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EAST SIDE PLANNING INITIATIVE

Berens River, Manitoba

ISSUES IDENTIFIED & RECOMMENDATIONS

ALL WEATHER ROAD

Look at the community and where it's at. In the past, 85% of the people had been working but now there is an economic decline and the impact has been a huge reduction in the size of the community. From 3,000 to 100. There is no work and no way of getting people to go there.

If an all weather road were opened up, we could fish for seven months instead of four and double the amount of fish we catch each year. This would provide an incentive for people to stay. An all weather road would also reduce transportation costs for medi-vac and groceries which are very high. EMO and Search and Rescue are also affected. Communications and connectivity strategy go hand in hand and are costly without a road.

The Rice Road is from Seymourville, Berens River and Bloodvein. More priorities should be placed on communities for what should be done. If future development works, the young people need an education.

Recommendation: All Weather Road

- Open up an all weather road to diversify the economy, reduce the high cost of living, improve communications and connectivity and provide an incentive for people to stay.

POLLUTION IN THE LAKE

Impacts from Manitoba Hydro. When a NW wind blows, the water moves to the south. Then the south wind blows and the water moves north, this is how the lake cleans itself. Because of Hydro, there is not enough water movement to clean the lake.

The fish go where there is feed. They have moved to the deeper parts of the lake. It now takes us two hours traveling time by boat to get to where the fish are. This has impacts in regards to the need for equipment, repairs, etc. as well as the increased amount of time. We also lose more nets than we did in the past. The fish itself are good.

COMMERCIAL FISHING

The economy is based on the fishing industry and has been for over 150 years. It is a way of life for the people. Fishing is what they want to do. To reach our quotas, however, fishing is for only 4 months through the fall, winter and spring. The lake quota is 1.5M kilos. In 4 or 5 years we produced 500 – 600,000 kilos.

Regulations restrict us to bringing in the small fish because we are limited to small nets. Prices are down for Whitefish. You get three times as much money for Pickerel so the incentive is to fish for Pickerel.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

We could produce more species if we had a plan together with Freshwater Harbour Authorities. We should try to get a new packing station and process plant. The health of the fish is good. There are two boxes of pickerel to a net. We could try and bring up Saugers, whitefish, and more pickerel.

Conservation hasn't done anything to establish a hatchery. This needs to be expanded.

Also pulp and forestry in the area employs 4 or 5 people from the community. The rest are from outside.

There has been environmental damage and the trapping industry has been wiped out. The costs are too high to trap and the price, too low. People would like to get back to trapping but it is not economically feasible any longer. Tree farming is expensive and takes out 20 pulp cutters.

Recommendation: Economic Development

- Establish a fish hatchery.
- Develop hiring policies to hire locally to keep the youth in the region.

COMMUNITY PLAN

There was a plan being developed for Beren's River about 15 years ago along with a regional plan for the road. These plans have been scrapped.

Recommendation: Community Plan

- Check with INAC and Northern Affairs for the report and consultations that had already been completed.

CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

Government is not listening. What do we need to do in order to be heard? Communities are in the dark. Minister Oscar Lahlin had set up the Round Tables. We need the minutes from meetings and follow up.

Recommendation:

- Ensure minutes from Round Table meetings are provided to communities and there is follow-up.
- Communities to select two people from each community to sit on the Working Groups which report back to the round table.
- Community input should be taken seriously in regards to what should be done in the region.