

NEWS: Nunavut August 03, 2012 - 6:30 am

## Mary River project owner bankrolls Olympic trip for three Inuit org reps

**“[We] may use the trip to promote what Inuit are negotiating for”**

DAVID MURPHY

Okalik Eegeesiak, the president of the Qikiqtani Inuit Association, along with two representatives from the Qikiqtaaluk Corp. is getting a free ride to the summer Olympic Games in London, paid for by Baffinland Iron Mines Corp.’s majority owners, the steel-making giant Arcelor Mittal.

Arcelor Mittal, the proponents of the Mary River iron-mine project, invited the QIA to attend the Olympics this past May, the same month QIA came out with its official stance supporting the Mary River project.

Baffinland, a private company under the control of Arcelor Mittal and a private investment firm, Iron Ore Holdings LP, wants to transport about 18 million tonnes or more of iron ore from Mary River to Steensby Inlet for markets in Europe and Asia over a period of least 37 years — and some predict up to 100 years.

Eegeesiak said the invitation from Arcelor Mittal, a corporate sponsor of the Mary River project, has not changed QIA’s opinion on it.

Accompanying Eegeesiak will be Levi Barnabas of Arctic Bay, the chair of Qikiqtaaluk Corp., and Harry Flaherty, president of QC.

“One of the things that we have worked on since May is to get insights for other members of QIA and our executives as well as representatives from other impacted communities, so that’s why Levi is going,” Eegeesiak said.

Eegeesiak didn’t want to comment on whether the trip could be seen as a conflict of interest during a period when negotiations on an Inuit impact and benefit agreement are still taking place between the QIA and Baffinland.

“[We] may use the trip to promote what Inuit are negotiating for,” said Eegeesiak, who added that more informal meetings will be held with the executives of the company in London.

Reached before her planned trip on August 2, Eegeesiak said she’s going to tell them that “Inuit support the project” and hopes the company will “agree to the majority of the agreement we would like.”

The discussions would also strengthen ties between the majority shareholders of Baffinland and the QIA, Eegeesiak said.

“This is an opportunity for QIA to promote and possibly be a bit educated by Mittal executives and others working with them,” she said.

Although Eegeesiak said she feels it is appropriate to go on the trip, which will run from August 4 to August 10, she also said she understands why some people may be upset at her decision.

“Yes I can understand why. Given they might not be informed, because, like I said, the board supports the project,” Eegeesiak said.

The trip comes a week after the [Nunavut Impact Review Board held public hearings](#) in Nunavut concerning the environmental and socio-economic impacts of project.

“This is post-NIRB. They have already had their hearings, so it is now in their hands to make any recommendation they want to the minister. And then the minister will decide either way whether the project will go ahead,” she said.

“If [the project] goes ahead then it’s going to be a long-term relationship with Baffinland and Mital. So I think this is one of the positive steps that QIA is taking.

Eegeesiak said she plans to attend some Olympic events where she will cheer on her fellow Canadians.

## 56) Comments:

#1. Posted by Inuk observer on August 03, 2012

Major sucking up happening here. I myself would not take the offer. Okalik you should focus on the negotiations not on the olympics. your dealing with land and waters that are owned by the Inuit.

#2. Posted by +- on August 03, 2012

Sounds like she should be saying “this is my reward for my “brilliant” performance (wink wink Arcelor Mittal) before and during the final consultations.”

#3. Posted by +- on August 03, 2012

This is a trip to promote herself. Maybe she already has a job lined up at the mine.

#4. Posted by supporter on August 03, 2012

Take the offer. the orgaizations will be dealing with them for a long time. This is their offer, take it. prove to them that we are in support of the mines for the people to be employed by them for many years to come.

#5. Posted by Really on August 03, 2012

Anywhere else in Canada, in the public sector or the private sector, this would be seen as a clear conflict of interest and grounds for immediate firing.

#6. Posted by Ron Inuk on August 03, 2012

The leaders who are there to protect the interest of Nunavut (Our Land) are so cheap that they can sell Nunavut with a trip to London Olympics. They can go any length for their personal gains. This free trip to Okalik, Levi Barnabas and Harry Flaherty, the so called our leaders will cost in future. We elect them and they sell our land, not acceptable Shame Shame

#7. Posted by Walter Bagehot on August 03, 2012

This makes me feel genuinely sorry for the Inuit of the Baffin region, when they have weak characters like this in charge of managing their Inuit owned lands and their Inuit economic and business affairs.

Levi Barnabas the chair of a company? You’re kidding, right? Only in Nunavut. The folks at Arcelor Mittal are not stupid and I am sure they saw these suckers coming from a long way off, realizing it wil not take much of an investment to win their loyalty. Well, good luck to Arcelor Mittal, the Inuit of the Baffin region are better off trusting a multinational company than the so-called leaders of their own organization anyway.

#8. Posted by Incroyable on August 03, 2012

London 2012 Conflict of Interest - Event Results

Gold - Okalik Egeesiak  
Silver - Harry Flaherty  
Bronze - Levi Barnabas

#9. Posted by Anyone else notice... on August 03, 2012

That we have not heard from QIA? The organization itself is not supporting this, Okalik is on her own here.

#10. Posted by Citizen on August 03, 2012

Right on! Go for it. Get a good deal. There is no conflict at all. The Federal Minister makes the last call on the Nuluujaak project.

I've only met one eskimo who did not support the project. But, he was ill informed.

Great job, QIA!

#11. Posted by eskimo joe on August 03, 2012

look at the feds, bev oda, she resigned (removed?) for \$16 orange juice, lol. these three are bought; lock, stock and barrel. shame, for a junket?

#12. Posted by Tommy on August 03, 2012

QIA President - Okalik is voted in = Politician  
QC Chair - Barnibas is voted in = Politician  
QC President - Flahety was hired = Businessman

I can understand the latter - but the first two are now lobbying - everyone has a price I guess. But if that means more jobs for Nunavutmiut - that is an acceptable risk. People are so quick to their morals... What has the Feds done to help the Inuit in Nunavut? It's private industry that will change the north for the better.

#13. Posted by Amittumiut on August 03, 2012

Seriously, NIRB has done its role to look over the possible impacts in the Qikiqtaaluk Region [Nunavut] and QIA will need to its role of looking over the IIBA. The IIBA will be benefited to the Inuit in Nunavut. The negotiators of the NLCA implied that the DIOs [QIA] to handle the IIBA's and be discussed with the people. Not to take up a trip; that could risk what Inuit has worked for our integrity, not for [They're] worth. But this decision of [Theirs] will impact a great upraise to the upcoming Inuit Leaders.

#14. Posted by George on August 03, 2012

I hope the next generation of Inuit leaders are not as near sighted, bull-headed and self-absorbed. We've come to expect blatant disregard for peoples opinion by some leaders. The best interests of Inuit are being ignored all because nobody knows how to back-out of this huge mistake that is being made. An internal Code of Conduct is not the only thing missing here. A communications protocol is clearly non-existent for this mess that is being made. Do the organization and the people you represent a favor and do the right thing. In this day of information technology, all of Nunavut, all of Canada and the world is watching to see how you handle this fiasco and the outcome will stick to your reputation for years to come. Corporations, the general public including Inuit, IPG's, and government will see your integrity and reputation tarnished if this is not handled appropriately.

#15. Posted by dnuf on August 03, 2012

If the full board supports getting corporate gifts – then the full QIA board and president must all resign immediately. What other gifts will be accepted? What are the other bright and shiny gifts we don't we know about ?  
QIA could of gone. All they had to say, "We pay our own way thank-you." Oh the respected they would of gained and

#16. Posted by beneficiary on August 03, 2012

This sucks!! Our elected leader is ridiculous. Ethics.  
QIA, please call the election already!!!! We don't want anymore questionable actions that will further devalue our regional Not-for-Profit organization. QIA, please have the election before August 10th. Now. Save our organization from pitiful leadership.

#17. Posted by Nunavut inuk on August 03, 2012

Do the trio know how long it will take for the land and water to go back to it's normal condition if damage?

It seems like the favour is not for these three leaders right now. The inuit and the Nuanvut impact review board are against the go of the Mary river project.

#18. Posted by Akimajuktuq on August 03, 2012

This is such a conflict of interest, no matter that the people going on this trip deny it. Some people think there is nothing wrong with these kinds of activities and that people are entitled to take whatever they can (as seen on some CBC comments). I suppose it may be because Nunavummiut have become so accustomed to conflict of interest and corruption that we can no longer recognize it; it's just the everyday norm. As long as bad behaviour (things much worse than this trip!) is not only tolerated, but rewarded, Nunavut will never be the great place that I know it is capable of being.

#19. Posted by Sylvie on August 03, 2012

"Given they might not be informed..." you say?? Perhaps you should inform yourself by taking a business and political ethics 101 class. Honestly!

#20. Posted by janeinuk on August 03, 2012

This may be legal but totally unethical. Only in Nunavut.  
Gold - Corruption  
Silver - Conflict of interest  
Bronze - moral decay

#21. Posted by Beneficiary on August 03, 2012

It's all about public perception. Watch out Okalik. It could bite you in the end.

#22. Posted by Northern Inuit on August 03, 2012

for shame for shame FOR SHAME!!!

I have not seen a blatant clear conflict of interest like this. bought and paid for Okalik. you should be embarrassed and immediately resign. you do not have the best interests of the Inuit you are representing in mind, you only want to go on a free tour oversees as you would never pay for this trip yourself!

seriously shameful act, very cowardly the way you are trying to explain yourself after the fact.

#23. Posted by Joe Blow on August 03, 2012

Not part of the story written by NN, but why did Okalik invite a GN director to accompany her on this 'official QIA business trip'? This GN director was then forced to turn the offer down after accepting first of all. Someone may want to ask Mrs. Egeesiak this question when she returns from her trip of a lifetime.

#24. Posted by Radical Inuk on August 03, 2012

No comment from this dude...you don't want to hear what I have to say on this matter...I'll leave it up to the voters.

#25. Posted by IceClass on August 03, 2012

Didn't the same company also pay for Okalik Egeesiak's election campaign and travel expenses?

#26. Posted by Sylvie on August 03, 2012

Right on the nose #21. It's not only about a true conflict of interest, which this is, but also about perceived conflict of interest.

No matter how hard lined the defense is and no matter how justified it may seem, at the end of the day the public opinion is stronger. It will only grow more resilient and possibly resentful by ignoring them. Is this worth a free trip? Step-up, fix this and the public will forgive this mishap. The alternative might be carrying around the label of corrupt all because you want to see Mr. Bolt live.

#27. Posted by sick on August 03, 2012

We] may use the trip to promote what Inuit are negotiating for," Egeesiak said.

"We MAY" what a joke.

Tell it like it is, you are going to the olympics for a free trip. Olympics is about sports, not about promoting Inuit. So short sighted. Making excuses so she feels better about accepting the tickets.

#28. Posted by South Baffin on August 03, 2012

They knew 2 months ago !!!

Okalik time to start thinking again with what you have left.

Community reps shame on you for not passing on to the people you are there for !!!

Elections are the only time we can make them understand !! I will remember this one !!!

What have we gotten from our land claim lies and more lies !!!

The ones that are speaking in support for her are not from Baffin or some sucking up to her you know what !!!

#29. Posted by cheer me too QIA board on August 03, 2012

Now we know how the boards take advantage of Inuit positions on any board , I to elect you again and judge and see how you take this for granted from all Inuit and tell everyone this is for our benefits now we

need to see if more percentage will gain to Nunavummiut over all this , this does not sound good but you are on duties of Inuit org paid position and hope you use your own leave , which you put in this positioned yourself and this is your story now , hope you read how everyone feels about you .

#30. Posted by boatie on August 03, 2012

This isn't the first 'free ride' offered by mining companies to Inuit leaders.

Agnico-Eagle put on a 'junket' to Finland and Greenland, to 'tour their gold mine in Finland' (kittala). They brought along GN bureaucrats, KIV.IA workers and board members, Arctic College staff, and businesspersons. All this during the review of the Meliadine gold project (their next gold mine which was yet to be approved)

AREVA has put on multiple tours of its 'wonderful uranium mines' in Saskatchewan, for Inuit leaders and GN staffers. To see how a modern uranium mine works, supposedly. Don't think they included tours of the contaminated sites on Navajo territory, or Port Radium in the NWT.

My beef? Its one sided information on these tours. If our representatives want to do 'research', they should fund it themselves, and look at both sides of the coin. Don't get too impressed by free flights, meals and booze.

I wonder what kind of accomodations and 'benefits' Arcelor is providing?

#31. Posted by Salamonie on August 03, 2012

Was she not given legal advice on this?  
If so, she should make such advice publicly available.

#32. Posted by George on August 03, 2012

This will be remembered at the next election.

#33. Posted by Northerner on August 03, 2012

This is not good at all. They should resign for this stupid move. Those board of Directors should resign as well since they were "bought" and it will happen again. They have to think about what's best for the territory and it's people. This isn't looking good at all. RESIGN!.

#34. Posted by Joanasie on August 03, 2012

Now we see the real character of our QIA President. If she was smart, she would cancel her all expenses paid trip to London, its not too late. Otherwise, Inuit will remember this, I certainly will. My confidence in her is waning, and if she doesn't fess up to this, then she will lose all credibility with me.

#35. Posted by Just not on ... on August 03, 2012

This is not about anything other than accepting a rather grand free lunch.

Don't be fooled by the 'promoting Inuit' and the informal meetings, there are more effitive (and ethical) ways of conducting business from home.

'Consulting QIA lawyers' before accepting also smacks of guilt, yet no they plough on.

Many young teenagers in Nunavut have never even left their home communities, and are unlikely to do so unless assisted by Sport Nunavut, or are unfortunate to be referred by the Health Centre.

Frankly, this is a disgrace Ms Eegeesiak.

#36. Posted by sled dog on August 03, 2012

Now I guess you all realize why the Feds will drag their feet on Devolution, dragged their feet on the development of Nunavut for over 30 years and treat NU/Inuks/Northerners like children.

@janeinuk, not sure kickbacks are not illegal and this seems to be a well placed kickback

#37. Posted by Joanasie on August 03, 2012

While we are on the topic of conflict of interest, why is the President of QIA a Board member of an Institution of Public Government- the Nunavut Planning Commission?

Check it out:

<http://www.nunavut.ca/en/about-commission/our-team>

I don't think this is right.

#38. Posted by Grandy on August 03, 2012

If this trip is for business why did Okalik extend an invitation to a friend who is a Director with the GN? Normally, people don't invite friends on business trips. This sounds a lot more like pleasure than business. Okalik you owe many people an apology and you should be forced to re-pay your trip from your own pocket and take leave from your job while you attend.

#39. Posted by Jimmy on August 03, 2012

YEAH RIGHT!!

#40. Posted by wondering on August 03, 2012

Looks like these so called Leaders of these so called Inuit organizations are learning fast...take care of "numero uno"...starting to look like an Indian reserve more and more...kick them out now...before its too late...

#41. Posted by Elected on August 03, 2012

Ministers get stripped of their portfolion, MLA caught drunk driving, MLA charged with the unlawful possession of liquor, abuse of corporate VISA cards, scandals, lawsuits, violations, .....elected leaders of Nunavut. Congratulations..... LMAO

#42. Posted by Sylvie on August 03, 2012

Send a reporter to follow them on this "business trip". I can see the photos of them hard at work eating at fine restaurants, watching the games at a private box, pampered at a 5 star hotel. Let's see how much work will actually be done. Seriously, send someone to verify everything that they say they will be doing. That'll blow all their lies out of the water!



#43. Posted by Andre Tautu on August 03, 2012

I hope Kivalliq Inuit Organizations will not make same mistake as Q.I.O., bought by mining companies.

#44. Posted by George on August 03, 2012

Oh they will #43. And just as it is with this stuff here in the Baffin it'll all be justified in their own twisted way.

#45. Posted by Raymond Kaslak on August 03, 2012

Nunatsiaq News should put a " Thumbs Up " and " Thumbs Down " icons on the feedback comments area.

#46. Posted by You would on August 03, 2012

Shut up Post Number one, you never been in position of authority or been a position of being a President or decision maker, don't say you wouldn't take the offer, it's easier to judge then to be the one making the decision, so shut the hell up, and go back to watching porn on your computer, or go on facebook feeling important!

That how business is run now a days, everyone has something to gain and something to loose, what that saying.

" I have never taking part in corruption, then again I haven't been asked to join!"

#47. Posted by Ouch on August 03, 2012

Whether you are for or against the project, the offer and acceptance of this trip is so wrong!

#48. Posted by George on August 03, 2012

you speak strongly in one short yet oh so true sentence #47.

#49. Posted by wondering on August 03, 2012

hey #46..by the intelligent post you just made, certainly tells me that defending these leaders in what is a clear case of conflict makes me wanna say..maybe you better get off of porn and facebook and take notice....how come I didnt get offered a free trip ??????????????..wake up man..

#50. Posted by you would on August 03, 2012

It's retarded to argue online but Ill do it anyways cause I want to feel like a winner! Cause your not important, you have no influence! your not elected official, you haven't made any real contribution to anything! I don't want to wake up, I want to live in a world make believe and fantasy, right now I am dreaming I am an olympian winning gold in batmiten I was one of the people that was disqualified for trying to loose to get a favourable seat in the final!

#51. Posted by Intellectual Bum on August 03, 2012

An ol' and wise university professor told me many moons ago than an appearance of conflict is often worse than the conflict itself. Yes, there will be wining and dining- that's how these mega corps operate. The optics are poor for QIA, frankly quite hard to defend. But I will say this- if our elected officials worked half as hard as the QIA president and had half her passion for all things inuit, Nunavut as a whole would be

a far better place. See #41- I hardly think this is comparable. We all have brain farts, and, well, this one stinks.

#52. Posted by Opinion on August 03, 2012

While I am absolutely disgusted with this...I have had a little faith restored by the number of people that actually realize what a sham this is..I guess this is what our leaders have come to symbolize and why people laugh at me when I talk about leadership in Nunavut. Hopefully voters relly do remember but...it often seems we have short memories.

#53. Posted by Crazy Eskimo on August 03, 2012

I want the owners of Baffinland to pay for for all Inuit with in the Qikiqtani Region to anywhere they way.

Maybe some of us will partner with activists to rid our waters of unwanted traffic.

#54. Posted by Need the \$\$ on August 04, 2012

To turn down a real economic boon to the emerging territory of Nunavut when government \$\$ is drying up, and then turn to the government and bitch, whine, complain and beg for more \$\$ is near-sighted, hypocritical, and just plain retarded. Take the jobs, take the education, take the money, reinvest it in yourselves, your communities, and your children and we will all see what an amazing and exciting place to live and grow up in that Nunavut and Canada can really be. Be the change you want to see.

#55. Posted by How ironic on August 04, 2012

I seem to recall this lady, Okalik was very self righteous in removing the President of NTI for entertaining at sporting venues with funds. She moved motions to suspend and remove the President of the day.

I suggest someone on the board of QIA give this lady a taste of her medicine and remove her as she is no longer trustworthy. How will the Inuit interest be protected in the IIBA negotiations with the company who have given her a golden handshake.

#56. Posted by Celestino Uyarak on August 05, 2012

I am very disappointed, I am also supporter of this Baffinlands project.

This whole Department Of Fisheries, Nunavut Impact Review Board Public Meeting didn't help any and many Baffin Island people, which Qikitani Inuit Association(s) role is, all Baffin Islands peoples concerns be dealt by QIA and we elected them to repersent the all Baffin Island concerns, it is slap in the face, all three should resigned.