

# Rising Above the Rhetoric: Northern Voices and the Strengthening of Canada's Capacity to Maintain a Stable Circumpolar World

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**Abstract:** The political discourse in the Arctic has been heating up as states, including Canada, use strongly nationalistic rhetoric to handle the complex issues that confront the region. This contrasts with the priorities of Canada's territorial governments and northern Indigenous groups like the Inuit Circumpolar Council, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, the Arctic Athabaskan Council, and Gwich'in Council International, which have consistently emphasized that Canada should constructively engage its Arctic neighbours to build a more stable and co-operative region. Critics have also suggested that the sense of alarmism in Canada about the Arctic has led to the marginalization of the northern voice in the framing of Canada's domestic and foreign policy for the region. Based largely on interviews with key stakeholders, this article examines northerners' perspectives on how the Arctic Council might be enhanced to better serve the Circumpolar World of the twenty-first century, and how northerners can be better engaged in priority- and agenda-setting on the domestic level.

When you think of the Arctic you think of the melting ice caps  
and the polar bears, you don't really think of the people whose  
lives are going to change as a result. *Bill Erasmus*<sup>1</sup>

As climate change continues to warm the Arctic at an exceptional pace, the political discourse in the circumpolar region has also been heating up as states use strongly nationalistic rhetoric to handle complex issues involving boundaries, resource exploitation, and environmental problems. Canada has engaged heavily in this discourse, using catchy statements like

“stand up for Canada” to draw the attention of the public and its Arctic neighbours. “If muckraking academics and journalists are to be believed,” states historian Whitney Lackenbauer, “the circumpolar agenda is now dominated by a ‘polar race’ with a concomitant sovereignty and security crisis precipitated by climate change and competing interests in ‘our’ Arctic.”<sup>2</sup>

The problem with talk of a “polar race” is that it deflects attention away from prospects for co-operation in the Circumpolar World.<sup>3</sup> The focus on conflict contrasts with the priorities of Canada’s three northern territorial governments (the Yukon, Northwest Territories, and Nunavut) and northern Indigenous groups like the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC), Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK), the Arctic Athabaskan Council (AAC), and Gwich’in Council International (GCI), which have consistently stressed that Canada should constructively engage its Arctic neighbours to build a more stable and co-operative region.<sup>4</sup> Critics also claim the alarm that exists in Canada about the Arctic has led to the marginalization of the northern voice in the framing of Canada’s foreign policy.<sup>5</sup>

Based largely on interviews with key stakeholders, this article examines northerners’ perspectives on how the Arctic Council might be enhanced to better serve the Circumpolar World of the twenty-first century, and how northerners can be better engaged in priority- and agenda-setting at the domestic level. For decades southern Canada, with little knowledge of the North, has directed Canada’s Arctic policies with negligible input from the actual inhabitants—although there are signs that this mindset is beginning to change, especially with the increasing consultation offered by the federal Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT). Northerners have many ideas and suggestions on how to improve circumpolar co-operation and want to be involved in shaping Canada’s policies for the region. This article contends that their voices need to rise above the crescendo of political rhetoric and influence any decisions that are made.

### **The Arctic Council and the Creation of a Similar Canadian Version**

The eight nation Arctic Council is the key forum for regional co-operation and plays a pivotal role in communicating Arctic perspectives to other international organizations.<sup>6</sup> Although it is a high-level platform for discussion and debate rather than a political decision-making body,<sup>7</sup> the council prepares excellent technical reports and its inclusion of Permanent Participants, while non-voting, has given Indigenous peoples the opportunity to contribute their own viewpoints on circumpolar issues.<sup>8</sup>

While the council contributes to a regional identity and sets the Arctic agenda,<sup>9</sup> it suffers from a lack of enforcement capability and has been rather ineffective in translating its excellent assessments into policy results.<sup>10</sup> Some commentators suggest that a regional or Antarctic-type treaty that could manage climate change and regulate resource exploitation would better serve the circumpolar countries.<sup>11</sup> Is there any political will to replace the soft-law driven Arctic Council with a legally binding agreement? Is such a treaty even necessary? What would it look like? What role could Canada play in strengthening the Arctic Council's existing structure to make a formal treaty unnecessary?<sup>12</sup> Canada needs to answer these questions in close collaboration with northern stakeholders.<sup>13</sup>

In May 2005 the inspector general of DFAIT could find little evidence of effective engagement of northerners and Indigenous groups in framing the circumpolar policy dialogue.<sup>14</sup> Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, the representative organization for the Inuit of Canada, continues to place a high policy-priority on attaining "recognition that an effective Arctic strategy requires a high and sustained level of intergovernmental and government-Aboriginal cooperation."<sup>15</sup> To meet these demands several scholars have suggested the creation of a domestic Arctic Council, involving the Canadian Permanent Participants, the territorial governments, key federal departments, and Indigenous regional governments, so that Canadian foreign policy is framed in concert with northerners' priorities and after careful dialogue with northern representatives.<sup>16</sup> With such a whole-of-government approach northerners would be true partners in devising Canadian policy.

While the creation of a domestic Arctic Council and regional treaty might make academic sense, currently there seems to be little political appetite for these initiatives at the federal level. The current federal government believes that there is already a legal framework in place across the Arctic and enough multilateral forums to effectively deal with emerging circumpolar issues.<sup>17</sup> According to one government official interviewed for this article, those calling for a formal treaty are ill-informed about the complexity and the breadth of the work done by the council, which includes the *Arctic Human Development Report*, *Oil and Gas Guidelines*, and the *Arctic Marine Shipping Assessment*.<sup>18</sup> At times, the work of the council also translates into official policy, an example of which is the offshore oil and gas guidelines.

The federal government is attempting to make the intergovernmental and government-Aboriginal relationship work. Over the last couple of years, DFAIT has emphasized the importance of the Arctic Council Core

Group (ACCG) and the Arctic Council Advisory Committee (ACAC) and currently engages in frequent teleconferences and regular meetings with northern stakeholders. "Canada probably does more than any other country in terms of a systematic approach to talking through some of the issues, both within the federal government, with territorial governments and Indigenous groups ... In terms of consultative methods, I think we have some good ones," concluded one government source.<sup>19</sup> From the perspective of the territorial governments and several northern Indigenous groups, however, both the Arctic Council and the consultative mechanisms established within Canada are in need of improvement.<sup>20</sup>

### **The Territories**

In May 2007 the three territorial premiers released *A Northern Vision: A Stronger North and a Better Canada*, which strongly encourages building and strengthening ties with Canada's circumpolar neighbours and increasing territorial involvement in multilateral forums. The territories have the ability and knowledge to make other governments aware of the most urgent northern issues and "help drive the northern agenda."<sup>21</sup> This document also calls for greater discussion between the Indigenous participants on the Arctic Council and the territorial governments "to foster a unified northern position that will better inform the federal government in its dealing with our international neighbours."<sup>22</sup> *A Northern Vision* is a loud cry for the federal government to remember the territories when creating foreign policy options for the Arctic.

*A Northern Vision* also demands greater territorial participation in the Arctic Council to better maintain Canada's "northern advantage."<sup>23</sup> The territorial governments have attended council meetings as members of the Canadian delegation since 1998. While the territories do not have a seat at the table in the same manner as the states or Permanent Participants, they still consider their involvement worthwhile.<sup>24</sup> Territorial officials approve of the council as a mechanism for discussion and co-operation, but they also recognize the institution could be improved.

Though there is a lack of tangible policy results emanating from the assessments of the council's working groups, the territories acknowledge that the political will to create more of a policy-making role for the institution is lacking in many of the circumpolar states.<sup>25</sup> A non-policy-making permanent secretariat for the council, however, would provide a much needed focal point for managing the council's activities. According to one territorial government official "the present Arctic Council resembles nothing so much as a giant barge pushed by an underpowered

tugboat. Each ministerial and subsequent country chair tries to give it some direction but there is no permanent body that has the records of the organization, can speak to what has been done in the past, and give policy advice to ministers and to incoming chairs."<sup>26</sup> A permanent secretariat would provide focus and direction for the web of working groups and studies supported by the council.

Although some commentators are frustrated by the council's inability to deal with many of the most pressing issues in the Arctic, such as security and sovereignty concerns, the territories take a very pragmatic and realistic approach to this issue. While a regional treaty might lead to certain positive developments like the establishment of an effective environmental regime, in some situations solving the problems once and for all may not be in the best interests of the territories or the country as a whole.<sup>27</sup> Even theorizing about hard law treaties may be an exercise in futility given the aversion of the United States to establishing anything resembling a "UN type body" for the Arctic.<sup>28</sup> Rather than developing a formalized legal framework to deal with circumpolar affairs, certain territorial officials prefer informal bilateral negotiations to address certain issues, especially jurisdictional disputes like those in the Beaufort Sea. Such a framework provides Canada with the best chance to achieve its goals in the Arctic.

In order for the territories to play an effective role in the Circumpolar World and in these bilateral negotiations, existing partnerships within Canada must be maintained and new ones should be established. A position shared by both territorial and provincial governments is that while relations between foreign governments and Canada are the constitutional responsibility of the federal government, international discussions and treaties often affect areas that are the constitutional responsibility of sub-national governments so all negotiations should include the provinces and territories.<sup>29</sup> Despite occasional points of contention,<sup>30</sup> the amount of consultation between the territorial governments and the federal government has gradually increased since the release of *A Northern Vision*. DFAIT has shown a higher level of interest in the Arctic Council and is involving the territorial governments. One official from Nunavut claimed that this "has been the most collaborative northern affairs work that I have seen in my career here."<sup>31</sup> Currently the territorial governments believe that they have the ear of the federal government—at least most of the time.

The Arctic Council Core Group has developed into one of the most important platforms for high-level discussion between the territories

and the federal government. Involving representatives from the public governments, all of the federal departments involved in the North, and the senior Arctic official (SAO), this group engages in open discussions and provides all participants with the opportunity to express the positions they want Canada to adopt on the Arctic Council.<sup>32</sup> The Arctic Council Advisory Committee involves the same people, with the addition of the Canadian Permanent Participants, and is supposed to complement the work of the core group. It too has become an important mechanism for consultation and dialogue.<sup>33</sup> Informal discussions between representatives of the territorial governments and DFAIT are also beginning to play a major role in the consultative process.<sup>34</sup> There is a strong dialogue between federal and territorial officials on matters of foreign policy in the Arctic.

Suggestions to strengthen the intergovernmental and government-Aboriginal relationship using a domestic version of the Arctic Council have not been officially discussed by the territorial governments. The worry may be that such a forum would mix governments and groups that have competing agendas and priorities, diluting the voice of territorial officials, and limiting their ability to express needs to federal representatives. The territorial governments do engage in productive meetings with the Indigenous governments and international groups, conducting government-to-government relations with them using very respectful bilateral and multilateral negotiations.<sup>35</sup> The territories possibly feel this positive relationship negates the chief reason given for the creation of a domestic council. If the need for an intergovernmental forum eventually develops, one official believes that a more inclusive and high-level Arctic Security Working Group (ASWG) could become an effective catalyst for debate and discussion on a broad range of circumpolar issues.<sup>36</sup> Creating a larger mandate for and placing unrealistically high expectations on the ASWG, however, could impede its effectiveness or cause it to buckle under the added pressure.

Instead of creating a large-scale parallel bureaucracy to the Arctic Council, a number of rather low-key developments would improve consultation. Most importantly the territories require a system in which they can contribute to the policy-making process before actual Arctic Council functions if "territorial representation is going to mean more than just showing the flag at meetings."<sup>37</sup> The broad based discussions at the ACAC and the ACCG are important, but they do not provide the territories with enough opportunity to provide policy input for the SAO and ministerial meetings. The process does not allow territorial government representatives adequate time to consult with their governments on major

issues and provide input to the briefing note process that the federal government uses to prepare working group heads of delegation before meetings. The ideal solution would be to put together a small working group composed of the territorial governments and federal representatives, “to create a nimble but useful means of input.”<sup>38</sup> The focus in the territories is on continuing to develop an intimate relationship with the federal government when dealing with circumpolar affairs.

When these interviews were conducted in February 2009, several respondents shared the feeling that there was “no end of meetings,” which all required a great deal of preparation but did not necessarily result in the federal government using the discussions to form a coherent strategy or foreign policy for the Arctic.<sup>39</sup> At this point, Canada’s policy in the Arctic was given shape by little more than a series of press releases; an invisible strategy of individual statements. Without an official strategy, the North seemed far less important than Canada’s role in Afghanistan or even the Caribbean, a fact northerners simply could not understand. In August 2010 the government finally rectified this omission and released its long awaited *Northern Strategy*, outlining Canada’s plans for the region. Now that the country has a coherent policy, however, much work remains to be done as most of the proposed actions linger in their early planning stages. With input from northerners, the government should also form and publicize the agenda Canada will seek to follow when it takes over the chair of the Arctic Council in 2013. It has the opportunity to take the lead on several pressing issues, like the development of a Polar Code<sup>40</sup> or the establishment of a secretariat, but must begin planning now.

The territorial governments are enjoying the increased attention from the federal government. There is, however, concern that northern Indigenous groups are not being equally engaged. One government official from Nunavut insists that Ottawa is now hearing the territories, but other stakeholders, especially the Canadian Permanent Participants, are not as involved in this dialogue.<sup>41</sup>

### **Northern Indigenous Groups**

In 1996, the year the Ottawa Declaration formally established the Arctic Council, Mary Simon, then Canada’s ambassador for circumpolar affairs, noted that “northern peoples did not wish to set up another bureaucracy—further stretching our sparse human and financial resources—unless it provided something substantially beneficial to the people of the Arctic.”<sup>42</sup> Currently, the Permanent Participants value the council’s ability to create excellent assessments on emerging issues like marine shipping, and

enjoy the high profile it gives them. Bill Erasmus, the head of the Arctic Athabaskan Council (AAC), believes that the council provides Indigenous people with a much stronger forum than the United Nations.<sup>43</sup> Corinne Gray, the executive director of Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC) Canada, argues that the council is “one of the most important vehicles we have on the international level for circumpolar work ... [It should] play a strong role as a model for other regional or international forums.”<sup>44</sup> There is recognition amongst all Permanent Participants, however, that something should be done to increase the institution’s efficiency.

The Permanent Participants have strong feelings on how to improve the council to better suit their unique needs and increase its overall effectiveness. ICC and ITK want to improve the transparency, candour, and discussion of the council while removing some of the “no go zones” and ensuring that “politeness” does not keep pressing issues off the agenda.<sup>45</sup> The council also needs to work at remaining on point, using a permanent secretariat to clarify the duties and responsibilities of the working groups and improve the efficiency of these lumbering organizations.<sup>46</sup> Effective organization of the council will, after all, create more effective governance.

An increasing worry for the Permanent Participants is the number of groups expressing interest in the council.<sup>47</sup> While ITK and ICC welcome interest in the Arctic, Gray claims that “some of these [states] are so large and so big and have so much power that there is a danger.”<sup>48</sup> The European Union, for instance, has a great deal of sensitivity towards wildlife issues like the seal hunt, which worries Indigenous groups about the ability of the EU to make a long term and positive impact on the Arctic. Before engaging with the Arctic Council, observers need to declare their absolute support of the Permanent Participants and provide funding for Indigenous involvement on the working groups.<sup>49</sup> If the observers wish for more involvement on the council they need to first make connections with the Permanent Participants.

The Permanent Participants enjoy the intimate and close-knit negotiations that are now possible within the council, but as interest grows in the institution the risk exists that its very “attractiveness” will make it “unworkable.”<sup>50</sup> There is a concern that if more actors continue to gain access to the council, the organization will begin to lose its specialized status and regional identity to the harm of the circumpolar Indigenous peoples and states. John Merritt, a senior policy adviser to ITK, worries about how large the meetings are becoming and wonders how the council will remain relevant and creative as it becomes more cumbersome.<sup>51</sup> The



identification and acceptance of observers onto the council needs to be done carefully and with the involvement of the Permanent Participants.

One of the primary goals of the Permanent Participants is to improve the human dimension of the council. There is a desire, states Gray, to “get the human face of the Arctic included in these very technical assessments.”<sup>52</sup> There have been encouraging signs that this is beginning to happen, as evidenced by the *Arctic Human Development Report* and other Indigenous led initiatives like the Arctic Indigenous Languages Symposium, which was held in 2008. Bridgette Larocque, executive director of Gwich’in Council International (GCI), believes that the impetus should remain on making the Sustainable Development Working Group into one of the most credible parts of the council. This group needs to spend more time examining the communities and public health issues, while increasing its publicity to make sure these issues receive the attention they deserve.<sup>53</sup> Unfortunately, the scientific knowledge created by the council is routinely considered more important than the traditional knowledge and oral history of the Indigenous peoples. The people who actually live and work in the Arctic need the opportunity to share their knowledge at the council. “Our hunters and trappers are the ones who see the changes,” argues Larocque. “They will be noticing the environment, more so than our leaders.”<sup>54</sup> The council’s members and working groups also need to venture out into the communities more and see what is actually happening on the ground. While the Arctic Council attempts to frame the discussion in the Circumpolar World, it still fails to investigate the needs and ideas of the people who have lived in the region since time immemorial.

The Permanent Participants continue to lament the lack of support provided to them by Canada and the council, which bars them from participating in all of the working groups they are interested in.<sup>55</sup> While the Indigenous Peoples Secretariat is supposed to facilitate Indigenous peoples’ needs, lack of money has led it to begin sending just one of the Permanent Participants to represent all on the working groups. This solution makes little sense in the mind of Corinne Gray, after all “Canada wouldn’t say ‘well Russia is going so we’re covered.’”<sup>56</sup> Along with financial support, all three groups also desire to have the right to vote at the council. Without the vote, Bill Erasmus argues that the Permanent Participants will continue to function under the umbrella of the nation-states although they deserve to function as independent and free groups, equal to the states on the council.<sup>57</sup> While dealing with nation-states, however, attaining the right to vote at council meetings will likely prove impossible for the Arctic’s Indigenous groups.

Though equality remains elusive on the Arctic Council, the Permanent Participants are not willing to abandon the institution in favour of a hard law regional treaty for the area. There is fear that a formal treaty would exclude the Permanent Participants and include only the eight nation states. According to Koivurova and Heinamaki, “as the work of the Arctic Council is based on soft law, states could be more willing than if its work was based on hard law to grant Indigenous peoples a status that better reflects their status nationally.”<sup>58</sup> In a hard law regional treaty the very realistic fear exists that the Indigenous people would be ignored and excluded from the types of discussions to which the Arctic Council gives them access.

If Canada wishes to have a strong northern foreign policy it needs to fully engage its northern Indigenous peoples. Most northern Indigenous groups have signed and ratified comprehensive land claim agreements, which require the Government of Canada to involve them when negotiating international agreements that may affect their treaty rights.<sup>59</sup> Furthermore, as Whitney Lackenbauer points out, “Through ... sovereignty assertions based upon northern indigenous use and occupancy, northern Indigenous peoples are partners in Canadian governance and stewardship in the Arctic.”<sup>60</sup> Canada needs to do more to live up to its commitments and increase its dialogue with northern Indigenous groups.

There have been positive developments in the relationship between the Permanent Participants and Ottawa. Bridgette Laroque acknowledges that there is a much closer connection between the Gwich’in and Canada’s SAO, than between the Alaskan Gwich’in and the American SAO.<sup>61</sup> One of the first actions of the Canadian mission to the 2008 EU meeting on the Arctic in Brussels was inviting the Permanent Participants to attend.<sup>62</sup> Foreign Affairs has also begun working with the Permanent Participants to develop their own priorities and take the lead in identifying projects and initiatives they wish to bring to the table,<sup>63</sup> and to a degree this process is working and appreciated.<sup>64</sup> The Arctic Council Advisory Committee is also a welcome platform for broad level discussions. Still, there are not enough domestic forums that allow northern Indigenous peoples to assist in the creation of Canada’s northern foreign policy.

The *International Dimension to the Inuit Action Plan*, published by ITK and ICC in 2007, observes that “to address international issues, which are increasingly interdisciplinary and multifaceted, the Government of Canada establishes ad hoc and sometimes permanent interdepartmental committees and/or working groups. Canadian Inuit are sometimes invited to participate in these bodies but often after positions have been

developed by Canada.”<sup>65</sup> According to Bridgette Larocque the committees are formed to represent the people of the North, but there is usually a disconnect between the goals of the committee and the actual needs of the people.<sup>66</sup> “If Canada has a strong northern foreign policy, which clearly is engaging its northern Indigenous peoples, I think we need to expand on the relationship process and have a forum that engages us,” states Larocque. To be effective, such a forum would need to include the knowledge holders of the communities, have meaningful participation, and adequate resources. Larocque stresses that the Indigenous Permanent Participants should chair it and include the various federal departments involved in the North, without any third party involvement.<sup>67</sup> Working groups could be formed, meet more frequently, and involve Indigenous leaders and the communities. Such a council could meet in the North four times a year, allowing southern policy-makers to experience the realities of a northern winter.

While ITK and ICC crave greater collaboration with the government on matters of foreign policy in the Arctic, they do not believe that a forum can be established until the stakeholders are clearly defined. Academics and politicians talking about a domestic Arctic Council inevitably bring up the issue of “stakeholders” and tend to be very inclusive, often with little explanation. According to John Merritt, “Inuit want to participate on a very different footing. Not just as an NGO along for the ride. They are the settlers on the land so when a minister convenes a meeting about polar bears, the Inuit do not want to be considered just as stakeholders.”<sup>68</sup> While they promote co-operation and collaboration, ITK and ICC also believe that they are in a very special position and deserve a greater chance to participate than other groups. “Nation-states certainly don’t view their club as being infinitely expandable,” argues Merritt, “and I guess Inuit would be the same way.”<sup>69</sup> A forum that gives an equal voice to a wide array of different groups would only diminish the Inuit presence, even though they are the most affected by current Arctic issues.

### **Recommendations and Conclusion**

A number of recommendations emerge from this research:<sup>70</sup>

1. The Permanent Participants support re-establishing the position of Ambassador for Circumpolar Affairs to show the world that Canada is serious about the Arctic and to act as Canada’s face to the world on circumpolar issues. The ambassador should be a northerner and northern groups should play a key role in choosing a candidate.

2. Communicate more effectively what the Arctic Council is working on and accomplishing. As several of the officials interviewed for this project suggested, people know little about what the Arctic Council is or does. Canada should support the suggestions made in a 2007 Arctic Athabaskan Council report, which calls for developing a coherent communications strategy, hiring a media relations or information manager, publishing a regular journal, increasing interaction with northerners to improve awareness of the council, and generally disseminating information more successfully.<sup>71</sup> These steps could be taken by DFAIT in conjunction with the Permanent Participants.

3. Use the lessons learned from the current Scandinavian secretariat and begin developing a permanent one for the Arctic Council. Canada could take a lead on this initiative during its chairmanship. The council does require a stronger guiding mechanism.

4. As Arctic issues continue to attract more and more attention, the number of Arctic Council Core Group and Arctic Council Advisory Committee meetings should be increased and held in the North during winter. While the South is more than willing to decide on Canadian policy in the North, it has little idea about the realities of northern life. It is impossible to write about an issue, let alone decide an entire region's future, without visiting and experiencing it first-hand.

5. The political will to create a domestic Arctic Council does not exist at this time and the current efforts of the federal government to build stronger intergovernmental relationships make this development unnecessary. DFAIT should continue to improve its consultative mechanisms and focus on the creation of small, high-level working groups (one for the territorial governments and one for the Permanent Participants, or multiple groups for each individual Permanent Participant) that can frame policy options for Canada and contribute to the federal briefing note process. Enough time must be given for the territorial representatives and Permanent Participants to consult with their governments and constituents in order to come up with a contribution to a given issue.

6. The Canadian government should start to act on its *Northern Strategy* plans now so they can be used to shape Canada's chairmanship of the Arctic Council in 2013–2015. The government needs to set its agenda for this chairmanship using input from northerners.

7. Canada should identify key stakeholders in Arctic issues by creating clear geographic distinctions between the North and the Arctic. "Whenever the government of Canada talks about the North, we really don't know what they are talking about," states Merritt. First of all, there should

be a separation between the North and the Arctic. The “Arctic” should refer to the region north of the treeline, or Inuit Nunaat, the homeland of Canada’s Inuit comprising the land and marine areas of Nunatsiavut, Nunavik, and Nunavut, as well as the Inuvialuit land claims settlement areas in the Western Arctic. Such a concept recognizes the importance of Indigenous peoples and treaty rights, and the unity of the Inuit as Canada’s one historical Arctic Indigenous people.<sup>72</sup> The “North” should refer to the remainder of the three territories. These geographical distinctions should help identify key stakeholders on region specific issues.

8. Indigenous northerners should be heavily involved in the acceptance of new observers onto the Arctic Council. New observers must support the involvement of the Permanent Participants in the governance of the Arctic.

9. Increase the human dimension of the Arctic Council. The first step should be providing increased funding to Permanent Participants so that they can participate in every working group and forward their unique perspectives. The second step is to increase the mandate and funding for the Sustainable Development Working Group and create ties between it and the communities. The focus should be on supporting more events like the Arctic Indigenous Languages Symposium and more initiatives like the Vulnerability and Adaptation to Climate Change in the Arctic project.

In the end, discussing institutional problems and intergovernmental mechanisms is a good exercise, but has to translate into effects that actually help people. Northerners are facing some very difficult realities as their homes continue to change rapidly. “It only makes sense that the government will work with its people. You have to ensure that your citizens’ needs are met,” argues Larocque.<sup>73</sup> As the dialogue and debate continues to heat up in the Arctic, the people that call this region their home need to be heard, whether they are Indigenous or non-Indigenous. Their voices must not be drowned out.

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## Notes

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21. Governments of the Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut, *A Northern Vision*.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid.

24. Territorial government officials from Northwest Territories, interviewed by Peter Kikkert in Yellowknife, 2 February 2009; Territorial government official from Nunavut, interviewed by Peter Kikkert in Ottawa, 9 February 2009.
25. Territorial government official from Northwest Territories, 2 February 2009.
26. Territorial government official from Yukon, email interview with Peter Kikkert, 12 February 2009.
27. Territorial government official from Nunavut, 9 February 2009.
28. Territorial government official from Yukon, 12 February 2009.
29. Territorial government official from Northwest Territories, 2 February 2009; Territorial government official from Yukon, 12 February 2009.
30. The Illulissat Declaration was seen as a step backwards in intergovernmental relations and left the territories wondering whether the federal government was serious about their involvement in circumpolar activities.
31. Territorial government official from Nunavut, 9 February 2009.
32. Territorial government official from Northwest Territories, 2 February 2009.
33. Territorial government official from Northwest Territories, 2 February 2009.
34. Territorial government official from Nunavut, 9 February 2009; Territorial government official from Northwest Territories, 2 February 2009.
35. Territorial government official from Nunavut, 9 February 2009; Territorial government official from Northwest Territories, 2 February 2009.
36. Territorial government official from Nunavut, February 2009.
37. Territorial government official from Yukon, 12 February 2009.
38. Territorial government official from Yukon, 12 February 2009.
39. Territorial government official from Yukon, 12 February 2009; Territorial government official from Northwest Territories, 2 February 2009.
40. Currently, the Polar Code is a voluntary set of guidelines to regulate shipping in ice covered waters.
41. Territorial government official from Nunavut, 9 February 2009.
42. Mary Simon, *Inuit: One Future – One Arctic* (Peterborough: The Cider Press, 1996), 24.
43. Bill Erasmus, Chairperson, Arctic Athabaskan Council (AAC) and Dene National Chief, interviewed by Peter Kikkert in Yellowknife, 3 February 2009.
44. Corinne Gray, Executive Director, Inuit Circumpolar Council Canada, interviewed by Peter Kikkert in Ottawa, 9 February 2009.
45. Corinne Gray, 9 February 2009. John Merritt, Senior Policy Adviser to Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK), interviewed by Peter Kikkert in Ottawa, 9



- February 2009. The Inuit want the council to engage in a discussion of Arctic Sea Mammals.
46. Bridget Larocque, 5 February 2009; Corinne Gray, 9 February 2009.
  47. Bridget Larocque, 5 February 2009; Corinne Gray, 9 February 2009; Bill Erasmus, 3 February 2009.
  48. Corinne Gray, 9 February 2009.
  49. Bridget Larocque, 5 February 2009.
  50. John Merritt, 9 February 2009; Corinne Gray, 9 February 2009.
  51. John Merritt, 9 February 2009.
  52. Corinne Gray, 9 February 2009.
  53. Bridget Larocque, 5 February 2009.
  54. Bridget Larocque, 5 February 2009.
  55. Corinne Gray, 9 February 2009.
  56. Corinne Gray, 9 February 2009.
  57. Bill Erasmus, 3 February 2009.
  58. Koivurova and Heinamaki, 106.
  59. Terry Fenge and Tony Penikett, "The Arctic Vacuum in Canada's Foreign Policy," *Policy Options* 30, no. 4 (April 2009): 65–70.
  60. Lackenbauer, 90.
  61. Bridget Larocque, 5 February 2009.
  62. Corinne Gray, 9 February 2009.
  63. Government official, interviewed by Peter Kikkert in Ottawa, 10 February 2009.
  64. John Merritt, 9 February 2009.
  65. ITK and ICC, *Building Inuit Nunaat*, 59.
  66. Bridget Larocque, 5 February 2009.
  67. Bridget Larocque, 5 February 2009.
  68. John Merritt, 9 February 2009.
  69. John Merritt, 9 February 2009.
  70. These recommendations emerge from discussions with some, but not all, interviewees and are not necessarily reflective of the official policies of any group or government.
  71. Arctic Athabaskan Council, "Improving the Efficiency and Effectiveness of the Arctic Council: A Discussion Paper," March 2007, <http://www.arcticathabaskancouncil.com/>.
  72. ITK, *An Integrated Arctic Strategy*, 11.
  73. Bridget Larocque, 5 February 2009.