

## **PART IV**

# **BUILDING RESILIENT COMMUNITIES IN THE ARCTIC**



## Inuit perspective

Duane Smith

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### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Arctic is vast. It has an unforgiving climate that is changing rapidly and unpredictably, with implications for the health and well-being of Inuit as well as the environment and wildlife they depend upon. Rapid environmental change in the Arctic is driven by climate change, growing access to resources, and a new era of geopolitics that is focussing more and more on the Arctic and its wealth of natural resources. These changes and the increased global interest in the Arctic are providing new development opportunities, including easier access to oil and gas, minerals, and fisheries as well as challenges for Inuit communities. More far-reaching change is forecasted for the region over the years and decades to come. The pervasiveness of Arctic change and the anticipation of even greater change are major concerns for people and decisions-makers, as they challenge established political practices intended to maintain or improve current conditions based on an understanding of the past.

Emerging opportunities for large scale resource development and economic growth have the potential to bring economic diversification, skills, training and education. The challenge is to ensure that the unique Inuit culture informs this development and that Inuit benefit from these new opportunities and Arctic riches. The ability of Inuit and other Arctic peoples to adapt to these changes is dependent on the resiliency of their communities. The situation requires new approaches that conceptualize and address Arctic changes and inform policy on how to prepare for and respond to them.

### WHAT IS RESILIENCE?

Resilience is a property of social-ecological systems that centers on the capacity of a system to cope with disturbance and recover in such a way as to maintain its core function and identity, whilst also maintaining the ability to learn from and adapt to changing conditions, and when necessary to transform itself. A resilient Arctic system is able to absorb disruptions

in the form of both abrupt disturbance events and more gradual forces of change. Furthermore, a resilient Arctic system is capable of persisting within a broad range of conditions and adjusting in a relatively smooth manner to varying circumstances. When a system is no longer able to adapt, it is likely to experience a transformation (Arctic Council 2013).

## ARCTIC CHANGE - CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The Arctic and its peoples are experiencing changes that will have impacts as far reaching as those brought about by first contact. In 1576, an English explorer, Martin Frobisher, led an expedition in search of the Northwest Passage to China. Although he did not find the



passage, the expedition did encounter the Inuit of Baffin Island. The lives of Inuit were fundamentally changed from this point. By the early 1960s, they had been relocated to new communities (High Arctic exiles) to support the Canadian sovereignty in the High Arctic.

Today these communities have met with a range of success. While some are embracing the changes in the Arctic and adapting, others are struggling with poverty, food insecurity, educational issues, and health challenges. What are the factors that make some individuals and communities more resilient to change than others? This has been the subject of many research projects. Some say strong ties to the land and culture through traditional Inuit knowledge and teachings provide the strength to meet the social, cultural and economic challenges Arctic change has brought to Inuit communities. Others have identified poverty and education as fundamental factors in preventing Inuit and other Arctic indigenous peoples from meeting changes and participating fully in new opportunities.

Community resilience is one of the most essential components needed to build and support sustainable, thriving Arctic communities. Resilience refers to “the capacity to withstand change for some time but also, past a certain point, to transform while maintaining or regaining the ability

to provide essential functions, services, amenities or qualities.” Resilient communities are able to absorb, adapt to, or bounce back from climate change impacts as well as other crises, such as the downturn of major industries, severe accidents, natural disasters and pandemics. Research at the Center for Northern Studies defined five main characteristics that contribute to an Arctic community’s ability to build and maintain resilience:

1. Flexibility and adaptability,
2. Ability to quickly and effectively harness local resources and expertise,
3. Local ownership of preparation, planning, and response when faced with a threat or incident,
4. Ability to access and draw upon local knowledge, and
5. Existence of trust and cooperation between public and private sector actors and community members.

A number of challenges, however, can work against the resilience of Arctic communities. Rapid sociocultural and socioeconomic changes, remoteness, a lack of economic diversity, and the direct and often immediate impacts of climate change are some of the elements that can, either alone or in combination, make building community resilience a daunting goal for Arctic peoples. Troubling many Inuit throughout Canada’s Arctic experience are disparities in health outcomes compared to non-Inuit Canadians. These include: “higher-than-average suicide and addiction rates; increased incidences of infectious diseases; and higher incidences of chronic diseases, such as diabetes and respiratory illness.”

How might we support and enhance community resilience in the Arctic? Fundamentally, resilience is best established from the bottom-up through the engagement, interaction and initiatives of individuals and organizations within communities. Locally driven resilience-building initiatives are the most effective because they tend to be culturally appropriate and address the communities’ priorities. These may include initiatives from self-governance and co-management of resources to on-the-land education programs for youth and hunter support programs to provide country food for communities. Economic vitality and stable, predictable and long-term public and private funding mechanisms are also critical elements. And partnerships are pivotal, as they will help to ensure accessible and long-term funding sources, and work to build trust across sectors. These conditions

can be met by building authentic, productive, interdisciplinary, community-based relationships. These partnerships should include Inuit community voices, the public and private sector, academic and third-sector perspectives, as well as respect for established Inuit governance structures. Arctic communities need to leverage their strengths. These include such things as social capital and innovative and adaptive practices. Strong kinship and community, for instance, are features of many Arctic communities; they constitute a deep pool of social capital. In addition, Arctic peoples are already showing themselves to be adaptive and innovative in the face of change. For example, modern technologies such as Global Positioning Systems used in combination with traditional ecological knowledge are helping Arctic peoples to adjust the way they hunt. Also, Arctic peoples are integrating traditional economic and subsistence practices, such as hunting and foraging, with a market- or wage-based economy. This is helping to ensure food security, offset the high cost of living in the North, and develop lucrative tourism opportunities.

Ensuring the well-being and resilience of Arctic peoples and their communities will be impossible, however, without a clear and ongoing understanding of the effects of climate change and the social, cultural, economic and political challenges of climate change bring to the Arctic communities. Linking community well-being to community resilience is an important step toward ensuring that northerners and their communities are able to address properly the various impacts of Arctic change. We need to remind ourselves that many Arctic peoples are not only *from* a particular place, but also *of* that place. That is, their identities, well-being, livelihoods, histories, and emotional-spiritual connections are emergent from the lands on which they live. These lands and the rich cultural heritage that they support are and will continue to be subject to change. The resilience and well-being of those forced to confront this change is essential if Arctic peoples and their communities are to thrive.

### Who are Inuit?

For 5,000 years, the people and culture known throughout the world as Inuit have occupied the vast territory stretching from the shores of the Chukchi Peninsula of Russia, east across Alaska and Canada to the southeastern coast of Greenland. It is in this region, based on our ability to use the physical environment and living resources of this geographic

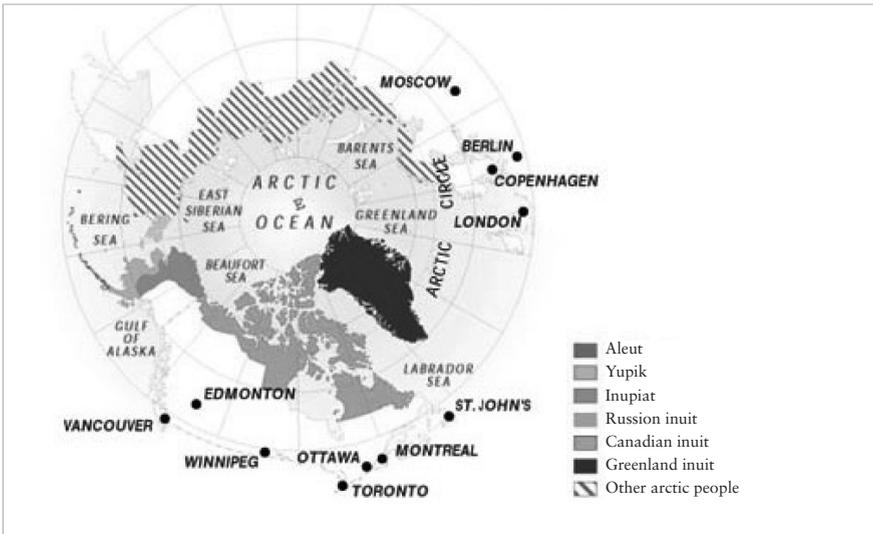


Figure IV-1 Inuit and circumpolar peoples

area known as the Arctic, that our culture developed and our history has unfolded.

As Inuit, we divide ourselves into two closely related groups based on language, environmental factors and certain cultural features. The first group is the Yupik, who occupy the coastal southwestern Alaska, Nunivak and St. Lawrence Islands, and a small sector of the southeastern Chukchi Peninsula. There are approximately 25,000 Yupik living in Alaska and 1,300 in Russia. Although the Yupik language has the same origin as ours, it is not understood by Inuit. Besides language, there are many other cultural features that distinguish Yupik from Inupiat and Inuit.

The second group includes the Inupiat of north Alaska and eastern Russia, Inuit of Canada, and Inuit of Greenland. Of these 155,000 Inuit, 2,000 live in Russia, 50,000 in Alaska, 45,000 in Canada and 55,000 in Greenland. Although certain differences in culture and language are to be expected over such a vast expanse of Arctic territory, one of the truly amazing aspects of our culture is the extent of similarity from one subgroup to another as you travel from the eastern shore of Greenland west across what is now Canada and Alaska to the shores of Siberia.

## Inuit Circumpolar Council

The 155,000 Inuit live in the Arctic spread across Greenland, Canada, Alaska (United States) and Chukotka (Russia). The Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC) advocates for Inuit rights internationally.

Growing political awareness among Inuit made their leadership realize they must speak out with a strong, united voice to protect their national and transnational interests. To that end, in 1977, Inuit delegates gathered in a conference in Barrow, Alaska to discuss the formation of an ongoing internationally representative organization to promote and develop programs that advocated on behalf of Inuit from the four countries (Canada, Greenland/Denmark, Chukotka/Russia, and Alaska/U.S.). This was the origin of the Inuit Circumpolar Council.

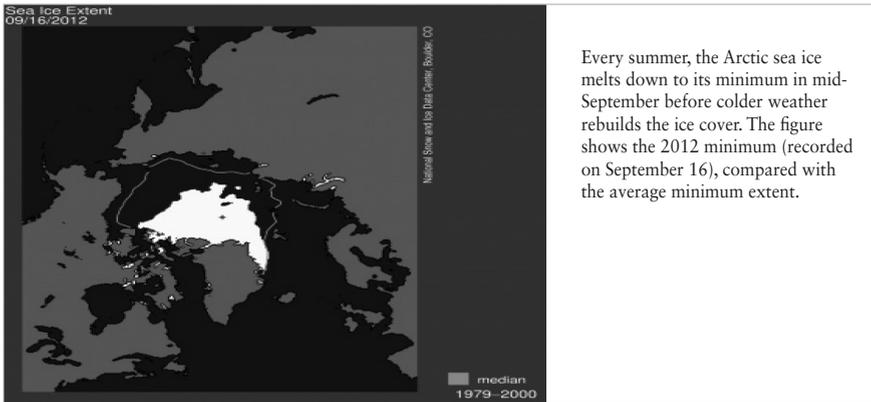
Eben Hopson recognized that the settlement of the land claims Inuit have with the various governments was of the utmost importance:

*“Working with our people in Greenland and Canada, the Saami have been active in the organization of the World Council of Indigenous Peoples through which the settlement of land claims has become a world-wide movement... We must elevate our Inuit Arctic claims to the status of an international effort to secure equal justice all across the North American Arctic.”*

## Climate Change as the Main Driver of Arctic Change

Climate change will have consequences far beyond this region, including a global rise in sea levels and probably more extreme weather across much of the Northern Hemisphere. These current and future consequences of climate change require urgent responses. Arctic and non-Arctic countries share responsibility for protecting this region, in particular by limiting their greenhouse gas emissions. Climate change is a global concern, and its impact on Canada's North has been especially severe. According to the U.S. National Snow and Ice Data Center (NSIDC), during the summer of 2012, Arctic sea ice shrank to the lowest extent ever recorded. Ultimately, climate change in Canada's North is not only affecting how some northerners spend time on the land, it is rapidly changing the very places and landscapes themselves.

Current changes in weather patterns are impacting the health and



*Figure IV-2* The 2012 Arctic sea ice extent

well-being of community residents in a variety of ways. These include: increased risk of food-borne and waterborne diseases; increased frequency and distribution of vector-borne diseases; increased mortality and injury due to extreme weather events and heat waves; increased respiratory and cardiovascular diseases due to changes in air quality and increased allergens in the air, and increased susceptibility to mental and emotional health challenges.

The warming Arctic brings with it a range of changes that impact the extent of sea ice and with this the ability to increase shipping in Arctic waters. With increased shipping comes the ability to explore and develop renewable and non-renewable resources such as fisheries, minerals, and oil and gas resources that were at one time too difficult or expensive to develop. The U.S. Geological Survey has estimated that about 30% of the world's undiscovered reserves of natural gas, and 13% of its undiscovered oil, lie in the Arctic. The region also contains coal, iron, uranium, gold, copper, rare earth minerals, gemstones and much more, including, of course, fish.

For the emerging Asian markets located in the newest Arctic Council observers (e.g., Singapore, China, India, Japan and South Korea), the opportunity to exploit these riches seems compelling. Also, the hope is that the Northeast Passage above Russia, also known as the Northern Sea Route (NSR), as well as the Northwest Passage from the Atlantic over the top of North America will become navigable for several months each summer. The NSR cuts the voyage from Shanghai to Hamburg by 6,400 km (4,000

miles) compared with the southern route through the Strait of Malacca and the Suez Canal. It will be even shorter when it is possible to break the ice across the North Pole. However, this opportunity also brings challenges. Increased economic activity brings environmental issues such as potential contamination (which is on top of the long-range transport already being experienced), potential spills from offshore and near-shore oil and gas development, and other associated changes.

Changes in the biophysical environment interact with rapid social changes that are affecting all inhabitants in the Arctic. Humans have often successfully adapted to changes in the past and, especially in the Arctic, have developed elaborate ways to ensure resilience of livelihoods in a highly dynamic environment. However, the rate and magnitude of exogenous and endogenous changes, due in part to increased connectivity with the outside world, have been unprecedented. One consequence of the pace and scale of changes has been a challenge to the adaptive capacities of Arctic indigenous communities. Nevertheless, indigenous peoples across the Arctic are also gaining new rights as they are recognized increasingly in national and international policies, offering new opportunities for self-determination and adaptation. Another impact has been the emergence of significant governance challenges resulting from the need to support resilience across the Arctic and from a changing geopolitical situation.



*Figure IV-3* The Chinese MV “Xue Long” (Snow Dragon) crossed the Arctic in the summer of 2012 Arctic shipping

Some changes in the Arctic are now inevitable, others will be avoidable, and yet others are needed to ensure the long-term viability of Arctic social and ecological systems. Understanding the thresholds for those changes we wish to avoid and ways to facilitate crossing the thresholds for changes we see as beneficial is at the heart of why we need to understand and assess resilience in the Arctic.

In March 2013, the ICC hosted a workshop on Circumpolar Inuit Response to Arctic Shipping. This workshop brought together Inuit hunters, leaders and representatives of organizations from across Inuit Nunaat, our homeland (that includes the Arctic areas of Canada, Alaska, Chukotka, and Greenland). It emerged from the Arctic Council's Arctic Marine Shipping Assessment (AMSA), which articulated many recommendations we Inuit wanted to understand and respond to.

The gathered Inuit not only shared their views with each other, but also listened to the views of Arctic shipping experts who provided valuable insights as to what Inuit should be aware of as we face decisions about our sea ice and our hunting practices and as we interact and negotiate with those who want access to Inuit Nunaat. While some of the views expressed came from opposing frames of reference, they all pointed to one central conclusion: Inuit must take firm control of their own destiny, while at the same time working collaboratively and harmoniously with those who seek to interact with them. This is the Inuit way.

The workshop confirmed that shipping in the Arctic touches upon many other issues that impact Inuit and the Arctic region. In fact, no other issue does this to the same degree. It is not sufficient simply to point to the reality of climate change and leave it at that. Arctic shipping cannot be discussed, for example, without first understanding issues of Arctic sovereignty. Who owns the Arctic? Who has rights to traverse the Arctic? Where do the boundaries of each Arctic state end? And what role can Inuit play in addressing these matters? Proceedings of this workshop are available on the ICC website.

## LOOKING BACK TO MOVE FORWARD

### Traditional Knowledge and Cultural Strength

An important aspect of a resilience assessment is to engage with available

knowledge about how societies have responded to past changes in their environment. Indigenous peoples' traditional knowledge is increasingly recognized as important for such an understanding and is also increasingly included in the Arctic Council assessment processes. In an oral history of Unalakleet, Alaska, Inupiaq Elder Charles O'Degnan refers to his people's traditions thus: "The thing in a subsistence way of life, what I can say is that if our ancestors were not the stewards of these resources, we wouldn't have any resources now."

Integrating traditional knowledge with Western scientific traditions is not a straight forward process, as the two see the world very differently. In short, traditional knowledge generally views all elements of matter as interconnected and not easily understood in isolation. Such knowledge is gathered and studied over a long period of time in individual localities; it is rooted in a social context that sees the world in terms of social and spiritual relations among all life forms. Traditional-knowledge explanations of environmental phenomena are often spiritual and based on cumulative, collective experience.

Traditional knowledge is transmitted orally, and it is often difficult to convey ideas and concepts to those who do not share the tradition and the experience. However, there is a growing body of epistemological material from indigenous scholars and published literature that places local experiences in a broader context. This makes it relevant to view traditional knowledge as a knowledge paradigm of its own, in parallel with Western scientific discourses.

Traditional knowledge preserves important experiences and indigenous history in the collective memory. It maintains a long-term communal understanding of the landscape, the flora and fauna, the human relationship to the environment, and cultural dynamics, all key determinants of indigenous resilience. Traditional knowledge clarifies how communities are organized and how they responded to past environmental states, there by informing the present.

The former Norwegian Minister of Foreign Affairs Jonas Gahr Store stated, "His (Amundsen's) success in this endeavor was largely due to the time he had spent with the Canadian Inuit some years before learning how to survive in such a harsh climate."

## The role of IPY research and ArcticNet

Inuit have been engaging in Arctic research for millennia, and it is their traditional knowledge of Arctic processes and change that lends incredible value to efforts to understand the changes acting upon the Arctic today.

The International Polar Year (IPY) was a large scientific program focused on the Arctic and the Antarctic from March 2007 to March 2009. The IPY was organized through the International Council for Science (ICSU) and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO). It was actually the fourth polar year, following those in 1882-3, 1932-3, and 1957-8. Inuit were partners in designing and undertaking significant research projects and integrating traditional knowledge, or two ways of knowing, into the research project. One example of this was the Circumpolar Flaw Lead System Study, where the ICC in partnership with communities led a research team that worked to bring the traditional knowledge of the region together with nine other science teams.

ArcticNet is a Network of Centres of Excellence in Canada that brings together scientists and managers in the natural, human health, and social sciences with their partners from Inuit organizations, northern communities, federal and provincial agencies and the private sector. The objective of ArcticNet is to study the impacts of climate change and modernization in the coastal Canadian Arctic. More than 145 ArcticNet researchers from 30 Canadian universities, and eight federal and 11 provincial agencies and departments collaborate with research teams in Denmark, Finland, France, Greenland, Japan, Norway, Poland, Russia, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the U.S.

Inuit want to build a research capacity to design and undertake research for their own needs and to provide a foundation of knowledge for informed decision making. In doing so, Inuit welcome research partners that wish to engage in participatory and mutually beneficial research projects.

## Community-Based Monitoring

ICC Canada has worked to build community-based monitoring into the work program of the Sustained Arctic Observing Network (SAON). Arctic communities are actively involved in observing social and environmental change. Recently, an atlas was designed in partnership with the ICC and launched to showcase the many community-based monitoring (CBM)

projects and initiatives across the circumpolar world.

## Governance in the Arctic

The rapid pace of change and growing importance of the Arctic require that we enhance our capacity to deliver on Inuit priorities on the international scene. Facing the challenges and seizing the opportunities that we face often require finding ways to work with others through bilateral relations with our neighbours in the Arctic, through regional mechanisms such as the Arctic Council, and through other multilateral institutions.

Under the leadership of Leona Aglukkaq, the Minister of the Arctic Council and then the Minister of health, Canada assumed the chairmanship of the Arctic Council in May 2013 and will hold that important international position until May 2015. The ICC will continue to play a leading indigenous peoples' role in the council as a Permanent Participant and is committed to working with the Minister and the Canadian government in implementing initiatives that will support the priorities of Canada.

The U.S. is Canada's premier partner in the Arctic, and the Canadian federal government's goal is to develop a more strategic engagement on the Arctic issues. This includes working together on issues related to the Beaufort Sea, Arctic science, aboriginal and Northern issues, and a common agenda that is being pursued during the Canadian chairmanship of the Arctic Council. Canada is also working with Russia, Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Finland and Iceland to advance such shared interests as trade and transportation, environmental protection, natural resource development, the role of indigenous peoples, ocean management, climate change adaptation and scientific cooperation.

However, the key foundation for any collaboration will be acceptance of and respect for the perspectives and knowledge of the Arctic peoples and Arctic states' sovereignty. As well, there must be recognition that the Arctic states remain best placed to exercise leadership in the management of the region.

Seven of the eight Arctic Council member states have sizeable indigenous communities living in their Arctic areas (only Iceland does not). Organizations of Arctic indigenous peoples can obtain the status of Permanent Participant in the Arctic Council, but only if they represent a single indigenous people resident in more than one Arctic state or more

than one Arctic indigenous people resident in a single Arctic state. The number of Permanent Participants should at any time be less than the number of members. The category of Permanent Participants was created to provide for active participation and full consultation with the Arctic indigenous representatives within the Council. This principle applies to all meetings and activities of the Council.

Permanent Participants may address the meetings and raise points of order that require an immediate decision by the chairman. They need to be consulted beforehand on the agendas of ministerial meetings, and they may propose supplementary agenda items. The Permanent Participants must be consulted beforehand when calling the biannual meetings of Senior Arctic Officials. Finally, they may propose cooperative activities, such as projects. All this makes the position of Arctic indigenous peoples within the Arctic Council unique compared to the (often marginal) role of such peoples in other international governmental forums. However, decision making in the council remains in the hands of the eight member states, on the basis of consensus.

The three founding indigenous members of the Arctic Council in 1996 were the ICC, the Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North (RAIPON), and the Saami Council. By 2010, three new Arctic indigenous communities had Permanent Participant status. These groups are represented by the Aleut International Association, the Arctic Athabaskan Council, and Gwich'in Council International. These indigenous organisations vary widely in their organisational capacities and the size of the population they represent. To illustrate, RAIPON represents about 250,000 indigenous people of various (mostly Siberian) tribes; the ICC represents about 150,000 Inuit. On the other hand, the Gwich'in Council and the Aleut Association each represent only a few thousand people each.

However prominent the role of indigenous peoples is, Permanent Participant status does not give them any legal recognition as peoples. The Ottawa Declaration, the Arctic Council's founding document, explicitly states (in a footnote): "The use of the term 'peoples' in this declaration shall not be construed as having any implications as regard the rights which may attach to the term under international law."

The states that make up the Council call the Arctic region home. Canada's chairmanship will put Northerners first. The theme of Canada's chairmanship is "development for the people of the North" with three sub-themes focusing on responsible Arctic resource development, safe Arctic

shipping, and sustainable circumpolar communities, announced by Leona Aglukkaq on January 21, 2013 in a speech in Tromsø, Norway.

### **Strengthening the Arctic Council**

Since its inception, the Council has undertaken important work to address the unique challenges and opportunities facing the Arctic region. As these challenges evolve, so must the Council. Canada will work collaboratively with its Arctic Council partners to strengthen the Council. The aim is to enhance the capacity of the Permanent Participant organizations, improve the Council's coordination, and maximize efficiency.

### **Responsible Arctic Resource Development**

The Arctic Council is working to ensure that Arctic development takes place responsibly. Businesses in the Arctic will play a strong role in building a sustainable and economically vibrant future for the region. Establishing a Circumpolar Business Forum will foster circumpolar economic development and provide opportunities for businesses to engage with the Council. As economic activity in the region increases, Arctic states are cooperating to protect the marine environment and the livelihoods of Northern peoples.

In May 2013, the Arctic states signed an Agreement on Cooperation on Marine Oil Pollution, Preparedness and Response in the Arctic. The Council has also begun work on oil-pollution prevention. This work will continue during Canada's chairmanship. Effective action to prevent oil pollution is critical to ensuring the protection of the Arctic marine environment.

### **Safe Arctic Shipping**

Opportunities for tourism are growing in the Arctic. By establishing guidelines for sustainable tourism and cruise ship operations, the Council will encourage the benefits that tourism will bring to communities, while reducing the risks associated with increased activity.

The Council states will also continue to work together closely to encourage the IMO's efforts to develop a mandatory Polar Code for the Arctic Ocean.

## Sustainable Circumpolar Communities

Canada has a clear vision for the Arctic in which self-reliant individuals live in healthy, vibrant communities, manage their own affairs, and shape their own destinies.

The Arctic Council recognizes and celebrates the importance of traditional ways of life for Northern communities and will work to increase regional and global awareness of these ways of life. The Council has long understood the importance and value of traditional and local knowledge. This knowledge has enabled Arctic residents to survive in the harsh Arctic environment for millennia. The Council will develop recommendations for incorporating traditional and local knowledge into its work.

The Arctic is facing rapid changes in its climate and physical environment, with widespread effects for Northern communities and ecosystems. Short-lived climate pollutants such as black carbon and methane contribute to the Arctic climate change. Addressing short-lived climate pollutants offers the potential for improving health as well as climate benefits as part of a comprehensive strategy to address climate change.

Across the circumpolar region, communities are adapting to these changes. The Council will facilitate the sharing of communities' knowledge and best practices. By promoting mental well-being, the Council will increase the ability of residents to thrive and adapt to the many changes affecting the Arctic. The Council will continue to pursue cooperation among Arctic and non-Arctic states to support the conservation of migratory birds that communities depend upon.

## THE ARCTIC RESILIENCE REPORT

The Arctic Resilience Report (ARR) is an Arctic Council project that analyzes the resilience of these closely coupled social-ecological systems in the Arctic. The ICC drafted a chapter in the interim report on traditional knowledge and is a member of the project steering committee. The following are the key messages from the Arctic Resilience Interim Report.

- The Arctic is subject to major and rapid changes in social and economic systems, ecosystems and environmental processes. These

interact in ways that have profound implications for the well-being of indigenous and non-indigenous peoples.

- A resilience framework provides an integrative approach for assessing linked social and ecological changes across scales, identifying the risk of threshold effects, and building capacity to respond.
- Abrupt changes have been observed in the environment across the Arctic. Such changes risk crossing environmental thresholds, which can have long-term consequences that affect options for future development.
- Arctic change has global effects, with potential impacts on societies, ecosystems and options for development across the world.
- Options for responding to change may be compromised by past decisions and interventions, particularly those that have eroded traditional safeguards of resilience.
- Rapid Arctic change is likely to produce surprises, so strategies for adaptation and, if necessary, transformation, must be responsive, flexible and appropriate for a broad range of conditions.
- Governing in the Arctic will require difficult choices that must grapple with different and sometimes conflicting priorities. The resilience approach helps capture the complex interrelated processes that need to be better understood for effective decision making.
- Participatory processes can more effectively ensure that diverse voices are represented and that all relevant forms of knowledge are included in decisions.

## **THE FUTURE IS BRIGHT – INUIT INTEND TO THRIVE, NOT JUST SURVIVE**

Inuit are open to mutually beneficial collaborations, partnerships, and alliances to address the challenges and to take advantage of the opportunities associated with rapid Arctic change. To this end, there are some unique opportunities. ICC Canada will support the government of Canada during its chairmanship of the Arctic Council, and will host the quadrennial ICC General Assembly in July 2014 in Inuvik, Northwest Territories. The general assembly is an opportunity to write the map going forward for a sustainable Arctic.

## References

Arctic Council. 2013. *Arctic Resilience Interim Report*. Stockholm: Stockholm Environment Institute and Arctic Resilience Center.

## Greenland perspective

Sara Olsvig

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In this perspective, I will develop five main points. First, change is inevitable, resilience is crucial. Second, with rights come responsibilities. Third, resilient local communities forge their resilience on a political level. Fourth, we have shared interests internationally, and thus shared responsibilities. Fifth, increased cross-border research is crucial – also on an east-west axis.

### THE POLITICAL STATUS OF GREENLAND

Let me begin, however, with a brief introduction to the political system of Greenland and the political agreement between Greenland and Denmark. I should point out in this connection that I do not represent the government of Greenland. I am a member of the nation's parliament and hold one of Greenland's two seats in the Danish Parliament. I represent the party Inuit Ataqatigiit, which is in opposition to the current Greenlandic government following the general election in March 2013.

The Inuit and other Peoples and Nations across the Arctic are often organized on the basis of different forms of self-government or home rule within the Arctic nation states. Since the introduction of Home Rule in 1979, Greenland has held a semi-autonomous status within the Realm of Denmark. Greenland has its own 31-member parliament, the Inatsisartut, which is the legislative power, while the government of Greenland, the Naalakkersuisut, is the governing power. The former home rule agreement and current self-government agreement are the results of several years of negotiations with Denmark. The Act on Greenland Self-Government,<sup>1</sup> which entered into force in 2009, gives Greenland authority over all legislative domains except the constitution, nationality, the supreme court, and foreign, security and defense policy as well as the exchange rate and monetary policy.

Under the Act on Greenland Self-Government, the people of Greenland are recognized as a People according to international law; they can call a referendum at any time and choose to become independent of Denmark.

The Act includes a financial agreement between Greenland and

Denmark covering the division of income from resource extraction. Greenland continues to receive a block grant from Denmark until income from resource extraction reaches the same level as the block grant. At that point, renegotiations will take place between the countries.

The Act on Greenland Self-Government sets out a framework, on which there is general political consensus, for the development of Greenland's resource sector. A referendum held in relation to this Act in 2008 resulted in 75% of the electorate saying "yes" to the self-government agreement, thus giving Greenland's government a strong mandate for political development based on provisions contained in the Act.

In my opinion, the strong tradition of diplomatic and pragmatic negotiations between Greenland and Denmark regarding the political construction of the Realm of Denmark (including the Faroe Islands as well as Denmark and Greenland) has ensured a strong political environment in Greenland. Participation and investment in our own political status at a high level has given Greenland political resilience. It is very difficult to imagine that Greenland would not continue to strive for more political independence from Denmark.

## **CHANGE IS INEVITABLE, RESILIENCE IS CRUCIAL**

Whether we speak of climate change or of political change, the peoples of the Arctic are faced with new challenges and opportunities brought about by both external and internal developments. When dealing with these challenges, the continuation and further development of resilient communities must be a key priority across the entire Arctic region. For this reason, education, capacity building and a strong welfare system with free and improved access to health care and schooling, have been key priorities for successive Greenlandic governments in their ambition to build strong societies and generations.

Greenland, an island in the Arctic with an area of more than 2 million square kilometers and a population of only about 57,000, has a constant need for development of infrastructure, means of communication, and mobility. Fish and shrimp remain Greenland's main export commodity. But for many decades, other resources have been explored with the aim of establishing new sources of income. Both the politicians and the public in Greenland realize that there is a need for the development of new industries

in order to maintain our welfare system and, in time, minimize the block grant from Denmark.

In common with many other Inuit nations of the Arctic, Greenland went through a colonial period that generated a wide range of post-colonial issues. As with other Inuit, high suicide rates and social problems are still part of the everyday lives of far too many families and communities along the coast of Greenland. We have been successful in maintaining a welfare system similar to the systems in Denmark and other Nordic countries during our Home Rule era, and we have been successful also in expanding our educational system and level of education. But we still struggle with high social and economic inequality.

Post-colonialism, identity, power and language are always underlying issues in Greenland's political debates. But they have reemerged in recent years, especially in the run-up to the latest general election in March 2013. The rhetoric used during the election campaigns revealed that Greenland as a society has not succeeded in making sure that identity and social and cultural conditions reflect the political self-determination Greenland has achieved. Unfortunately, this has brought with it a new movement with underlying anger and discriminatory outbreaks toward all that can be related to the former colonial power, making real reconciliation hard to achieve. In my opinion, an internal process within the country to define the identity of Greenlanders in the cultural and ethnic melting pot Greenland has become must be the first step forward.

This phenomenon is not unique to Greenland. Many indigenous peoples around the world struggle with parallel social and cultural challenges resulting from colonization followed by tremendous societal and cultural changes. The resilience we see in Greenland's politics is thus a strong resilience that evolved in order for us to survive as a nation and as people. If we are to truly create resilient communities and secure our own identity and culture, we must continue along this path. But at the same time, we must find ways to build bridges between the post-colonial era and the present, between the political achievements of our predecessors and the aspirations of our youth.

If we are to meet these challenges, I believe there is a need for a strong democratic system and a high level of democratic awareness. Transparency and a high level of trust in the governing bodies and politicians are crucial if we are to maintain and expand our self-reliance. There is a need for strong democratic processes to forge citizen participation in all processes of

decision making. This includes decisions regarding resource development projects and principles, industrial development, and agreements with businesses and international actors.

Change is inevitable and resilience is crucial. Resilience must be understood and built holistically. Opportunities for industrial development must be grasped; we must strive to build strong Arctic economies. But these economies must be based on local capacities and on strong partnerships between local communities, governments, and foreign investors and businesses. Here, all actors have responsibilities. The international community led by the UN increasingly defines these responsibilities in the form of new developments within human rights and businesses,<sup>2</sup> principles of corporate social responsibility and guidelines for businesses,<sup>3</sup> and clarifications of states' responsibility to protect and businesses' responsibility to respect, as in the "UN Protect, Respect and Remedy" Framework.<sup>4</sup>

## **THE FUTURE OF THE ARCTIC MUST BE DETERMINED BY THE PEOPLES OF THE ARCTIC**

For decades, the global community has had its eye on the Arctic. Recently, climate change has been the main issue, giving rise to new challenges and opportunities that will inevitably change the Arctic as a region as well as Arctic peoples and nations.

The most important point in this respect is that the future of the Arctic must be determined by the peoples of the Arctic. With this comes a duty to develop the Arctic responsibly. Here, a human rights approach is fundamental. The right to self-determination is a key provision of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).<sup>5</sup> Under that right, the Inuit have the right to freely and collectively determine political, social, economic and cultural developments. This right was recently confirmed in the Alta Outcome Document,<sup>6</sup> which was agreed upon by the indigenous peoples from all regions of the world at the Alta Conference in June 2013. The Alta Outcome Document is the preparatory document for indigenous peoples for presentation at the UN High-Level Plenary Meeting, also known as the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples, to be held in September 2014. In the Alta Outcome Document, indigenous peoples state that: "We affirm that the inherent and inalienable right of

self-determination is preeminent and is a prerequisite for the realization of all rights. We Indigenous Peoples, have the right of self-determination and permanent sovereignty over our lands, territories, resources, air, ice, oceans and waters, mountains and forests.”

In the Inuit Circumpolar Council’s “Declaration on Resource Development Principles”<sup>7</sup> it is noted that “Our rights as indigenous peoples, including our right to self-determination, may be exercised in a practical way through governance structures that combine both Inuit and non-Inuit constituents. No matter what level or form of self-determination the Inuit of any particular region have achieved, resource development in Inuit Nunaat must proceed only with the free, prior, and informed consent of the Inuit of that region.” This not only reaffirms the right to self-determination, but also points out that one of the core rights of indigenous peoples, enshrined in the UNDRIP, is the right of giving free, prior, and informed consent. This is a process right under which the chronology of free information prior to decision making is a core element. It is also a right of self-determination, giving indigenous peoples the right to be the decision makers in respect to the development of their lands, territories and resources.

The rights and principles are clear; the more difficult part is their implementation. In self-governing nations such as Greenland, we continuously work to improve our legislation to ensure that we have legislative frame works that meet human rights principles and that the public has free access to information and participation in decision making. It is not easy. Neither is it easy to keep abreast of the constant new challenges in finding optimum solutions for developing new industries and economic growth, where foreign investors are welcomed in a manner that protects our own interests, while industry and investors are provided with an incentive to choose our country and our resources.

Arctic peoples have over the decades participated actively in the development and promotion of indigenous peoples’ rights. Governing ourselves should be based on the same principles we expect others to follow.

## **SHARED INTERNATIONAL INTERESTS – SHARED INTERNATIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES**

As non-state actors, the Inuit peoples of the Arctic often face complex

situations in regard to taking part in the international community's Arctic activities.

The main Arctic governmental forum is the Arctic Council. Here, the eight Arctic member states are the voting members, while six indigenous peoples' organizations participate at all levels of the Council as Permanent Participants. But as we have seen recently, the Arctic Council is expanding internationally, allowing more observer states access to its core work on the one hand, while on the other hand, limiting the participation of small Arctic nations, such as Greenland. During the Swedish chairmanship, running from 2011 to the ministerial meeting held in Kiruna, Sweden in May 2013, Greenland's officials experienced a new reluctance to include Greenland as a self-governing country at the negotiating table. This resulted in the government of Greenland protesting against this new exclusive character. Greenland decided to boycott the ministerial meeting in Kiruna. The boycott extended to putting on hold all of Greenland's participation in the council's working groups, task forces and other activities. Greenland, with Denmark by its side, then negotiated with the new chairmanship to find a solution to this issue. The Danish Prime Minister has stated that Greenland, the Faroe Islands and Denmark must participate in the Arctic Council on an equal footing. But the question is whether this will be accepted by the rest of the Council's member states, as the Greenland/Faroe Islands/Denmark construction is not the only multi-player construction within one state in the Arctic.

In August 2013, a solution emerged. Greenland decided to take part once again in the Council's work. The Canadian chairmanship issued a letter to the heads of delegations of the Arctic Council stating that the form and participation of meetings of the Senior Arctic Officials would remain the same, while on a more symbolic account only state flags and state names would be visible at council meetings.

In my opinion, this solution has not solved the problem. The issue was and still is delicate. The Arctic Council must consider the role of the Arctic's self-governing nations. Self-government is here to stay, and the Council can only benefit from being inclusive of the peoples and nations that reside in the Arctic and call it home.

Another point fundamental to Arctic governance issues is that all eight Arctic states are governed from capitals located south of the Arctic. In the case of Greenland, we have our own capital, Nuuk, and our own government and parliament, though as previously mentioned areas such

as foreign policy, security and defense are still Danish responsibilities. This does not mean that Greenland does not “do” foreign policy. De facto, Greenland does engage in foreign policy, defense and security issues and will do so increasingly as we continue to implement the Act on Greenland Self-Government and develop existing and new industries with foreign policy and security policy implications. One example involves negotiations concerning fish and shrimp with international players in the export of these resources. Also, subsurface resources and large scale industry development require negotiations concerning international agreements in which Greenland wishes to participate. Such negotiations naturally will have foreign policy, defense and security implications.

A more recent example is the decision of the Greenland Parliament on October 24, 2013 to lift the 25-year-old zero-tolerance ban on mining and export of uranium and other radioactive minerals. I am among those who were against lifting the zero-tolerance policy, and I have strongly opposed the government of Greenland’s lack of public hearings and citizen participation in the decision-making process. The issue resulted in large demonstrations against uranium mining, some say the largest demonstrations in three decades. If we are to build a strong democratic nation, a national referendum would have been the right way to do it. But the government chose otherwise, using the majority they held in parliament where the vote ended 15 for and 14 against.

Thus, Greenland is now officially a pro-uranium mining and export country. Further work on the security and defense policy implications of this decision now will be evaluated by both the Danish state and Greenland’s government. The two governments have announced that they will agree to disagree on how the responsibilities around Greenland’s possible uranium mining are to be divided between Greenland and Denmark. In practice, both governments will have to find ways to collaborate, as the international society will need clear answers regarding which administration is responsible for the management of uranium mining and exports. Many questions remain unanswered.

As a member of both Greenland’s Parliament and the Parliament of Denmark, it is clear to me that under the new self-government agreements, the internal administrative and bureaucratic structures within the state must also be revised along with the self-governing nation’s relations to international forums, where the state is traditionally the main member and actor.

If we are to reach a point where Greenland, for example, represents the state fully in a forum such as the Arctic Council, internal capacity building must take place. And Greenland, as a nation, must be fully capable of participating in the practices of international high-level forums. In other words, the responsibility for recognizing and facilitating our rights to self-determination and self-representation is as much ours as it is that of other sovereign nations and the global community.

## COMMUNITY RESILIENCE FORGES POLITICAL RESILIENCE

I strongly agree with the Center for Northern Studies' five main characteristics of the Arctic communities' ability to build and maintain resilience, as highlighted by Duane Smith. In this section, I will add perspectives based on the five characteristics presented and describe examples of the interplay between these characteristics and the international agenda:

1. "Flexibility and adaptability." This must include international experience and ability to access and participate in international forums. As non-states, many indigenous peoples' nations struggle to be part of the international community, especially in member state organizations and forums. The Arctic Council is a good example of how indigenous peoples have maintained and developed participation in the role of Permanent Participants. However, it must be remembered that the Permanent Participants do not participate on a full and equal basis with the member states. Their participation is effective because they have built diplomatic skills and know the international agenda.
2. "Ability to quickly and effectively harness local resources and expertise." In order to make sure that local expertise and resources provide economic benefits for local communities, the communities themselves must ensure that there are solid agreements with the recipients of these resources. In Greenland, living and non-living resources are primarily exploited with the aim of commercial use, either locally (e.g., whale meat and other forms of wild meat) or for export (e.g., primarily fish, shrimp and, in the future, possibly

also minerals and oil and gas). They, thereby, contribute to strongly needed economic development. Subsistence hunting is still part of our culture, but our hunters and fishermen also need to make a living from their way of life. Thus, the economic success of sealing, whaling and fisheries is completely dependent on the ability of our local communities to work with international export mechanisms,<sup>8</sup> and international sustainability agreements and conventions. This forges a high level of knowledge of international systems, not just at the political level, but all the way through the system to the individual hunter or fisherman. An example of how this can also raise complex international issues is the case of the International Whaling Commission (IWC) whose unwillingness to adopt a new whaling quota for Greenland has resulted in Greenland deciding on its own quota. The surrounding international community, including Denmark, sees this as demonstrating a lack of respect for the convention, although the quota Greenland applied for by Greenland is in accordance with the recommendation of the IWC's own Scientific Committee. Greenland and Denmark are now openly debating whether to leave the IWC.<sup>9</sup>

3. "Local ownership over preparation, planning, and response when faced with a threat or incident." In addition to this, the development of an open Arctic with cross-border access to cooperation when an accident happens is crucial. The Arctic Council's new legally binding agreements on search and rescue and oil spill preparation and response are steps in the right direction, but we need to make these agreements stronger in order for them to work in practice when an incident occurs. It is not just large incidents that are difficult to manage without international cooperation; smaller incidents such as search and rescue operations and environmental accidents will often require responses from neighboring countries.
4. "Ability to access and draw upon local knowledge." One challenge is to link local knowledge to conventional science regimes. Here I strongly agree with Smith's comments on traditional knowledge and cultural strength. In order to fully implement local and traditional knowledge in management regimes, we need to make sure that scientists grasp such knowledge and develop ways to integrate it into their scientific research. Communication and capacity building go both ways, and all sides must make an effort to accommodate each

other's perspectives and limitations. Community-based management systems are good examples of how to improve integration between local and traditional knowledge and conventional scientific methods. In order to expand fully the interplay between local and traditional knowledge and conventional science, cross border-cooperation is needed. Far too often we see cooperation only going north-south. The Arctic must also learn east-west cooperation.

5. "Existence of trust and cooperation between public and private sector actors and community members." Strong, transparent and inclusive democratic processes are crucial. Both foreign states and businesses that engage with local communities must include a human rights perspective in their activities. Arctic states in general also must have a human rights approach to the development of the Arctic. This is crucial in ensuring that trust, anti-corruption and transparency are all both established and maintained. This can only be achieved with openness and dialogue and by being informed of international and national rules, principles and guidelines as they evolve.

## **INCREASED CROSS-BOUNDARY RESEARCH IS CRUCIAL – ALSO GOING EAST-WEST**

A final issue I would like to raise in this commentary is the need for increased research and, in particular, research that is not limited by national boundaries. Research and fact-based knowledge must be core elements in the decision-making processes. Free access to knowledge both for policy makers and for members of the public is vital in building democratic processes.

One challenge that governments, businesses and international forums must face is that of sharing knowledge in a transparent and open manner. Here, researchers play a key role as knowledge holders and disseminators. The interplay among researchers, authorities, and residents of the Arctic must be increased.

Arctic research collaboration has a tendency to go from north to south. We must increase research collaboration and research forums that cross east-west borders. Arctic residents know the Arctic, and we must do better at sharing this knowledge amongst ourselves.

As Smith also observes, there is great potential to enhance capacity

building, education, and skills training in the Arctic as industrial and economic development emerges. For so many decades the Arctic has been the research field of outside researchers; the focus must now be on building strong research communities in the Arctic. For the Arctic peoples to benefit from research conducted in the Arctic, this research must be anchored locally, and both local communities and researchers must be involved.

As Smith notes, the recent International Polar Year is a good example of how the Inuit can play an active role in designing research projects. This kind of openness from the research community in involving the Inuit, in addition to the inclusion of local and traditional knowledge, is crucial.

Some have suggested initiating an International Polar Decade or an ongoing International Polar Initiative to follow up on the International Polar Years.<sup>10</sup> I strongly support this idea. The continuation of a focused international polar research collaboration would be a way to continue the initiatives of an International Polar Year and to provide an ongoing forum for Arctic peoples and researchers to exhibit the Arctic research, integrate local and traditional knowledge into the efforts of the research community, and develop a more mobile and cross-border Arctic research community.

Much research has yet to be conducted. Climate change and opportunities for resource development have attracted large numbers of researchers to the North. Future research objectives should include an increased emphasis on the social sciences, social and cultural development in the Arctic, and, not least, health, including mental health. What happens to the small communities and their peoples as increasing numbers of large-scale industrial projects are established in the Arctic? What happens as large numbers of foreign workers take residence near or in small Arctic communities? What are the cultural and social impacts of the diversification of industries and economic foundations? All these developments must be monitored and researched.

It is the ability to be socially, culturally and politically resilient that will determine the future of Arctic nations and communities.

## SUMMARY

To sum up, change in the Arctic is inevitable and will impact local communities in a range of ways. With changes come the responsibilities to protect the environment and nature and to protect and develop the

societies of the Arctic. Resilience in all its aspects is therefore crucial. It is also crucial that the Arctic nations and peoples know their position in the international community so that they can participate, raise their voices and engage in international activities at all levels. At the same time, the international community must recognize the rights of self-governing nations and indigenous peoples. We have shared interests and thus shared responsibilities. The political changes occurring in the Arctic bring with them new challenges for the research sector; the interplay among researchers, authorities, and Arctic peoples are crucial.

### Note

1. The Act on Greenland Self-Government. [http://www.stm.dk/\\_p\\_13090.html](http://www.stm.dk/_p_13090.html)
2. See the UN Working Group on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Business/Pages/WGHRandtransnationalcorporationsandotherbusiness.aspx>
3. See the UN Global Compact: <http://www.unglobalcompact.org/> and the guidelines for businesses on the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: [http://www.unglobalcompact.org/docs/issues\\_doc/human\\_rights/UNDRIP\\_Business\\_Reference\\_Guide.pdf](http://www.unglobalcompact.org/docs/issues_doc/human_rights/UNDRIP_Business_Reference_Guide.pdf)
4. See the work of the UN Special Representative on Business and Human Rights: <http://www.business-humanrights.org/SpecialRepPortal/Home>
5. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007). [http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS\\_en.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf)
6. See the Alta Outcome Document (2013): <http://wcip2014.org/1530>
7. Inuit Circumpolar Council: A Circumpolar Inuit Declaration on Resource Development Principles in Inuit Nunaat (2011). [http://inuitcircumpolar.com/files/uploads/icc-files/Declaration\\_on\\_Resource\\_Development\\_A3\\_FINAL.pdf](http://inuitcircumpolar.com/files/uploads/icc-files/Declaration_on_Resource_Development_A3_FINAL.pdf)
8. An example here is the case of the EU seal product ban and its “Inuit exemption,” which allows only the Inuit to export seal products to Europe. In Greenland, the political system has decided to abide by this exemption and has developed a labeling system that lives up to the EU resolution. Other Inuit have another approach to the issue and lately, Canadian Inuit have demonstrated their opposition to the seal product ban with the “No Seal, No Deal” campaign.
9. My opinion on this case is that the IWC has become more of an anti-whaling commission than an actual whaling commission. In the case of the Greenland quota, the IWC is clearly acting in a non-pragmatic way, making decisions that

are not based in fact. The question is whether this would have happened if the subject was not whales, but pigs. For me, the whole case is an expression of cultural imperialism, where indigenous peoples' right to develop and live from their own resources is unfortunately not taken into account.

10. See the conference statement of the Conference of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region (2012): <http://www.arcticparl.org/files/conference-statement%2C-final-draft1-2.pdf>