I was a member of the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board. I served as Acting Chairperson in 2010.
5. Caribou were reintroduced onto Southampton Island in 1967. Inuit had to wait for the population to rise before they could begin harvesting caribou again. Once the population was high enough, Inuit were able to harvest one caribou for every two households. Later we could harvest four per household. After that, it was ten caribou per household. The population rose quickly in the late 1980s. After the population became too high, there was no more limit.
6. The HTO supported an abattoir hunt for two reasons. It would benefit the community economically, and it would help reduce the population of caribou. The Government reported that the population was too high, and the HTO agreed it had to be reduced.
7. An abattoir made sense because there a meat plant in Rankin Inlet. An abattoir in Coral Harbour could sell its meat to the plant.
8. When the abattoir started, the HTO held the licence. Then the HTO advertised for a contractor. Tunnug was the first company to get the contract. It was a written agreement between the HTO and the contractor. The HTO agreed not to have a say in the business unless something bad was done. Over the years, the contract went to different companies. Usually a contract was for several years; then it would be advertised again. For a few years the contract went to the Coral Harbour Community Development Corporation (Community Development Corporation), which was managed by Richard Connelly. The contract also went back to Tunnug for a few years, under a different name.
9. The Community Development Corporation was set up for the community. The HTO was behind it. If the Hamlet of Coral Harbour had equipment that could be used for the abattoir, and the HTO requested it, the Hamlet often would loan or rent equipment to the company. My understanding was that the Hamlet did not have any other role in the Community Development Corporation, or in the abattoir operation.
10. There was not very much paid work available for Inuit in Coral Harbour when the abattoir started. The abattoir project gave money to the abattoir workers and hunters that they would not have been able to earn otherwise.

11. The project also benefitted the community by distributing parts of the caribou not sold to the meat plant, such as tunnuq (back fat), hearts, and tongues.
12. If the caribou population rises again, the community would want to start the abattoir again. I would push for it. Even this winter, when people have reported more caribou, I have been asked whether the abattoir will start up again.
13. I knew the land claims agreement was signed in 1993, but I did not begin to learn about the Inuit harvesting rights contained in it until 1996, at a Kivalliq Wildlife Board meeting. After the Board met, NTI gave a workshop explaining the harvesting rights in the agreement to the HTO Chairs.
14. When the abattoir project was operating, I did not know what a Basic Needs Level was. I am not aware of any discussions between the Government and HTO about a Basic Needs Level at that time, or about how the project might affect Inuit rights under the land claims agreement. The HTO supported the project for its benefit to the community.