

FROM CO-MANAGEMENT TO COLLABORATIVE SOVEREIGNTY: THE INUIT, THE STATE AND THE FATE OF THE ARCTIC

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****THIS VERSION IS A DRAFT, NOT THE FINAL VERSION****

INTRODUCTION

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While this rapid mobilization would create many stresses and strains on the long-isolated native population, including the painful odyssey of the remaining Aleut population as it was relocated outside the war zone to camps in Alaska's southeast, the wartime experience would also help bring the two peoples closer together—most evident in

Ideas and institutions for reconciling the interests of indigenous northerners and the modern state have evolved, following, primarily along a west-to-east arc across the north, becoming stronger with each new iteration and reversing many of the negative consequences of what's now officially remembered as a quasi-colonial experience, and transforming the domestic balance of power to heavily favor the very tribal interests that have claimed to be marginalized from power, particularly with regard to managing social, environmental, and economic matters. This increasing shift in power from state to tribe and from center to periphery has increased the capacity for the indigenous peoples of the north to confront the many social and economic challenges that remain in their communities, providing the tools necessary to face these broad social and economic challenges, to innovate new opportunities, and to grapple with the complex challenges (as well as potential opportunities) associated with climate change and a potential Arctic thaw.

ALASKA NATIVE CLAIMS: STARTING THE PROCESS

When the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971 (or ANCSA) was enacted, it aimed to quickly bring Alaska natives into the modern economy, and at the same time to clarify the limits of aboriginal title, making it possible to fully develop the state's natural resources and in particular to build the trans-Alaska pipeline. Because its objectives were largely economic, its corporate model became its defining and most transformative characteristic – not without controversy, since the corporate model was viewed with some skepticism by indigenous leaders as a tool of assimilation, and there remains a continuing debate over the appropriateness of the corporate model to the indigenous north. ANCSA formally extinguished aboriginal rights, title, and claims to traditional lands in the state, while formally transferring fee-simple title to 44 million acres – or some twelve percent of the state's land base – to Alaska natives, with \$962.5 million in compensation for the lands ceded to the state, \$500 million of which was to be derived from future oil royalties (as a result of which over half the “compensation” was to be derived from resources extracted from the Inupiat homeland – an irony not missed by Alaska natives.) ANCSA also created 12 regional native corporations (and later a 13th for non-resident Alaska natives), and over 200 village corporations to manage these lands and financial resources. These new corporate structures introduced a brand new language and culture, as well as a new system of managing lands and resources that seemed at variance with the traditional cultures of the region and their traditional subsistence economy. The early years of ANCSA were

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Canada's land mass, including the high Arctic islands and the central-Arctic coastal mainland. While its population is tiny, its jurisdiction is vast and its resource base potentially tremendous, and the sea lanes that cross through the territory include the famed Northwest Passage.

The most striking innovation of the Nunavut claim was the way it was formally linked to the division of the Northwest Territories and the formation of a brand new territory, resulting in the 1999 birth of Nunavut. Nunavut has now been up and running for a decade, gaining valuable but often painful experience in self-governance – and thus showing many strains as it struggles to confront some daunting social and economic challenges in one of the most challenging geophysical environments imaginable. There have also been intergovernmental frictions with Ottawa over implementation, and a growing perception of a crisis in Canada's youngest territory. But there is still much reason for hope for the future; the roots of the problems facing Nunavut go deep and are not likely to be quickly overcome, but the solutions developed can now be northern solutions, rooted in a deep understanding of northern social realities. Since its population is predominantly Inuit, a

stakeholders, partners in the consolidation of state sovereignty, and in the economic development of the northern frontier. A comparable situation exists in the post-Ottoman Middle East, with extended tribal families and clans sitting at a powerful and lucrative nexus of land ownership, natural resource wealth, and political power. While northern natives in Arctic North America are not in command of the ultimate levers of sovereign state power, such as military forces or national treasuries, they do have in their possession or within reach many tools of regional power, making them dominant regional elites. As the climate warms and the Arctic basin yields more natural resource wealth, the economic resources in their possession will also increase, and with that political influence.

In November 2008, Greenland held its historic but non-binding referendum on increasing the island's autonomy and eventually restoring its sovereign independence, which was approved decisively, showing how the desire to be self-governing is universal across the Arctic.² Denmark has shown a unique openness to the possibility of Greenland becoming formally independent (in contrast to the other Arctic states which attach great economic, strategic and emotional/ideological significance to their Arctic territories) – and if independence happens, it would mark perhaps the final stage in the process that began with ANCSA nearly half a century ago, with the full restoration of sovereignty to an Arctic nation. Other micro-states are sovereign (even if unable to defend that sovereignty) – from the South Pacific to the city-states of Europe and potentially to Scotland in the coming months, and soon after perhaps Catalonia. So why not in the Arctic? What a sovereign Arctic state will look like, how it affirms traditional native values, and balances modernization with tradition, will be fascinating to observe. The risks are real; Iceland's economic collapse, Nunavut's persistent social challenges, and the near-collapse of Alaska's native corporations, are all cautionary tales to consider. With increased attention to climate-related changes facing the north – both the challenges to infrastructure and cultural preservation as well as the opportunities inherent in the opening up of new areas to exploration, transportation and development – has encouraged policymakers north

INUIT NARRATIVES ON ABORIGINAL OCCUPANCY AND HISTORICAL FACT

Perceiving a continuing tendency by the Arctic rim states to ignore the indigenous peoples of the far north, in 2009 the Inuit Circumpolar Council released its Circumpolar Inuit Declaration on Arctic Sovereignty which updated and clarified Inuit policy on sovereignty for contemporary times, responding not only to the new pressures of a changing climate but to what they felt was their continued diplomatic exclusion from Arctic security and diplomatic affairs, as experienced at Ilulissat the year before and which continues to hold back the achievements of the Arctic Council by excluding defense and security affairs from its mandate. The Inuit have long been denied a seat at the table when it comes to issues of hard power, namely military, strategic, and related diplomatic affairs which have long been viewed and continue to be defined as affairs of state. The Inuit nonetheless aspire to shape policies in the far north that affect issues relating to military, security, and diplomatic issues, and during the Cold War endeavored to denuclearize the Arctic basin and to help unify east and west through northern displays of collaboration and cooperation years before Soviet Premier Gorbachev adopted such an approach as state policy in a bid to end the cold war on favorable terms.

The 2009 Circumpolar Inuit Declaration emerged from the first Inuit Leaders' Summit held on November 6–7, 2008, in Kuujuaq, Nunavik, in Northern Quebec, where they “gathered to address Arctic sovereignty” and “expressed unity in our concerns over Arctic sovereignty deliberations, examined the options for addressing these concerns, and strongly committed to developing a formal declaration on Arctic sovereignty.” In Kuujuaq, the Inuit leadership had noted with disappointment that the “2008 Ilulissat declaration on Arctic sovereignty by ministers representing the five coastal Arctic states did not go far enough in affirming the rights Inuit have gained through international law, land claims and self-government processes.” In many ways, their declaration was a direct response to the foreign ministers of the Arctic rim states for the exclusion of the Inuit at Ilulissat, and it counters this exclusion with a strong argument for a central Inuit role in determining the fate of the Arctic.

As the ICC observed at this start of their effort in November 2008: “Sovereignty is a complex issue. It has a variety of overlapping elements, anchored in international law. But fundamentally it begins with the history and reality of Inuit use and occupation of Arctic lands and waters; that use and occupation is at the heart of any informed discussion of sovereignty in the Arctic. Arctic nation states must respect

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the rights and roles of Inuit in all international discussions and commitments dealing with the Arctic.”

But if we look with a detached critical awareness at what the ICC has long described as “the history and reality of Inuit use and occupation of Arctic lands and waters,” we quickly begin to encounter some problems of historical veracity that question not only the foundation of Inuit land claims in Arctic Canada, but of Canadian sovereignty over those lands. So while the institutional map within the Arctic has grown into a complex mosaic of joint- and self-governing structures, empowering and enriching the Inuit, the gap between a the dominant narrative on Inuit aboriginality and historical reality should not be overlooked, particularly as global strategic interest in the Arctic rise to new heights with the polar thaw. But these issues have been largely ignored, in part because the state (primarily the Government of Canada, but to a lesser degree the Government of the United States) has allied itself with the Inuit in a joint effort to mutually recognize one another’s sovereign claims, with the Arctic states of North America gaining credibility in world politics with regard to their northern territorial frontiers which remain lightly settled (and in some places, unsettled) while the Inuit have received the many benefits described above including large blocks of land in addition to cash compensation for the extinguishment of aboriginal rights and title to lands ceded to the state. The land swap that has defined a half century of Arctic history has been mutually beneficial despite the political rhetoric to the contrary. But has it corresponded with historical truth?

Some forty years ago, a team of anthropologists helped to lay the foundation for Inuit land claims in Arctic Canada, mapping traditional Inuit land use and helping to demarcate the “traditional” boundaries that would solidify into the Inuit and Inuvialuit land settlements in the 1980s and 1990s. Like today’s human-terrain mapping teams operating in foreign conflict zones, this small group of hardy anthropologists with a deep love for the north and a sincere appreciation of Inuit culture was without a doubt well-meaning. And, their work proved to be highly valuable to the Inuit who hired them in pursuit of their historic land claims settlement. But it remains to be seen whether their contribution to historical truth and justice measures up to their well-meaning intentions. A close look at their seminal *Inuit Land Use and Occupancy Project Report* reveals numerous methodological and historical issues, and suggests that the foundation for the entire Inuit land claims movement could be based upon historically invalid assumptions supported only by hearsay evidence provided by partisan participants in a highly politicized and inherently political process. Nonetheless, the effort of this team of adventurous anthropologists was noteworthy for the boldness of its

effort, and the determined courage of its authors. The strength of their commitment to the wellbeing of the Inuit reveals no absence of compassion, and it cannot be said that they were uncaring in their approach to the challenge of mapping Inuit land use. But the problem with their work, and their legacy, is that other peoples used those very same lands, but these *other* natives were not paying their salaries, so as a result they were largely (but not entirely) left out their report.

A few of the report's many contributors, notably Peter Usher who authored the portion of the report on the Western Arctic, and Robert McGhee, who contributed a chapter excerpted from his 1974 book, *Beluga Hunters: An Archaeological Reconstruction of the History and Culture of the Mackenzie Delta Kittegaryumiut*, did not shirk their historical obligation to tell the "whole truth" and did indeed mention the important place of the Athabaskan peoples of the Western Arctic in their discussions, though Usher's discussion was somewhat contradictory. But on the whole, the report itself became a foundational document verifying the claims of the Inuit to the coastal lands of the Canadian Arctic, claims that resulted in billions of dollars in compensation and millions of acres of land title in addition to vast subsurface rights, notable regulatory powers, and economic benefits. So while the dual use by the Gwich'in peoples of the Mackenzie Delta and North Yukon was mentioned briefly in the report's pages, the contradiction between the historical record and the ambitious claims by the Inuit was never properly resolved. Because these anthropologist-certified boundaries soon became constitutionally entrenched in law, bringing tremendous political and economic gain to the Inuit organization that hired them and the individual Inuit land claim activists who became political and economic leaders in the post-settlement era, one should not be surprised that a close look at the original *Inuit Land Use and Occupancy Project Report* reveals evidence of numerous conflicts of interest (i)-2 (t)3y e

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ownership including unrestricted subsistence rights and preferentially exclusive economic benefits from lands that were historically not exclusively their own, lands which are home to some of the richest oil and gas reserves in Canada – a source of tremendous future wealth that will now be denied to the Athabaskan peoples of the Delta. And yet for many of these so-called “Inuvialuit,” these were lands they had only settled since the early 20th century, moving from their traditional home communities in Alaska to the rich hunting and trapping lands abandoned by the Kittigazuit Eskimos after a measles epidemic nearly wiped them out early in the century, as recounted by Robert McGhee in his chapter 310.0069(r 3ly Robert 00913 Twu (as)6 (le 2the ch)1 (e Kit(r)40011 Tf 7102 0 0c 0.1211

those from Bering Strait have ordinarily come as whalers or servants on board. The net result is that the Mackenzie Population is becoming mixed in blood, is already deeply influenced in its culture, and has taken up many strange words into the spoken language." McGhee thus concludes that "Aboriginal Mackenzie Eskimo culture could probably be considered to have become extinct between 1900 and 1910."⁴ Thus the very underpinnings of the Inuit land claims narrative – which led to the remapping of northern Canada, the transfer of substantial sums (measured in the hundreds of millions of dollars) to just a few thousand Inuit, the transfer of land title to millions of acres of resource-rich lands, and numerous institutional structures and co-management mechanisms that favor Inuit economic participation on the coastal territories over the participation of the region's other native (and potentially more legitimately *taudulpot, especi the cly dev* ~~for the~~ ~~1607c 000 Tw 0 r~~ ~~psfer of lanion of t~~ ~~(reat~~ ~~Tw 428~~ ~~Dnl~~ ~~8a s~~

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newest immigrants who had called Alaska home just a few decades earlier. Just four days after being appointed chairman of the Citizen's Forum on Canada's Future, Spicer headed to Inuvik and Tuktoyaktuk to launch his effort to reconcile Canada's fractious populace, whether divided along native/non-native or English/French lines, addressing those he called the "first Canadians." As he explained, "My going to Tuktoyaktuk after four days on the job is not an accident. . . . I want to go back to where it all began, to begin with a community that is intimate with this." His visit was meant to be "an attitude changing gesture to get all Canada" to think about its beginnings, not its present differences: "I

by virtue of their exclusion from Usher's survey (or at least their subordination to a presumptive Inuit traditional use of their shared lands) exclude the same strip of resource-rich coastal lands the Inuit would claim, and which they would gain through conclusion of their land settlement with the Canadian government.

In the same discussion of the shift in the caribou hunting range toward the coast, Usher explains the shift is "largely because in the early 1900's, before the widespread ownership of whale boats and schooners, many people, especially those of Alaskan origin, spent most of the summer on the high ground inland, where travel by foot and pack dog was easier, caribou more plentiful, and mosquitoes fewer. They moved with the caribou and had no permanent summer camps," a hunting pattern that would describe the Gwich'in caribou hunters as well. Usher thus suggests that not only did the Inuit and the Gwich'in peoples cohabit the same high ground, and share the same caribou resource, but that a significant number of Inuit in this region were Alaskans, or recently descendants of Alaskans. The region's documented history tells of a dramatic immigration of Inuit from Alaska during the whaling era, many who moved to the rich ridding lands of the Delta and bountiful whaling camps along the coast after the Kittigazuit Eskimos were annihilated by disease, including the devastating measles epidemics at the start of the 20th century.

Indeed, the traditional Mackenzie Inuit population nearly died out from exposure to westerners' diseases, and was described by Robert McGhee as becoming culturally extinct early in this century. McGhee describes the original Mackenzie Eskimo subgroups, which included the Kigirktarugmiut, Kupugmiut, Kittegaryumiut, Nuvorugmiut, and Avvagmiut, and notes there was both a trading relationship with the neighboring Athabaskan peoples as well as a history of conflict between them, and that the Gwich'in at the time of European contact "were in frequent but wary contact with the Eskimos of the East Channel area," and that a "good deal of trade took place between these groups before 1852 when the Eskimos began to visit Peel's River Post, but that several instances of fighting in connection with this trade have been noted."⁷ He cites the 1853 observations of Hooper who "states that the Mackenzie River Eskimos... traded with the 'Mackenzie River Loucheux' (probably the poorly known Nakotcho Kutchin) but were probably at 'war to the knife' with the Peel River Loucheux (the Vunta Kutchin or Rat Indians who had trade relations with the Kigirktarugmiut at Barter Island.) After the Eskimos began to trade at Peel River's Post, there was

7. Milton Freeman, ed., *Supporting Studies, Vol. 2 of Inuit Land Use and Occupancy Project Report* (Ottawa, ON: Supply and Services Canada, 1976), 148.

some intermarriage with Indians, and at least one Vunta Kutchin lived at Kittigaruit during the late 19th century.”

Thus the cultural history of the Mackenzie Delta region was far richer than many now will admit, owing to the recent reification of the land claims boundaries into a fixed and inviolable territorial boundary, and in fact the land was dually shared by both the Inuit and Gwich'in peoples. This dual use would seem to suggest that the Gwich'in have an equal historical claim to the lands and resources of this region; that the Gwich'in might be more *legitimately* indigenous to Canada in their ancestry given the cultural extinction of the Mackenzie Eskimos that preceded the arrival of the Ummarmiut into the Delta, and thus most Inuit of the Mackenzie Delta region are by comparison relative newcomers whose claim of traditional land use since “time immemorial” is a complete historical fabrication. As Usher observed: “With the introduction of larger boats, people were bound more closely to the coast, and emphasis on whaling and fishing increased. Summer caribou hunting then tended to be restricted to walking distance from the coast. In more recent times, caribou hunting has shifted mainly to the Richardson Mountains, north, west, and south of Aklavik in fall, winter and spring, and to the Coal Mine and Shingle Point areas in the summer. The Malcom and Firth River valleys are still important to a smaller number of people, who occasionally stay at Herschel Island.” But with Aklavik as home community to both Gwich'in and Inuit residents, it is logical to conclude that both groups would share the same hunting resources, and thereby demonstrate similar land use patterns – even though Usher and his colleagues, by virtue of their preparation of an “Inuit” Land Use and Occupancy report, systematically under-emphasized the rightful Gwich'in claims to the same lands, and thus overstated the case for exclusive traditional use by Inuit. So while Usher does acknowledge Gwich'in use of these lands, and while his analysis can also be applied to the Gwich'in hunters of the region, the emphasis of his “findings” along with his fellow contributors to the report would come to disproportionately benefit the Inuit.

This systemic bias in favor of Inuit traditional use at the expense of other indigenous peoples from the same region, is reinforced by the

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anthropologists who did not practice unbiased scientific field research but instead were paid participants in a political process whose end goal was to maximize the claims of the Inuit to strengthen their negotiating position. Ironically, the federal government accepted their “findings” at face value, proof of the fallibility of anthropology when it ceases to be properly scientific and unbiased, and becomes part of a political process. In the report’s preface on page 19, this ethical murkiness is further acknowledged: “In February 1973 Inuit Tapirisat of Canada proposed to the Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs that research be undertaken to produce a comprehensive and verifiable record of Inuit land use and occupancy in the Northwest Territories of Canada,” and the “record so obtained would delimit the present and past use and occupation of the land and marine environment and would categorize the uses which any particular area served. In view of the continuing role which land plays in defining the cultural and ecologic circumstances of Inuit society, the research was also to provide an explicit statement – *by the Inuit* – of their perception of the man-land relationship.”⁸ At least the perceptual nature of these observations is acknowledged, but through the subsequent processes of land claims negotiation, formalization, and implementation, perception would become fact, and these facts as defined in land ownership boundaries and exclusive benefits for the land claims beneficiaries, would not necessarily correspond with historical truth. The preface further acknowledges that “with the exception of the short settlement histories presented for each contemporary community, virtually all textual material was derived from fieldworkers’ discussions with Inuit informants. By thus restricting the material presented to that derived directly from recent fieldwork, we have attempted to meet our objective of setting down the Inuit view relating to land use and occupation.”⁹ And yet while this is freely admitted, the land use “findings” took an tremendous momentum, gaining weight as accepted land use history and thus contributing to the formalization, and reification, of these “perceptions” into law, causing much harm to the Athabaskan peoples who long shared these same lands and in the case of the western Arctic region, may well have used these lands for a longer continuous period, as many Inuit were newcomers to the region, many families actual shareholders in the Alaska Native Land Claims corporations.

But contradicting the admission of the perceptual nature of the

8. Milton Freeman, ed., *Land Use and Occupancy, Vol. 1 of Inuit Land Use and Occupancy Project Report* (Ottawa, ON: Supply and Services Canada, 1976), 19.

9. Milton Freeman, ed., *Land Use and Occupancy, Vol. 1 of Inuit Land Use and Occupancy Project Report* (Ottawa, ON: Supply and Services Canada, 1976), 19.

report's "findings" and the obvious political ties of participants to the political process, revealing a long-term conflict of interest in that fieldworkers, translators and interviewers would benefit both economically and politically from the report's outcome, the authors note in the end of their preface that the "main determinant of the final form of this report" has "necessarily been consideration of balance in trying to describe accurately the voluminous documentation now available describing the different Inuit groups occupying and using the approximately 1.5 million square miles of northern Canada that constitute their domain."¹⁰ It does not appear credible that an accurate description can be the goal of a project that is riddled with so many ethical gray areas, most notably the political nature of the report itself and the financial interests the unite researchers with the Inuit political organization funding their research; there is no possible expectation that the research would challenge the political interests of the report's primary funders, even though it is clear Usher sought to sprinkle elements of the truth into his report, noting Gwich'in n dual use of the same lands, their shared hunting of caribou and even the white whale, and their mutual perception of their lands being *native* lands and not specifically Inuit or Dene lands.

As it states on page 6 of the Inuit Land Use and Occu(c)50 P0n1l (u)48 ands bero4ks4.16r2.19pR

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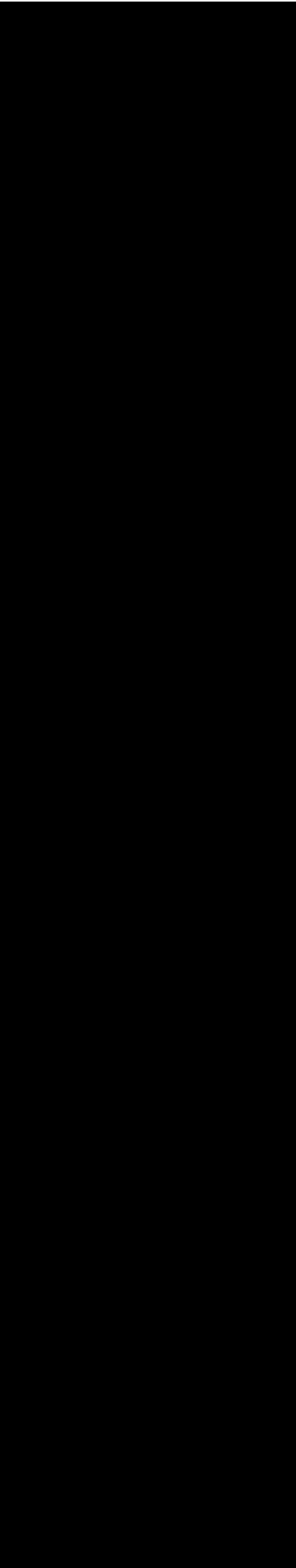
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of Canada, met five times, reviewed the progress reports and financial statements of the Project, and found them satisfactory.”¹² The Inuit representatives were Connie Hunt and Tagak Curley and the government representatives were A. Stevenson and Dr. M. J. Ruel.¹³ Among those “fieldworkers, interpreters, and interviewers” individually thanked in the acknowledgements on page nine from the western Arctic portion of the project are: Victor Allen, Nellie Cournoyea, Bertram Pokiak, Sam Raddi, and Peter Thrasher, several of whom would become important land claims activists, as well as important political and economic leaders – with Nellie Cournoyea rising to become the Premier of the Northwest Territories and later the Chair of the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation, and Sam Raddi, who served as COPE President and is widely viewed as a founding father of the Inuvialuit land claim.¹⁴ That so many of the field researchers and interviewers who played the role of gatekeeper of the information provided by the Inuvialuit hunters and trappers on their traditional land use were so closely affiliated with the land claims process and personally gained political and economic power from the very land claims process their research helped to substantiate raises yet another ethically questionable practice – and raises a red flag for posterity on the legal, moral, historical and cultural foundation of the Inuit land claim.

The third volume of the report, which includes the compelling land use and occupancy maps, reveals similar methodological issues, including a reliance upon the claims made by Inuit hunters without cross-checking their claims against other users of the lands for accuracy

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involved. These were the journals and the analyses of the journals of Father Emile Petitot, the 19th century missionary; the work of anthropologist Cornelius Osgood; the work of linguist John T. Ritter; and current research into Dene place names based at Fort Good Hope, Colville Lake, and Fort Franklin, N.W.T. The presence of the Dene Mapping Project headed up by my anthropology colleague Michael Asch on the University of Alberta campus greatly facilitated access to the latter material. The informative special 'Arctic Archaeology' issue of *The Musk-Ox* with Hanks and Winter's 'Dene Names' article (1983) for example, had not yet been distributed." Wonders further observed the following:

Arctic Red River place names occur through the eastern part of the Mackenzie Delta about as far north as Inuvik, thence eastwards around Campbell and Sitidgi Lakes, along the Miner and Kugaluk Rivers with some evidence even along the lower Smoke River. They extend eastwards to merge with the Fort Good Hope/Colville Lake names along the Wolverine River and around the Crossley Lakes.

Fort McPherson place names are particularly numerous along the Peel River and its western tributaries, Rat River and Stony Creek, leading through the Richardson Mountains. Kutchin place names occur through the western channels of the Mackenzie Delta. Local informants also reported some in the western Delta to an area northwest of Aklavik, with a wider dispersal over the higher land immediately to the west, and extending into the northern Yukon.

It is clear that Dene place names do occur extensively within the areas designated as "traditional Inuvialuit lands" in parts of the mainland in the Western Arctic and lower Mackenzie Valley area, thereby substantiating the Dene's claim to a traditional presence within parts of those areas. The Mackenzie Delta initially seems to have been used seasonally at least by Inuvialuit, who focussed primarily on the coast. Not until the present century did both Inuvialuit and Dene move into the

era, with the new boundaries separating “Inuvialuit” lands from those of the more southerly “Gwich’in” lands, has witnessed several land disputes between the two peoples, who continue to view their lands as a collective resource, not meant to be owned by one group and not the other. In the time before land claims, there may have been a consensus among the hunters and trappers of the region, regardless of whether

immigrant group whose majority population was not indigenous to Canada, violating the legitimate aboriginal rights of the Gwich'in.

POWER POLITICS AND HISTORICAL REALITIES

With the rise of Inuit power, fueled in part by their new status as land barons and power brokers across the North American Arctic, it is hard to view the indigenous peoples of the Arctic as victims any more. And yet Inuit leaders continue to position their people as victims of various historical injustices in their quest for compensation from the federal government of Canada. Consider the case of Canada's Inuit 'high Arctic exiles'. There has been much controversy over the particular plight of the 'exiles,' with numerous accounts written describing their poor treatment and near-abandonment by Canadian authorities during the early years of their relocation, such as Wil Haygood's August 1992 feature on the *Boston Globe*, "The Lie at the Top of the World," and several books including Alan Rudolph Marcus' 1995 *Relocating Eden: The Image and Politics of Inuit Exile in the Canadian Arctic*, and Melanie McGrath's 2008 *The Long Exile: A Tale of Inuit Betrayal and Survival in the High Arctic*. Thomas Berger correctly points out that the 1950s relocation of the Inuit to the high Arctic was driven largely by Ottawa's desire to establish a permanent population, and thus bolster its otherwise tenuous sovereign claims to the region. Because of the painful history of their relocation, and the chronicled neglect and mistreatment by government officials, Ottawa agreed to a \$10 million financial settlement with the survivors of the original relocation and their descendants in 1996,

“was motivated by concerns about possible Danish or American claims,” and that “the Inuit, identified by government officials by numbers rather than their names, were essentially treated as flagpoles.”²¹ He notes that “for the Inuit, it was like landing on the moon.”²² Byers believes that “for a Prime Minister who cares about sovereignty, apologizing to the High Arctic Exiles would be an excellent next step.”²³ But while an apology would be dramatic, and when it finally came was exuberantly cheered by Inuit, the situation of the exiles is complicated by the fact that their presence in the high Arctic has resulted in some substantial benefits to the Inuit, and that this presence date back only to the 1950s – and thus hardly merits an aboriginal claim at all.

Among the benefits received by the Inuit were the large tracts of high Arctic lands selected for the Nunavut land claim, which contribute substantially not only to the land and resource wealth of the Inuit, but also to the territorial breadth of the Nunavut territory. By many measures – including the size of the new territory, the amount of land now owned outright by the Inuit (lands not utilized by the Inuit in modern times, and thus integrated into Canada well before modern Inuit land use in the high Arctic islands even began), the extent of their subsurface rights as well, and the inclusion of the high Arctic communities of Grise Fjord and Resolute and their continued stream of operational funding and infrastructure investments in Nunavut – the relocation of the exile families to the high Arctic has proven to be a long-term collective gain for the Inuit overall. Further, as Byers himself has noted, Inuit leaders like John Amagoalik—considered by many to be the “Father of Nunavut”—emerged from the relocation experience; so as difficult as the experience was for the families involved, it made the Inuit stronger and not weaker for their suffering, contributing to the emergence of a strong and dedicated leadership that ultimately triumphed by creating Nunavut. At any time, particularly since commercial aviation reached into Canadian archipelago in recent decades, any resident of Grise Fjord or Resolute could board a plane and fly south, something many routinely do for medical services, higher education, and family vacations. There is no restriction on travel, and at any point during the last two generations, the entire population of these villages could have moved home. But they did not want to. The Inuit of these communities don’t want to *go home*. They *are* home. They have municipal governments, and with the land claim they now own tens of

21. . Byers, “Mr. Harper, Apologize to the ‘High Arctic Exiles’.”

22. . Byers, “Mr. Harper, Apologize to the ‘High Arctic Exiles’.”

23. . Byers, “Mr. Harper, Apologize to the ‘High Arctic Exiles’.”

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homeland, as a new class of government administrators migrate north to fill the many positions left vacant owing to the continued lack of fully credentialed locals with the required degrees and accreditations. It could be a generation before this situation changes if the current model is not replaced by a new model, one more innovative and outside the box. In

include us partners in the new Arctic, and to respect our land claims and self-government agreements.”³⁴ t61u3.0010.0003 0 0 5Ri (nersO/1ews13)Tj -0-113