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| **A fine balance: environmental sustainability and economic sustainability among the Southern Inuit of Labrador, Canada** |
| **Background/Objective**: NunatuKavut is the homeland of Southern Inuit and the territory encompasses the central and south eastern portion of Labrador. NunatuKavut means 'our ancient land’ in Inuttitut; it reflects the way Inuit from this region maintain connections to the land, waters and ice as central to identity and existence. Historically and presently, resource development ventures upon Southern Inuit lands, such as hydro and mining, have threatened Inuit territory and way of life. Yet, these environmentally destructive industries provide some of the only economic opportunities to a remote and isolated territory. To address concerns, NunatuKavut’s governing organization has sought to explore renewable energy possibilities as economic alternatives to these less environmentally sustainable options. Before committing to this type of long-term investment, there is a need to engage with community. This community-driven research project seeks to elicit community perspectives on renewable energy alternatives, provide educational opportunities for Inuit around renewable energy, and identify key health, economic, and environmental concerns. **Methods**: A Renewable Energy Summit (RES) was held in NunatuKavut with key stakeholders to raise awareness of renewable energy possibilities for the region. This was followed by focus groups (n=3) and individual interviews (n=10) with community members to identify their knowledge about renewable energy alternatives, and to identify concerns and questions about renewable energy possibilities for the region. This was followed by a second RES, where concerns and questions were discussed with Renewable Energy Educators (experts who discussed wind, solar, and tidal). **Results**: There exists tension between the immediate need for economic development with the genuine concern for adhering to Inuit values regarding the importance of environmental sustainability. Although community members are primarily concerned about community economic viability, there is a growing concern among some that their way of life could be threatened if the industries that are introduced destroy the local environment. **Discussion**: Using a social justice lens that prioritizes Inuit knowledge and ways of knowing, this presentation will tease apart the tensions between economic and environmental sustainability from the perspective of Inuit, paying particular attention to the implications for the health and well-being of Inuit, now and into the future. |