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## **The Effect Climate Change Has on Canadian Indigenous Communities**

Climate change has been an important topic for a really long time now. Specialists around the world are trying to find the best possible solution to this problem that is affecting every single one of us. Sometimes, we tend to forget that there are people who have it way worse than others. There are villages, families, human beings that do not have the tools and opportunities that someone as privileged as others have. In this essay I want to focus on the effect climate change has on Canadian Indigenous communities, especially the community called 'Inuit'. The Inuit are referred to as the Indigenous people that have settled down in the arctic region of Canada. Their ancestors can be traced back to 1050 CE, which means that they have been living and practicing their customs for roughly 4000 years now (Freeman, 2010).

There needs to be an immediate change, because if there will not be, Canada will look different in 2052. The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has reported that humans have already caused 1.0°C of global warming (Watt-Cloutier, 2018). The high rate of greenhouse gas emission rate will only shoot up. It has already increased by 20.9% between the years of 1990 and 2018. We can trace that back to the mining and upstream oil and gas production as well as the transport that comes with this business (Government of Canada, 2020). However, the Inuit community and any other Indigenous community in the arctic do not work in these fields of work. They value inclusiveness, collaboration and decision making through discussion. All of which they practice in their own territory, called Nunavut (Various, 2015).

The long-term damages that climate change will leave behind are drastic for the Arctic. The extreme coastal erosions, temperature changes and sea level rises have caught the attention of the Inuit community. Due to all of these changes, the sea ice thickness is decreasing, and the sea ice cover is significantly thinner than ever before. Many incidents have been reported where Inuit people fell through the ice due to its decreasing thickness. Reports state that the freeze-up is delayed, which results in a longer melting season. The Kaskawulsh Glacier in the Yukon has withdrawn so much that its meltwater is now flowing south toward the Gold of Alaska instead of north toward the Bering sea (Watt-Cloutier, 2018). With about 25% of the world's remaining oil and gas being located here, many parts of the Arctic have been explored for that measure. Especially in the polar region of Canada, reserves of base, metals and coal have been established. Even though the Indigenous population have

somewhat adjusted to these environmental and economic changes, the climate moderation will further damage their land and community in the following years (Smith, no date).

Climate change is not just affecting their environment. The Indigenous communities suffer from its consequences and develop serious mental health issues. Climate change is affecting their infrastructure, like the stability of their homes or roads. They are really troubled when it comes to accessing their foods, like wild foods that they harvest from their lands and waters, in order to take care of their families. The Indigenous communities that live in the arctic, including the Inuit, depend on hunting polar bears, walrus, seals or caribou. They not only need this food in order to support the local economy, but some of these are the basis for their cultural and social identity (Ki-moon, 2017). The Indigenous communities have traditions that they have been practicing for hundreds of years; and due to all these complications they are unable to fully experience them. Moreover, these people suffer from the effects that climate change has on their land, because it is hindering them to fully embrace their lifestyle and because of the impact it has on their sense of identity. Furthermore, the communities are facing the aftermath of climate change already. With the vanishing of historical sites and gravesite erosions, whole communities have had to relocate and built a new living space. The Inuit can adapt to their environment and try to make living in such conditions work, but only to a certain degree (Smith, no date).

Climate change is happening all around us. Sometimes people try to downplay it and make it look like it is not a big deal, because you cannot see it, when the truth is that you can. You can see it. The world is slowly but surely being destroyed. If you look at the effect that climate change has on Canadian Indigenous communities, you cannot deny it, because these cultures, families and people are experiencing it first-hand. The first paragraph clearly states that Canada has already experienced a global warming of 1°C. The economy is focusing on oil and gas production, which furthermore damages their land. You can already see the drastic effects that this global issue has brought to the arctic and its surroundings. The Inuit are suffering every day. They are slowly losing their land, community, food, water and their sense of identity. Climate action needs to be taken now, before it is too late and more Indigenous communities suffer from the loss of their homes.

(880 words)

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