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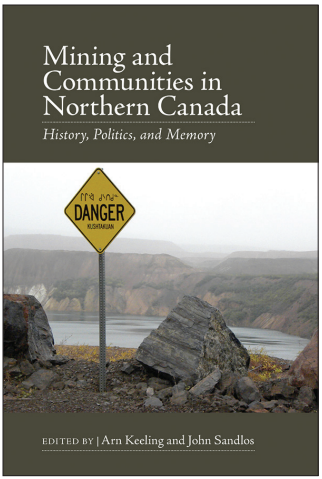

MINING AND COMMUNITIES IN NORTHERN CANADA: HISTORY, POLITICS, AND MEMORY

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"There Is No Memory of It Here": Closure and Memory of the Polaris Mine in Resolute Bay, 1973–2012

Heather Green

Industrial closure is about much more than decreased market value, capital loss, commodity decline, and economic disruption. It is also about individuals and communities. Though deindustrialization is a broad process that occurs worldwide, those impacted by closure experience an intimate and local connection to this process. In single industry towns especially, closure frequently starts a chain of unemployment, out-migration, population decline, and abandoned infrastructure. It is also common for post-industrial communities to suffer negative environmental impacts. Previous scholarship has studied the socio-economic, cultural, and environmental legacies of mine closure and deindustrialization in both Rust Belt zones and single industry towns in Southern Canada and the United States.[1] Mining and mine closures have also been prevalent in the Canadian North since the 1950s, and historians have recently begun paying attention to the impacts of closure in the North, as this volume

attests. Each case of closure is unique, though scholars have identified key trends in southern industrial closures, including their economic, cultural, and social impacts, which have also been repeated in cases of northern deindustrialization.[2]

One of the more recent topics in this literature is the connection between collective memory and closure.[3] Much scholarly work currently available about mining and collective memory is concerned with how communities react to closure and decline, and how in this reaction communities form a group/collective memory or a mining heritage. This literature provides case studies of mine closure and collective memory formation around the globe. What is striking about these cases, which examine different types of mining, different demographics of mine workers, and different geographic spaces, are the similarities they share in terms of both the economic and social importance of mining and the collective memories these local communities develop in retaining their mining heritage. What is further striking for my research concerning the Polaris mine in Resolute was how much the Polaris mine and the community of Resolute diverge from this post-closure narrative. Throughout this chapter I will attempt to provide an explanation for this divergence.

Studying coal-mining heritage in Britain, Rosemary Power explains that mining heritage is defined in a community in terms of "what has been lost, what needs to be retained, and what needs to be preserved to benefit future generations."[4] She says mining heritage includes local community organizations that gather written records, and abandoned equipment and artifacts that are set within the community as symbols of honour. Mining heritage involves both physical artifacts and "community spirit."[5] Finally, to be considered as having mining heritage, a community must identify as a mining or former mining community (even in cases where the mine has been closed for a period of time).[6] Such desire to commemorate mining heritage comes from the social and economic factors these single industries brought to local communities. In most cases, these towns revolved around mining, and the secondary economic development was based on providing services and products for mining. Further, Power argues that tight-knit social communities came from the structure of mining lifestyles, particularly in terms of gender roles and class consciousness.[7]

Scholars have also argued that the formation and retention of a collective mining memory has served political purposes. For example, in their work, Mellor and Stephenson outline the attempts of Durham mining communities to maintain their mining heritage through continuing the Durham Miners' Gala. The authors argue that the gala represented a political platform for the community to defend itself from the marginalization faced by post-industrial single industry towns.[8] In his work, Ben Marsh also provides an understanding of power struggles and power structures that commonly existed in such small towns industrialized from an outside force.[9] The inhabitants and workers in the small anthracite mining towns he discusses came from other continents in the early twentieth century. Though these places were created by companies, the workers felt these places were "theirs," and they claimed a sense of place on their own terms. This is important to understanding the development of community strength and loyalty to place.[10] Forming a collectively shared memory for the community helps in claiming legitimacy for future political issues, such as demands for economic development or government support for the deindustrialized area.

As this literature suggests, the memories that communities form about industry after closure are largely influenced by the degree to which a community participated in the industrial activity and the extent of its impacts, both positive and negative. In the Canadian North, these memories also include the experiences of Aboriginal communities, impacts on traditional land use, and the penetration of outside mining companies into the region. There has been less scholarly attention to mine closures and heritage in the North and, more specifically, in Aboriginal communities, though this area of scholarship is growing. Tara Cater and Arn Keeling study the ongoing influence the North Rankin Nickel Mine has in the community's built environment and cultural landscape since closure in 1962. They argue that the community of Rankin Inlet is "(re)staking its claims to its industrial past, as part of contemporary efforts to manage the costs and benefits of new mineral development in the region."[11] Once again, the case of the Polaris mine and Resolute Bay community widely differs from Rankin Inlet. The town of Rankin Inlet was created because of the mine. Community members not only worked at the mine, but it was the town's sole source of income. Finally, in Rankin, the former mine

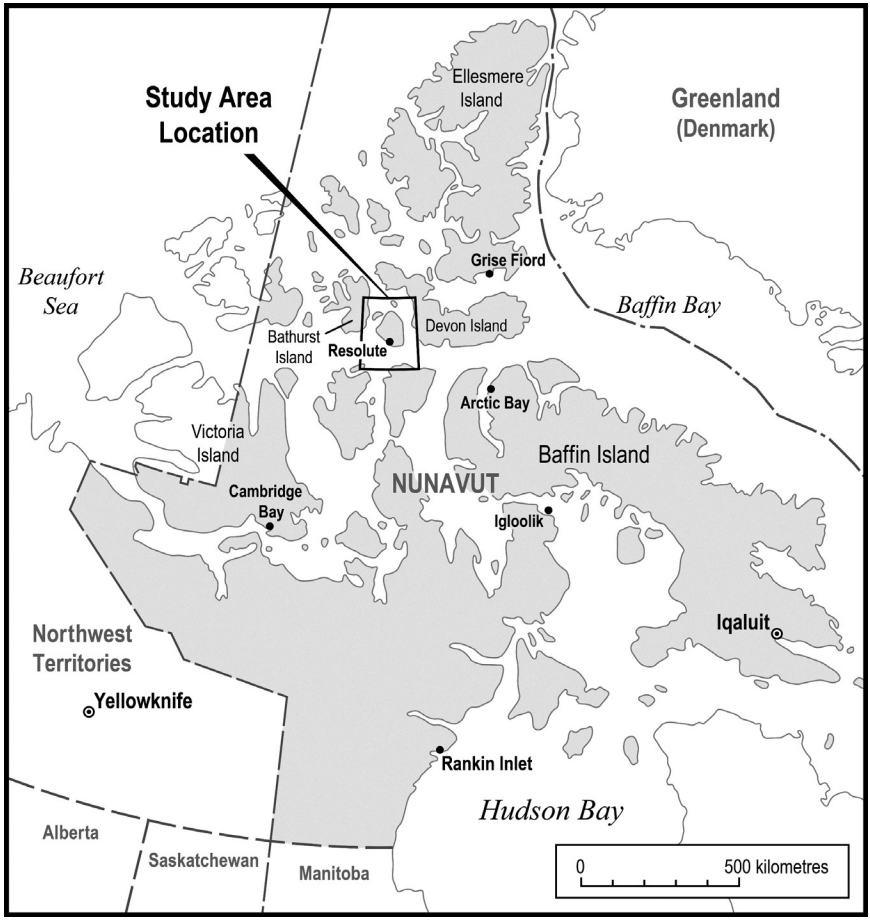

Figure 1: Nunavut, showing study area location (detail in figure 2). Map by Michael Fisher.

site has become an attraction for the community; it is a landscape to base mining heritage and memory around.

This chapter will explore the connections between memory and closure of the Polaris lead-zinc mine (in operation from 1982 to 2002) in the community of Resolute Bay (Qausuittuq),[12] located about one hundred kilometres from the mine (Fig. 1). Because of the deeply personal nature of the connection between closure and memory (both individual and

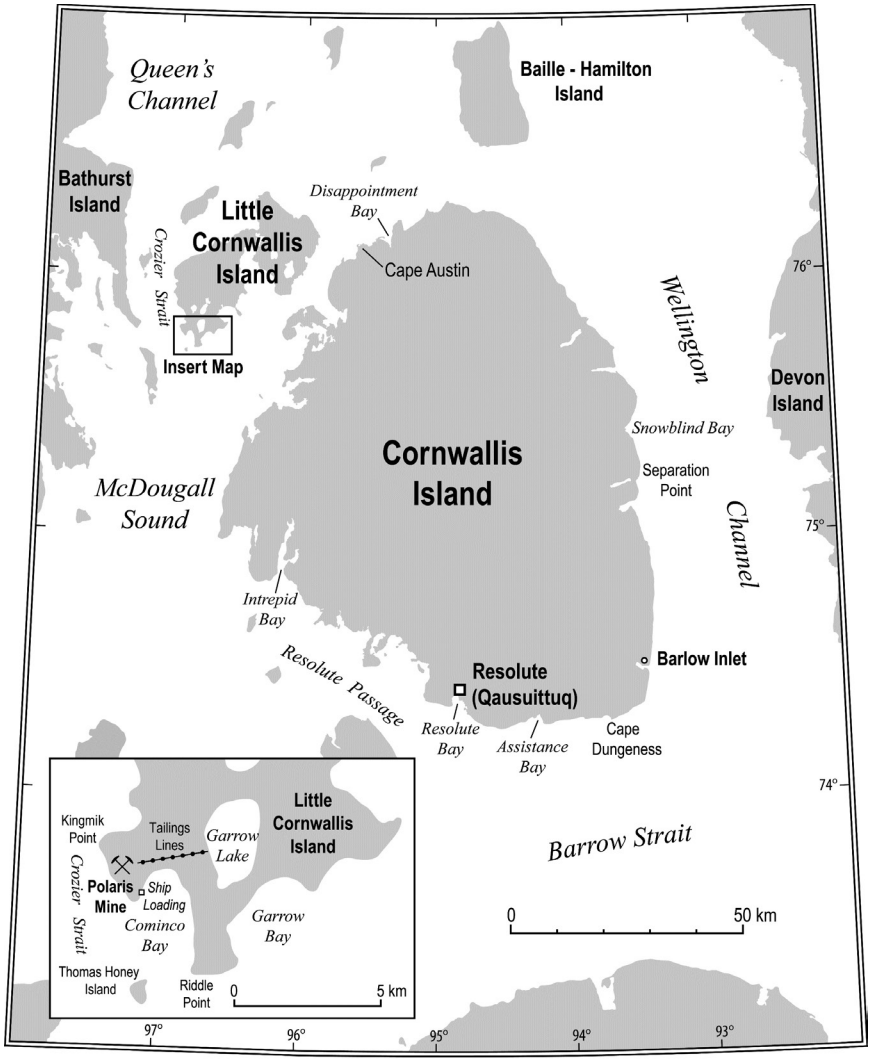

FIGURE 2: Cornwallis Island and Little Cornwallis Island indicating Resolute Bay and the Polaris mine site. Map by Michael Fisher.

collective), it is impossible to fully study mining memory without speaking with those who were affected by industry. Oral history interviews conducted with former Inuit Polaris workers and Resolute community members form the basis of this analysis. Interviewees spoke about their memories of the Polaris mine, from the time of its announcement to its closure. However, this research also found that, without asking directly about the mine, one would never guess there had been a mine nearby, even though Polaris closed only eleven years before this study. Due to the geographic isolation of the mine site from the town (Fig. 2), there are no physical remnants of industry in the town. There is no heritage site, no photographs in public buildings, and the youth are largely unaware that there had been a mine nearby. A *collective* memory of Polaris is absent in the hamlet.[13]

It may seem contradictory to state that Resolute lacks community memory of the Polaris operation and then proceed to discuss residents' memories of the mine. In *Oral History and Public Memories,* Hamilton and Shopes argue that the relationship between the individuals who do the remembering (which is the central concern in oral history) and the memory of a group has not yet been resolved nor analyzed in-depth. When I began this research project, I was initially interested in exploring the community memory of mining in Resolute Bay. However, as I began talking to more people and exploring the area, it became clear that the *community* did not have a specific mining memory, or a collective memory specific to a mining past. It is important to note that those interviewed were a select few from the total population of Resolute (9 interviewees from a population of 240), and those interviewed spoke of their *individual* memories and experiences with Cominco, the mining company that owned Polaris, and the Polaris mine, while indicating that a *collective* or *community* memory of the mine remains absent in Resolute.[14] Individual memories were quite strong, and each interviewee brought his or her own unique experiences, opinions, and memories to the narrative of the Polaris story. While many individuals shared similar personal memories, as I will expand upon below, these memories were not publicly codified in memorials, monuments, or events associated with mine work.

Previous scholarship reveals that community memory is often preserved within the deindustrialized landscape.[15] An overwhelming

presence of industrial heritage (whether abandoned infrastructure or environmental legacies) tends to force people to remember and, sometimes, to engage with the industrial past. By contrast, the residents of Resolute do not face such physical reminders (in part because of their distance from the actual mine site), which has contributed to the lack of mining memory in the town. Even if individuals mostly enjoyed their experience at the mine, those interviewed were in agreement that Cominco let the community down in not living up to its pre-development promises of employment and community benefits.

It is not enough to note the presence or absence of a collective mining memory; understanding why this is the case and what factors influence the formation of collective memory is critical to this story. Collectively, the stories from Resolute Bay suggest that the lack of involvement of Resolute Inuit in the Polaris development, from consultation to operation to closure, strongly affected the way that residents remember deindustrialization and their mining past. Cominco began planning and developing Polaris in 1973, opening the mine in 1982. The mine site was located in an area traditionally used by Resolute Inuit, which raised concerns about environmental impacts from the community in the planning phase. However, environmental concerns largely dissipated in the operational stage as Resolute residents became discontented over the lack of Inuit employed at Polaris. The Inuit employment rate, both in general and from Resolute specifically, remained low throughout operation. Some Resolute residents remain bitter about this, and many contend that their marginalization and lack of involvement in the Polaris mine explain the lack of socio-economic benefits the town received from mine development. It is clear that the absence of collective community memory of Polaris is rooted in the exclusion of Resolute Inuit throughout the lifespan of the mine, even though the Polaris operation was developed and operating at a time when Inuit political activism was becoming more recognized by the federal government and the mining industry.

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Northern mining development has always been pursued by forces from outside the region. Since the 1950s, the Canadian state has promoted the

mineral industry as part of its agenda of northern modernization.[16] David Trigger, using an Australian example similar to Canada in the 1950s to 1970s, highlights the prevalent historical belief that mining was moral progress, bringing "value" to the land and allowing people to "maintain a standard of living" through industrial opportunities.[17] As a result, mining companies often ignored the value of the land to Aboriginal peoples and rarely accounted for the consequences industry may bring to northern Aboriginal peoples specifically. By the 1970s, this attitude began to shift in Northern Canada as political activist groups, such as the Indian Eskimo Association (IEA), developed among southerners concerned about the plight of Inuit. Inuit-initiated political activism such as the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada (ITC) and the Committee for Original People's Entitlement (COPE) occurred parallel to new mine developments.[18] Geologist Robert McPherson has linked the changing political climate and growing Inuit political activism in the 1970s to resource issues, as Inuit asserted their rights to be active participants in northern economic development, to have their concerns and opinions considered and respected, and to become owners of their land. Inuit activism achieved some success, especially when political agitation led to the Nunavut land claims negotiations throughout the 1970s and the 1990s, culminating in the creation of Nunavut as its own territory in 1999.[19] However, during the 1970s and 1980s, at the same time that land claims were negotiated between the federal and territorial governments and Inuit organizations, companies such as Cominco continued to overlook Inuit concerns about mineral development in the development decision-making process.

The development of Polaris began when Bankeno Mines originally discovered mineralization on Little Cornwallis Island in 1960 and staked the first claim.[20] Cominco Ltd., one of the largest Canadian natural resource companies at the time, bought these claims in 1964 and, upon further exploration, discovered the Polaris lead-zinc ore body in 1971.[21] Unlike previous mine developments in the North, the company included community consultation in its planning process. In 1973, Cominco sent consultant J. E. Barrett to some Inuit communities to interview residents about their potential interest in working at Polaris.[22] In the planning stage, Cominco directed most of its attention (however marginal) to Resolute, the community nearest to the Polaris operation, holding two

community meetings (both in May 1980) before opening the site. The company promised the Resolute Inuit employment opportunities and described other economic benefits that the town would gain from having a mine nearby.[23] Interviews with Resolute residents suggest that Resolute expected Cominco would draw an Inuit labour force from the community and that the town would gain services and economic growth from the mine. According to interviewees, Cominco said the mine would help the town accumulate capital, and "it would be easier [to] build up a little bit of the community."[24] They agreed that Resolute residents were optimistic about the arrival of industry.

Though Cominco took consultation further than any previous operation had, it is important to point out that this consultation took the form of information sessions, rather than co-planning or negotiation. There were no legal requirements to provide communities with decision-making power, and throughout planning, Cominco did not exceed its obligations under an informal "Socioeconomic Action Plan" signed between the company and the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT), which simply required the company stay in contact with communities.[25] In 1976, Barrett and some company officials returned to seven communities from which Cominco believed it would likely draw Inuit employees.[26] After his second visit to Resolute in 1976, Barrett reported, "It seemed to the Consultant that at the meeting [in Resolute] Inuit were feeling a little threatened by the thought of the mine development. It was coming closer and becoming more of a reality."[27] This concern persisted as the mine opening drew closer, and was evident at a further community meeting on May 23, 1980. One remark made at this meeting was that Resolute people felt like "Cominco is rushing the Inuit."[28] Resolute Inuit wanted more communication so that they could be better informed and make certain that their concerns would be addressed. This poor consultation process reflected the mining industry at this time, which exhibited ignorance of and apathy to Inuit needs and desires.[29]

Among the biggest concerns Resolute residents had in the planning stages were the environmental impacts of the mine. Some residents also expressed concerns about the impacts of the mine on the subsistence economy, migration patterns, and animal populations on Little Cornwallis Island. Resolute Inuit traditionally hunted in that area as they

crossed between Resolute and Bathurst Island.[30] The Inuit consulted made clear that they wanted to continue hunting and trapping while working at the mine, and they wanted to continue hunting in the area around the mine.[31] Residents were concerned that the white-whale wintering colony along the shore near the mine site and the sea bird population might be scared away by the noise and shipping.[32] They also expressed concern about disposing solid waste and sewage in the sea.

At the public community meeting on May 23, 1980, Resolute Inuit expressed their concern about Cominco's tailings disposal plan. Originally, Cominco had planned to dispose of mine tailings in Crozier Strait;[33] however, a feasibility study commissioned in 1974 advised against marine disposal of tailings from the Polaris Mine.[34] Instead, the consultants recommended Garrow Lake, a permafrost-bound, hypersaline lake two miles away from the mine, as an alternative disposal site (Fig. 2).[35] Further reports confirmed that the bottom of Garrow Lake was concentrated salt water, that there was no plant or fish life in the lake, and that the hydrogen sulphide in the water would precipitate any soluble heavy metals deposited in the lake.[36] However, local residents still worried about the possibility that Garrow Lake could overflow and carry tailings, consisting of mine waste and lead and zinc ion concentrates, into the surrounding marine environment.[37] They also believed that, because the lake was saline, it must have an underground channel from the sea, and this concerned them. Cominco assured residents that the tailings would not leave Garrow Lake.[38]

Resolute residents were not the only group concerned about the Polaris development. A Northwest Territories Water Board public hearing held in Resolute on May 22, 1980, provided a venue for the Canadian Arctic Resources Committee (CARC) and Inuit Tapirisat of Canada to voice their opposition to the Polaris development. Founded in 1971 and operating out of offices in Yellowknife and Ottawa, CARC was a public interest group comprised mainly of southern academics dedicated to the environmental and social well-being of Northern Canada and its peoples. The organization emerged as part of the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry and presented alternative opinions about industry and resource development projects; through criticizing the problems posed

by resource development, CARC sought to bring public attention to issues that impacted the people and environment of the north.[39]

During the Polaris development process, CARC criticized Cominco's actions in the pre-development stage. CARC's concerns about the Polaris project were largely environmental in nature, but it also presented social and economic concerns while working closely with ITC.[40] CARC demanded that the development undergo a federal Environmental Assessment and Review Process (EARP).[41] Cominco never did undergo the EARP process, but instead conducted its own environmental assessments.[42] In 1975, Cominco commissioned BC Research to conduct an environmental study of the mine. BC Research acknowledged that possible and probable environmental effects included direct destruction of vegetation and animal habitat, habitat avoidance due to human activity, and chemical pollutants including sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxide compounds.[43] Like Resolute residents, CARC was also concerned about the Garrow Lake tailings disposal plan and criticized Cominco for not considering the possible impact on marine environments.[44] In spite of these concerns, the NWT Water Board granted Cominco a water licence for the mine's water supply and tailings disposal effective November 1981.[45] CARC also criticized Cominco for avoiding any discussion of compensating the Inuit for environmental damage caused by the mine or loss of income due to reduced resource base.[46]

ITC supported CARC's environmental criticisms, but the Inuit organization was principally concerned with the economic and political aspects of the Polaris project. The transcript of the May 23 public hearing reveals that ITC was not consulted or involved in the discussion and planning process, despite its efforts to foster contact with Jake Epp, minister of Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND). ITC was critical of Cominco's dismissal of land claims negotiations and the action plan signed between government and Cominco. Largely initiated by the GNWT, the "Socioeconomic Action Plan" primarily focused on employment and training assistance programs for Inuit workers, as well as the dissemination of information, consultation with communities and governments, and maximization of business opportunities for northerners. Though ITC did not go into specific detail in a letter it submitted for reading at the NWT Water Board hearing, it declared the action plan

an overall failure, and was particularly dissatisfied with an absence of Cominco Inuit training or hiring programs.[47]

The cooperation of these two groups in opposing the mining industry exemplifies the growing importance that both southern and northern political activists attributed to Inuit rights in the 1970s. Cominco's exclusion of ITC from Polaris discussions was typical of the industry's attitude at this time. Though CARC and ITC shared some anxieties with the people of Resolute Bay, specifically in terms of possible environmental impacts, their attitudes differed from local concerns about mine development. CARC and ITC acted in what they thought were the best interests of the northern environment and people in their criticisms, but their opinions overshadowed the concerns and opinions of those most directly affected by development—the people of Resolute Bay. For example, CARC claimed that the people of Resolute stood in outright opposition to the mine development.[48] While Resolute residents did have concerns about development, as outlined above, they mostly supported it.

During planning, Cominco told the community it planned to hire local people, but unlike the Nanisivik mine, which opened near the community of Arctic Bay in 1976, Cominco did not commit to a formal Inuit employment agreement with the government. Nanisivik was one of the first mines in Canada to have an agreement with the government specifying a quota for Aboriginal workers (the company pledged that 60 per cent of its workforce of 219 would be Inuit within the first three years).[49] According to Robert McPherson, by the time Polaris was developing, the government realized that Nanisivik's agreement was unrealistic and had given up on imposing employment quotas.[50] Instead, Cominco signed informal memorandums of understanding with DIAND in 1980 and 1981 that did not include specific employment targets for Native hiring. Dan McKinnon of DIAND's Northern Resource and Economic Planning branch stated that Polaris would not require any formal agreement with the government, largely because of the lack of state financial support and involvement in the Polaris project.[51] Cominco committed only that it would advertise jobs in the Northwest Territories first and that "whenever possible preference will be given to NWT residents."[52]

It is difficult to know whether Resolute residents were aware that there was no hiring agreement. Interviewees were knowledgeable about

the Nanisivik mine and may have assumed that Polaris would be similar in terms of Inuit employment. Most of the correspondence consulted regarding employment was private between the state and the company. The public meeting transcripts do not necessarily suggest that Resolute had concerns or anxiety about employment possibilities; for the most part, according to interviewees, Resolute residents took Cominco at its word that it intended to hire locals. Overall, the hamlet looked forward to the employment opportunities they believed the operation would bring to the community. Once Polaris began operation in 1982, however, Resolute soon realized that significant employment had not materialized.

Once the mine began operation (Fig. 3), previous environmental concerns dissipated when Inuit workers saw little damage to the surrounding area, though one interviewee remembered that dust and chemical ash coming from the mill in the summer months covered the surrounding land.[53] Another interviewee reported that, as he was handling ore in the mill, he noticed ore concentrates going into the ocean while ships were being loaded.[54] Furthermore, interviewees reported that animal populations decreased during operation, though they did note that populations returned after closure.[55]

Employment rather than the environment remained the major point of contention for Resolute during the operational stage. Inuit comprised fewer than thirty (of 250) Polaris employees at peak employment periods, making up less than 10 per cent of the mine's total workforce.[56] Interviewees could recall only ten people from Resolute employed at Polaris over the twenty years it was in operation.[57] Former workers from Resolute stated that the majority of mine workers came from Southern Canada, including a large number from Springdale, Newfoundland, and many from Alberta and Manitoba. They also remembered non-local Aboriginal people working at the mine, including Dene from Dettah (near Yellowknife) and Inuit from other areas in the Northwest Territories.[58]

Interviewees commented on the difficulty of getting the better jobs, which tended to be filled by non-Natives because there was no training offered to Inuit for positions requiring skilled labour.[59] Those from Resolute did a variety of jobs. Most were general labourers (all started out in this position, with the exception of one person who was hired as a guide in the development stage), mill workers (reported as the worst job

Figure 3: The Polaris Mine. NWT Archives/Northwest Territories Dept. of Public Works and Services fonds/G-1995-001: 1525

because of the dust and ash from the mill), surface crew, heavy equipment operators, and polar bear monitors. Female employees worked as housekeepers in the accommodation facilities, although one moved up to become a heavy machine operator after one year.[60]

The low number of employees from the community helps to explain why Resolute residents felt ignored by Cominco. It also adds to our understanding about the lack of collective mining memory in Resolute; so few people from the town were employed at the mine that working there did not become a significant part of the community identity. Interviewees agreed that they would not consider Resolute a mining community either then or now. Furthermore, because of the nature of their positions, the Inuit employees did not form individual identities as miners or mine workers. Many described working at Polaris, though they enjoyed the work, as "just [another] job."[61]

The lack of benefits to the community from the operation also reinforced the town's disconnection from the mine. Before the mine

opened, residents believed that the mine would bring spinoff industries to the town. However, such spinoffs failed to materialize, and some interviewees stated that residents were left feeling fooled and betrayed.[62] In their study of post-closure Polaris, Bowes-Lyon et al. suggested residents realized some minor short-term economic benefits from mining operations, but they identified very few long-term benefits.[63] Short-term benefits included increased income for those individuals employed at the mine, more frequent and less expensive jet services in and out of Resolute, and cheaper grocery prices due to the frequency of air traffic coming into the community. When asked if there were any major changes to the community as a result of the mine, all interviewees said the mine had "no real impact" or benefits for the community, other than for the individuals who worked there. Some residents had hoped that Polaris' fly-in/fly-out structure would stimulate extra spending in the community co-op store and the hotels while incoming workers waited for the company charter to fly them to the mine for their rotation. However, these workers stayed at a company hotel next to the airport and very rarely came into the town.[64]

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Polaris closed in 2002 because of declining ore grades and profitability. Interviewees noted that they knew well in advance that the operation would cease. In fact, the *Nunatsiaq News* reported that Cominco initially intended to close in 2001, but managed to get another year out of the mine.[65] At closure, out of 225 employees, only twenty from the North and only one from Resolute Bay were still working at the mine.[66] Naturally, that one individual was disappointed to lose his job, but interviews clarified that, collectively, Resolute residents felt no sense of loss when they discovered the mine would cease operation. Economically, since there had been little spinoff business as a result of the mine, there was no significant service sector loss or economic disruption upon closure. The biggest impact on the community was the loss of jet services, as Resolute lost all service from Canadian North airlines. First Air is now the only airline with service to Resolute Bay.[67]

Those interviewed expressed mixed feelings about the closure of Polaris. Some reported they were glad to see the mine close because of

"less pollution" on Little Cornwallis Island and an increase in animal populations. Some former workers reported that working at the mine was the best time of their lives. One stated, "I am still homesick for that place," and another reported that when the company was closing it up and demolishing the buildings he did not want to see it happen so he chartered a plane to leave early. When interviewees spoke of their personal experiences and memories of the mine, their stories usually related to social events or work. For the most part, although there were some negative memories, individuals generally emphasized the positive aspects of their mining experiences. They all spoke of how much fun they had working at Polaris, and recalled the activities available to them during their time off such as swimming, karate demonstrations, and passing time at the gym. One interviewee recalled, "there was always something to do . . . but lots of work too." Another remembered the baseball games when the Polaris team played the Nanisivik team, as well as teams from the airport and from the hamlet of Resolute. "It had a big impact on me, that mine," one interviewee reflected, and saying if he had the chance he would love to work in a mine again.

In contrast to these strong personal memories, the exclusion and marginalization of Resolute itself left the community with no strong ties to Polaris. Cominco largely ignored residents' concerns about environmental impacts and failed to conduct any further environmental assessments. Some community members were critical of the lack of communication and involvement in the planning stages:

> It was good but it would have been better if we talked to them more and worked with them more by communicating [with] each other. But we leave them alone; we were so Inuk that . . . Inuit way is leave things alone. Live down here, let the people live up there, on top of you. Don't harass and ask around. If they ask you then, "Ok, thank you."[68]

This particular interviewee also suggested that the biggest disappointment that she, personally, had with the company and with northern mining was the lack of employment opportunities. If Inuit had been more involved in the planning process, she believes, they would have received

more benefits locally from the mine, and many more people from Resolute would have been hired at Polaris.[69]

Together, the lack of involvement in both planning and employment at the mine, the marginalization of Resolute Inuit concerns about development, and the limited benefit (and loss) created by operation (and closure) suggest why Resolute does not retain heritage or collective mining memory in the town. In addition, Resolute Bay's distance from the mine—being one hundred kilometres away from the mine site and physically separated by water—has kept its physical legacies hidden. The structure of its fly-in/fly-out rotation schedule meant that often the only people who ever spent significant amounts of time in and around the mine were those who worked there. One interviewee stated, "If you'd never gone to that mine, you'd never know who's working there."[70] The only time Resolute Inuit would have occasion to see the mine infrastructure was during freeze-up when they made their way across Little Cornwallis Island on the sea ice to hunt on Bathurst Island, and even then they usually only saw Polaris as a light in the distance directing them west.

Unlike many former mining communities in the North and in the South, Polaris left few industrial ruins on the landscape that might provide reminders of the region's industrial past. Residents do not walk past the old mine site every day. They do not see it in the distance from their front porch or their window. At the site itself, the landing strip is the only relic of the former mine that remains in the area. Decommissioning and reclamation of the site began immediately after closure and was completed in 2004. This process consisted of removing buildings and the dock, disposing of metal-contaminated soil, and decommissioning the tailings dam. Infrastructure such as the mill, mill equipment, and mining fleet were buried underground.[71]

Furthermore, there is a general absence of visible ecological changes left on the land. At most abandoned mines, one is likely to find tailings piles, pollutants, industrial waste, open pits, abandoned infrastructure, destroyed migration zones, and (potentially) adverse human health effects.[72] Analyzing Schefferville, Jean Sébastien Boutet argues, "For the Innu and Naskapi, the post-industrial environment acts as an incessant material reminder of three decades of intensive land exploitation."[73] At Polaris, aside from twenty million tonnes of mining tailings that have

been dumped into the Garrow Lake, there is little evidence of environmental degradation around the mine site. In Resolute, in the absence of any persistent or urgent environmental impacts, there are few lingering anxieties about the old mine site, aside from some ongoing concern about Garrow Lake. Teck Cominco's environmental monitoring ended in 2012, and, when the author was in Resolute, one interviewee was hopeful that the company would update them on the condition of the tailings. Though there has been no reported or suspected damage, the concern is still present, especially when hunting in the area. He stated, "I'd like to know. I just want to be safe."[74]

In Resolute, the town did not think it critical to preserve a public, collective memory of the mine. There is no plaque or memorial to the mine. Every now and then, when hunting in the area, some notice that the buildings are no longer there. As one interviewee stated, "It's gone now, there is no memory of it here in the community."[75] The youth in the community are largely unaware that there had been a mine near Resolute (unless a parent or relative had worked there).[76] Those interviewed without exception reported that working at the mine was just a job. None of the former workers I interviewed identified themselves as mine workers; rather, they self-identified as hunters. I heard repeatedly (sometimes in laughter) that Resolute is certainly not a mining town today, and it was not during the operational phase either.[77] The absence of commemoration means that the youth (and outsiders) fail to learn about that aspect of the community's past.

The absence of commemoration speaks to the marginalization that Resolute Inuit, like communities before them, felt at a time when it was expected and normal for an outside force to make decisions that would affect a community, without including the community in the process. Just as commemoration can tell us much about what a community wants to remember, the absence of commemoration can teach us about what a community may choose to forget. The lack of commemoration suggests that the Polaris mine was not deemed an important site to the community for good reason. The formation of a collective mining memory served no purpose for the residents of Resolute Bay. Unlike southern mining towns (and other northern mining towns such as Rankin Inlet), Polaris lacked a strong labour force from within the local community; Resolute

Bay existed before the mine came, and the town did not rely on the mine for its major income. Finally, a collective memory served no political, economic, or social purpose for the town. Arguably, the Polaris mine operation *itself* was not a part of Resolute's history as a community. It is a part of individual persons' histories, for those who worked there or those who were actively engaged in the planning phase. Aside from private, individual reminiscence, Resolute residents largely do not engage with memories of a process in which they were largely slighted, excluded, and marginalized.

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NOTES

1 Stephen Brazen and Tony Thirlwall, *Deindustrialization* (Oxford: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd., 1992); Steven High, *Industrial Sunset: The Making of North America's Rust Belt, 1969–1984* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003). Some works that deal with the closure of mines specifically include Cecily Neil, Markku Tykklainen, and John Bradbury, *Coping with Closure: An International Comparison of Mine Town Experiences* (New York: Routledge, 1992); Timothy LeCain, *Mass Destruction: The Men and Giant Mines That Wired America and Scarred the Planet* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2009); David Robertson, *Hard as the Rock Itself: Place and Identity in the American Mining Town* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2006);

Richard Francaviglia, *Hard Places: Reading the Landscape of America's Historic Mining Districts* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1991).

2 See James Connolly, ed., *After the Factory: Reinventing America's Industrial Small Cities* (Toronto: Lexington Books, 2010); High, *Industrial Sunset*; Jefferson Cowie and Joseph Heathcott, eds., *Beyond the Ruins: The Meaning of Deindustrialization* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003).

3 This recent trend in the literature has a focus on the social histories of closure. Cowie and Heathcott's *Beyond the Ruins*, Robertson's *Hard as the Rock Itself*, and Steven High and David Lewis's *Corporate Wasteland: The Landscape and Memory of Deindustrialization* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2007) move beyond the quantitative-type studies to widen the discussion of deindustrialization to include memory, culture, and politics of deindustrialization. Common themes in these works include commemoration, legacy, identity, and connection to place.

4 Rosemary Power, "'After the Black Gold': A View of Mining Heritage from Coalfield Areas in Britain," *Folklore* 119, no. 2 (Aug. 2008): 160.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid., 170.

7 Ibid., 162.

8 M. Mellor and C. Stephenson, "The Durham Miners' Gala and the Spirit of Community," *Community Development Journal* 40, no. 3 (2005): 343–51.

9 Ben Marsh, "Continuity and Decline in the Anthracite Towns of Pennsylvania," *Association of American Geographers* 77, no. 3 (1987): 339.

10 Ibid., 344.

11 Tara Cater and Arn Keeling, "That's where our future came from": Mining, Landscape, and Memory in Rankin Inlet, Nunavut," *Etudes/Inuit/Studies* 37, no. 2 (2013): 59.

12 Qausuittuq means "place with no dawn" in Inuktitut.

13 I use "collective memory" and "community memory" interchangeably throughout this chapter referring to the memory of a group of people, typically of an event or era that holds meaning to the group, and often passed down over generations.

14 It is important to state that these opinions are those of a small percentage of the population. I interviewed seven (out of a possible ten) former Polaris workers from Resolute. Of the remaining three, one no longer lived in Resolute, one was away at the time I was there, and the third did not wish to be interviewed. The accounts I rely on in this narrative are the accounts of those people who agreed to be interviewed. I cast a wide net open to anyone who was in the community at the time of development, operation, and closure,

workers or not, to talk about their memories of the mine; it was surprising how many people did not believe they were a worthy candidate because they did not work at the mine and, hence, said they had no connection to the mine. Relying on ethnographic sources can be a slippery slope, and I initially worried that such a small percentage of interviewees would create dangerous generalizations. Frankly, I had to trust in and rely on my interviewees' stories about the mine and their assurances that there is no collective mining memory in Resolute. I feel confident in stating that there was an absence of a collective memory after my time spent in the community and both the formal and informal conversations I had with residents while there. Though I cannot cite informal conversations, the general collective impression agrees with the interviewees' stories.

15 See High and Lewis, *Corporate Wasteland*, and Robertson, *Hard as the Rock Itself*.

16 John Sandlos and Arn Keeling, "Claiming the New North: Development and Colonialism at the Pine Point Mine, Northwest Territories, Canada," *Environment and History* 18, no. 1 (2012): 5–34.

17 David Trigger, "Mining, Landscape, and the Culture of Developmental Ideology in Australia," *Cultural Geographies* 4, no. 2 (1997): 164–65.

18 Robert McPherson, *New Owners in Their Own Land: Minerals and Inuit Land Claims* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2003), 58–65.

19 For more, see McPherson, *New Owners in Their Own Land*.

20 Mary Josephine Taylor, "The Development of Mineral Policy for the Eastern Arctic, 1953–1985" (MA thesis, Carleton University, 1985), 124.

21 Formerly known as Consolidated Mining and Smelting Company (CM&S), Vancouver-based Cominco Ltd. (now Teck Cominco) was one of the largest Canadian natural resource companies with mine sites internationally. Cominco owned and operated the Con Mine in Yellowknife (1938), Pine Point in the Northwest Territories (1964), and Black Angel in Arctic Greenland (1973) at the time they developed Polaris in Nunavut.

22 J. E. Barrett, "Employment of the Inuit at Polaris, Little Cornwallis Island: A Feasibility Study Requested by Arvik Mines Ltd.," 1973.

23 NWT Water Board Public Hearing transcript, May 22, 1980, RG12 1985-86-578 Box 10 9004-6-2, Library and Archives Canada (hereafter LAC).

24 Interviewee 7, oral history interview with author, Resolute Bay, June 2, 2012.

25 It is unclear as to the exact date that the Socioeconomic Action Plan was signed; however, it was approximately around the same time as the Memorandum of Understanding in 1981 (RG12 1985-86-578 Box 10 9004-6-2, LAC).

26 These communities were Spence Bay, Pelly Bay, Gjoa Haven, Cambridge Bay, Holman Island, Coppermine, and Resolute. J. E. Barrett and Associates, "The

Polaris Project and the Inuit: An Assignment Concerned with Involving the Inuit in the Polaris Mine Development Requested by Arvik Mines Ltd.," 1976.

27 Barrett, "The Polaris Project," 36.

28 Cominco Ltd., "Polaris Mine Project: Transcript of Public Meeting in Resolute Bay, NWT," May 23, 1980, RG12 1985-86-578 Box 10 9004-6-2, LAC.

29 McPherson, *New Owners in Their Own Land*, xvii.

30 Interviewee 3, oral history interview with author, Resolute Bay, June 1, 2012. Other concerns in Resolute included accommodation, schooling, and the loss of experienced workers from the community to the mine (RG12 1985-86-578 Box 10 9004-6-2, LAC); as well, residents were concerned with possible in-migration of southerners settling in Resolute to be closer to the mine (Barrett, "The Polaris Project," 36).

31 RG12 1985-86-578 Box 10 9004-6-2, LAC.

32 Derek V. Ellis and Jack L. Littlepage, *Feasibility Study for Marine Disposal of Tailings at the Polaris Mine-site* (Victoria: University of Victoria, 1974), 16.

33 Ibid., 1.

34 Ibid., 17.

35 Ibid., 21.

36 RG12 1985-86-578 Box 10 9004-6-2, LAC.

37 RG12 1985-86-578 Box 10 9004-6-2, LAC.

38 Barrett, "The Polaris Project," 15–16.

39 For more about CARC, see Everett Peterson and Janet Wright, eds., *Northern Transitions: Northern Resource and Land Use Policy Study* (Edmonton: CARC Publishing Programme, 1978).

40 Correspondence, papers, June 1976 – September 1979, Wilfrid Laurier University Archives (WLUA) CARC fonds file 3.13.2.2.5; and Northwest Territories Water Board public hearing: application for a water licence by Cominco Ltd., Polaris Mine Project, 1980, WLUA CARC fonds file 3.13.2.2.26.

41 Though EARP has been applied by the Canadian government since 1974, it was not required until 1984 and then only mandatory for proposals requiring federal involvement. The records are not clear as to what extent the federal government was a part of the Polaris operation. Therefore, Cominco may not have been legally obliged to undergo EARP. An article in the *Northern Miner* in 1979 reported that the ITC and CARC wanted to halt development of the mine until up-to-date environmental studies were completed. The editorial claimed that Cominco had already conducted thirteen studies (environmental, economic, and social) (*Northern Miner*, November 1979).

42 In 1973, Cominco and Sheritt-Gordon carried out a research and development program to investigate hydrometallurgical processes to ensure that the

mine's processing would meet environmental standards. Polaris Mine Project, R1526-30-4-E vol. 269 file 243-18, LAC.

43 BC Research, "Environmental Study of the Polaris Mine, Little Cornwallis Island" (1975), WLUA CARC fonds file 3.13.2.2.20. BC Research reported that "any major chemical pollutant input into the terrestrial ecosystem will be from air-born emissions" and that such emissions were deemed to only be important in the summer months when the mill was active (BC Research, "Environmental Study of the Polaris Mine," 5).

44 Papers, newspaper clippings, January–May 1980, WLAU CARC fonds file 3.13.2.2.3

45 NWT Water Board, WLUA File 0262, Nov. 1, 1981.

46 Papers, newspaper clippings, January–May 1980, WLUA CARC fonds file 3.13.2.2.3. Though CARC criticized Cominco, no archival records or oral interviews suggest that Inuit of Resolute asked for compensation. They believed that they would receive employment opportunities from the mine, which is what they looked forward to about development.

47 Unfortunately I was unable to locate a copy of the Socioeconomic Action Plan, and the information provided above is the only available information coming from company and government reports. Furthermore, ITC was not specific about particular criticisms it had with the action plan, only general concerns as noted in this text. RG12 1985-86-578 Box 10 9004-6-2, LAC.

48 Papers, newspaper clippings, January–May 1980, CARC fonds file 3.13.2.2.3.

49 However, there were only forty in the first three years, and in 1979 there were only ten Inuit employees at the Nanisivik mine. McPherson, *New Owners In Their Own Land*, 92, 109. See also Chapter 10, this volume.

50 McPherson, *New Owners In Their Own Land*, 126.

51 McKinnon said Nanisivik had a formal agreement because the federal government granted the development $21 million in funding, indicating that Polaris did not receive such financial support. Correspondence, papers, October 1979 – April 1980, WLUA CARC fonds file 3.13.2.2.6. See also Katherine Graham, *The Development of the Polaris Mine* (Kingston: Queen's University Centre for Resource Studies , 1982), v.

52 Polaris Vision, MS-2500 Box 409 file 6, Royal British Columbia Museum Archives.

53 Interviewee 5, oral history interview with author, Resolute Bay, June 2, 2012.

54 Interviewee 8, oral history interview with author, Resolute Bay, June 4, 2012; interviewee 5, oral history interview with author, Resolute Bay, June 2, 2012.

55 One interviewee reported that before the mine, beluga whales were plentiful along the shores of Cominco Bay, but when mining activity started there were

much fewer. He says, "The Inuks relied on those populations, so that was one negative effect [of development]. After the mine was gone, the population of belugas increased." Interviewee 8, oral history interview with author, Resolute Bay, June 4, 2012; interviewee 5, oral history interview with author, Resolute Bay, June 2, 2012.

56 Léa-Marie Bowes-Lyon, Jeremy P. Richards, and Tara M. McGee, "Socio-Economic Impacts of the Nanisivik and Polaris Mines, Nunavut, Canada," in *Mining, Society, and a Sustainable World*, ed. Jeremy Richards (Berlin/Heidelberg: Springer-Verlag, 2009), 371–96.

57 I have found no company documents with statistics or data of Polaris employees, where they came from, and how long they were at the mine. However, those I spoke with in Resolute in June 2012 identified only ten people within the community who had worked at the mine. Of course, there may be others, but those I spoke with all repeated the same ten people (or fewer).

58 Interviewees 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, oral history interviews with author, Resolute Bay, June 1–4, 2012.

59 Interviewee 8, oral history interview with author, Resolute Bay, June 2, 2012.

60 Of the ten Inuit employees at Resolute, two were female. Interviewee 3, oral history interview with author, Resolute Bay, June 1, 2012.

61 Interviewee 3, oral history interview with author, Resolute Bay, June 1, 2012.

62 Interviewee 7, oral history interview with author, Resolute Bay, June 2, 2012.

63 Bowes-Lyon, Richards, and McGee, "Socio-Economic Impacts," 371.

64 Interviewee 3, oral history interview with author, Resolute Bay, June 1, 2012.

65 *Nunatsiaq News*, July 2000 and May 11, 2001.

66 Interviewee 4, oral history interview with author, Resolute Bay, June 2, 2012.

67 Bowes-Lyon, Richards, and McGee, "Socio-Economic Impacts," 383.

68 Interviewee 7, oral history interview with author, Resolute Bay, June 2, 2012.

69 Interviewee 3, oral history interview with author, Resolute Bay, June 1, 2012. The Mary River development in the Baffin Region (160 kilometres from Pond Inlet) will be an open-pit mine extracting iron ore. The *Globe and Mail* hailed the project as "the most ambitious mining venture ever undertaken in the Arctic." People in Resolute expressed support for the way the development has been handled in terms of an environmental impact statement and negotiations of an impact and benefit agreement. Though people in Pond Inlet expressed concerns and were divided in their opinions, Resolute residents believed that the consultation process and the ability to present local concerns had improved from the development of Polaris (Paul Waldie, "A Railway to Arctic Riches: Economic Boom, Environmental Threat?," *Globe and Mail,* May 14, 2011).

70 Interviewee 3, oral history interview with author, Resolute Bay, June 1, 2012.

71 The *Northern Miner,* November 11, 2002.

72 For more on this northern literature, see Arn Keeling, "'Born in an Atomic Test Tube': Landscapes of Cyclonic Development at Uranium City, Saskatchewan," *The Canadian Geographer / Le G´eographe canadien* 54, no. 2 (2010): 228–52; Jean-Sébastien Boutet, "An Innu-Naskapi Ethnohistorical Geography of Industrial Iron Mining Development at Schefferville, Québec" (MA thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 2011); Sandlos and Keeling, "Claiming the New North"; Arn Keeling and John Sandlos, "Environmental Justice Goes Underground? Historical Notes from Canada's Mining Frontier," *Environmental Justice* 2 (2009): 117–25. To read more about the environmental impacts of mining outside of the northern Canadian context, see LeCain, *Mass Destruction* and Brett Walker, *Toxic Archipelago: A History of Industrial Disease in Japan* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2010).

73 Boutet, "An Innu-Naskapi Ethnohistorical Geography," 217.

74 Interviewee 9, oral history interview with author, Resolute Bay, June 2, 2012.

75 Interviewee 7, oral history interview with author, Resolute Bay, June 2, 2012.

76 However, it is not always the case that the youth know if their relatives worked there. One youth I interviewed said she did not know of anyone who worked at the mine, though I later discovered from her grandmother that three of her uncles had worked there. She made the following statement about what kind of history she learns from her community and what is deemed important parts of the past for the younger generation to know: "I learned some skills from my grandmother and heard her history about her family and how they would survive. Like, what they would use for their huts and I learned how to make an igloo and I learned how to make mitts, what stitches to do and how hard they would work every day and how they connected to each other. I learned about those from my grandmother and she's still teaching me more." She later said that these types of things are more important to her personal history than the mine and more common for kids to learn about in Resolute (Interviewee 1, oral history interview with author, Resolute Bay, May 31, 2012).

77 Interviewee 3, oral history interview with author, Resolute Bay, June 1, 2012.