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Vulnerable social groups

Sainte Marguerite, Canada

Traditional lifestyles of the Innu, a minority indigenous community, were potentially threatened by the Sainte-Marguerite development in Montreal, Canada. A long-term compensation arrangement struck without Government intervention now maintains Innu traditions and provides economic and community benefits to the Innu.

Overview

Located on the Sainte-Marguerite River 700 km northeast of Montréal, Canada, the Sainte-Marguerite-3 project consists of a 171-metre-high rockfill dam (the Denis-Perron dam) and an underground powerhouse with two turbines of total installed capacity 882 MW. At approximately 330 metres, Sainte-Marguerite-3 boasts the highest hydraulic head in Québec. The reservoir is 140km long, with an area of 253 km² and is connected to the powerhouse via an 8.3 km headrace tunnel.

Peak employment during construction reached 1,200 workers, with an average of 500 workers over the eight-year construction period. Construction included a new 86-km-long access road between the Gulf of St Lawrence and the SM-3 generating station.

Dam Name

Scheme operator

Hydro Québec

Size of scheme (MW)

882

Country

Canada

Catchment area**River**

Sainte-Marguerite

Effective reservoir capacity**Construction years****Reservoir size**

253km²

External recognition

Nil

Details

The commissioning of the Sainte-Marguerite-3 project had the potential to impact on the hunting and trapping traditions of the local indigenous community (the Innu). Prior to construction, negotiations with the Innu community indicated strong division over the merits of the project. A referendum to decide on the project yielded a favorable outcome, albeit by a narrow (2%) margin.

Following the decision to proceed, the Uashat Mak Mani-Utenam Agreement was signed with the Innu indigenous community of Uashat-Maliothenam. The agreement provides for CAD\$20.9 million (in discounted 1994 dollars) compensation to be paid over a period of 50 years. This compensation is deposited in two funds: the Innu Aitun fund to support hunting and trapping activities (a fundamental facet of Innu culture) and a second fund designed to promote economic and community development.

The Uashat Mak Mani-Utenam Agreement comprises improved land use conditions and the construction of new facilities for the Innu community. The main projects include the following:

- Construction of several trapping camps and four community camps in the Sainte-Marguerite and Moisie watersheds
- Building of 170 km of snowmobile trails to facilitate access to Innu traplines and in the most remote corners of the region
- Construction of sporting facilities including an arena and two swimming pools
- Creation of new business establishments (i.e., supermarket, hardware store)
- Improvements to the Innu pilgrimage site dedicated to Saint Anne
- Construction of the Shaputuan Museum dedicated to the transmission of Innu culture and housing a permanent exhibition of artifacts discovered in the region

In addition, CAD\$10 million was budgeted for remedial measures during construction. Responsibility for these measures was assigned to the Sainte-Marguerite remedial works corporation (SOTRAC), which is run jointly by the Innu and Hydro-Québec. The agreement includes measures to maximise Innu employment during Sainte-Marguerite-3 construction and operation and contracts to Innu companies.

Other aspects

[Community engagement and acceptance](#)

There was deep division within indigenous communities on the issue of whether the project should proceed and the extent to which the project would impact on traditional activities. Agreement to proceed with the project was reached without Government intervention, through a process of carefully managed stakeholder engagement and consultation, including strategies to mitigate or compensate for impacts on traditional Innu activities.

Distribution and sharing of benefits

In addition to the creation of compensatory funds for Innu people, a goal of the project was to stimulate ongoing economic benefit to the local community. Improved access to the region, along with the construction of recreational facilities, supermarkets and museums to showcase Innu culture has improved local socio-economics.

Local capacity building

During the construction phase of the project, a number of Innu people were employed, providing increased income to indigenous families. In addition, 26 Innu obtained construction trade cards, and Innu companies (e.g. Innu Constructions) were formed and secured contracts locally.

Further information

Source: Hydropower Good Practices Workshop, Annex VIII - Examples for Good Practice Report, Villach, Austria, October 2005. International Energy Agency.

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