
Freedom of Expression or Freedom of Exploitation

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*Speech to the Association of Canadian Universities for Northern Studies
4th National Students Conference on Northern Studies, Ottawa,
November 1994*

It is an honour to be here to participate in the 4th National Students' Conference on Northern Studies. I would like to spend some time this afternoon sharing with you some of the concerns and questions I have regarding the nature of research, more particularly, the nature of Inuit participation in research, and the role research had played and is playing in our lives. What I mean when I say "our lives" is Inuit living in the Inuit homeland.

I would like to begin by stating that my remarks are based on my own experience and observations while working at Pauktuutit. As a result, most of the research and researchers I have come in contact with are dealing with social, political, and cultural issues of Inuit—issues that people in universities identify as the social science and humanities disciplines—and it is with regard to these areas that I wish to direct my comments.

Research has a very powerful role to play in the policies and programs that affect the lives of Inuit. For example, at this very moment, there is research being undertaken on designing the new administration regimes for the Nunavut Territorial Government, its policies, programs, and services dealing with education, health, justice, and economic development. Many southerners who have learned about Inuit through books and from their fieldwork in the North have done or are doing research in these areas. This raises questions for me about what research is being done, why certain types of research get funded and who is doing it. This is a concern to me, not necessarily because many southerners or non-Inuit are doing this work but because Inuit are not truly participating as equals.

Rather than answer these important questions, the discussion we have been asked to engage in deals with the need to establish ethical guidelines for researchers. Those engaged in research are concerned with improving relations between the researcher and the researched and they have turned to ethical guidelines as one means of resolving

conflict. The problem with this type of discussion is the underlying assumptions made about the nature and merits of the research methods and the research itself.

The assumptions that I speak of are the ones that underlie the discussion of the nature of research, research methods and the role of the "researched" in social science disciplines. I would like to begin by discussing some of these assumptions.

The assumption about the nature of research and the nature of Inuit participation in research is probably a good place to start because it illustrates the very different perspectives we come from. The need for guidelines about how to involve the researched suggests to me a presumption that the researched are never truly considered equals and that the "researcher" always retains ultimate control.

I consider research to be part of a larger process of development or change. In the context of Inuit, I see research as part of a wider component of community development and community action to change the status quo in order to improve the lives of Inuit. This leads to the second assumption, which is the nature of the participation of the people being researched. If research is part of our own development and action plan for change, then the people being researched must be in control of and participate in the entire research process, from beginning to end. These are not assumptions I believe to be widely shared among many in this room, nor within the various associations and professional organizations representing the disciplines in which you work. It is from this viewpoint and experience that I begin to interpret the concept of "freedom of expression" as "freedom of exploitation"—the freedom to exploit Inuit knowledge for one's own gain.

We have all heard about the participatory action-based research model as a research method. We have heard about it primarily from researchers who contact us for our support of their particular project. We are told that the research will use a participatory action research model. From my experience, this is the term used to describe the process when the researcher comes into a community and works with people in the community to collect data. Sometimes, although rarely, they include local people in analyzing the findings, and a final report may be sent to the community. Some researchers will seek the input of an Inuit organization or the hamlet council on the identification of possible Inuit fieldworkers, or for general support of the project. This appears to be the beginning and the end of the participation of Inuit.

We hear a lot about researchers who use the "participatory action research model." Our experience has taught us that participatory

research does not mean the community has a real role in deciding what the research topic will be, analyzing the data or deciding what or how the information obtained in the research will be used or distributed. For example, it may come as a surprise to many of you but for us, spending twenty years observing Inuit to determine if we are shrinking because we ride skidoos, is not a burning research topic. It was for someone at the University of Toronto.

A more cynical review of this participatory action research model could be described as a scheme to take Inuit knowledge and use it for the researcher's gain and perhaps, indirectly for the benefit of the community members who are paid for their services.

I am caught somewhere in the middle in my view about participatory research, although lately I find myself becoming more and more cynical about researchers doing participatory and action-based research in Inuit communities.

Real participatory research would include Inuit control over the identification of areas and issues where research is needed and the design and delivery of the methodology. Inuit would participate in the collection and analysis of data and have equal control over the dissemination of the information and research findings. In my view, anything less is not participatory and it is unfair to call it such.

I would like to refer to two specific examples of what researchers would identify as participatory research.

I am sure all of you are familiar with RCAP, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. The very name of the Commission provides a hint of where it might locate itself with respect to my assumptions. This is a Commission "on" Aboriginal Peoples, not "for" or "of" them. I recognize the Commissioners did not choose the name. Yet, I do think it is safe to assume that the Commission does not share my assumptions, since their own ethical guidelines for research directly challenge them.

RCAP states that in setting research priorities and objectives for community-based research, the commission and the researchers it engages "shall give serious and due consideration to the benefit of the community concerned." This does not suggest to me that the Commission's research can or will necessarily be a component of a wider development and action programme of the community. It also suggests RCAP will ultimately decide what research to fund and undertake at the community level not on the community's criteria but on RCAP's assessment of what is of benefit to the community. This, in my view, directly impacts upon the nature of participation of the aboriginal people being studied in the research. If the Commission

assumed this research was truly part of a wider process of community change, then it would be incumbent upon it to ensure its research guidelines support full participation of the people being studied in the identification of research needs, design of research methods, collection and analysis of data, and control over the results and use of the results. This is not the case, however.

The nature of the participation by aboriginal community groups and individuals in the Commission's research varies according to the physical location of the specific research initiative. For example, collaborative research procedures are to be established "to enable community representatives to participate in planning, execution and evaluation of research results" where the studies are located principally within an Aboriginal community. Where studies are to be carried out in the general community and "likely to affect particular Aboriginal communities, the appropriate Aboriginal bodies (according to what RCAP considers appropriate) will be consulted on the planning, execution and evaluation of results. I have only two comments to make in response to this. First, it would appear to me that there is no question that any research undertaken by this Commission will affect Aboriginal communities and second, the location of the research should not dictate the extent of the participation of the peoples being studied.

The Commission agrees to use advisory groups within the communities to provide guidance on the conduct of research in order to supplement the procedures set down by RCAP for collaborative research. However, the Commission clearly states the guidance provided "will not pre-empt" the procedures set out by the Commission regarding community-based collaborative research.

The nature of the participation of aboriginal communities and individuals of the community in research undertaken by the Commission would appear to be limited to being consulted on research priorities, design, assisting in the execution and evaluation of research results. Regardless of the location of this research, the researched are not the researchers and have a very different level of control in the process than those researchers specifically contracted by or working for the Commission. It is interesting to note one of the tasks of the researcher is to develop problem-solving strategies to resolve conflicts that may arise in the course of research between different interests within the community. The researcher is perceived to be a neutral person and the people in the community again are reminded they are participating but not equally.

Underlying the Commission's guidelines is an assumption that

there will be no conflict between its researchers and the people and communities being studied. I think if the research process is to be truly collaborative, conflict is inherent in the process where the researcher and the researched are equal partners. Accordingly, as conflict will arise, there is a need for dispute resolution mechanisms to resolve these conflicts in a fair and equitable way. The absence of any reference to the recognition of potential conflict further suggests to me the nature of the participation of Aboriginal communities within the Commission's research initiatives is unequal and limited to that of advisers not decision-makers.

The second example I would like to speak about involves the CAA—the Canadian Archaeology Association. This past spring we received an invitation from the CAA to comment on the guidelines they were developing to govern the conduct of archaeological researchers in Canada where First Nations were involved.

The CAA document, like the RCAP guidelines, had a lot of interesting possibilities on the first reading. It was only when I began to look at this document with a view to implementing it that I saw its shortcomings. I was able to look beyond such errors as identifying Inuit as First Nations people and focus on the fundamental differences in the perspective I have to the one presented in the document. I decided not to provide any comments and await the CAA's response. To date, there has been nothing and I wonder if they have chosen to accept my silence as tacit acceptance of their work. I have chosen to stand firm in my position that it is time for Inuit to set our own terms upon which those working within these professions who want to come to our land and study us, our culture, traditions, and lives, must abide by. To attempt to rework documents that reflect and promote a very different perspective than that of Inuit living in the communities, in my view, is a mistake. We have a very different perspective than those of researchers who come from the South or Yellowknife, for that matter. I would like to read to you a part from the guiding principles section of the Canadian Archaeology Association's document:

Archaeologists recognize and acknowledge that aboriginal people have a *valid concern* over the conduct of archaeological research, as it pertains to the study of First Nations cultures and traditions. Following from this it is incumbent upon all archaeologists to consult with the appropriate aboriginal group(s), prior to and throughout all stages of their investigations. This must include consultation and information exchange relating to field work, analysis of data, disposition of collection and data records and the interpretation of findings.

This is a good illustration of the very different perspectives from which we come at this issue. This is *our* history, tradition, culture and lives they are talking about. We, Inuit, have more than a valid concern over the conduct of archaeological research, we have *RIGHTS* that have begun to be recognized in land claims to the lands, artifacts and specimens found in the land, the sacred sites and places. I am sure Luke Suluk will discuss these issues in greater detail in his discussion on the archaeology provisions of the Nunavut Land Claim Agreement. I only wish to bring to your attention the very different perspectives we both have.

I don't like to speak in "them"/"us" terms, but often we are driven to this because we are so different, and we speak from very different places. For Inuit we too often are placed in a position of weakness. By weakness, what I am referring to is the fact that the laws, policies and guidelines that pertain to research in Inuit communities and within the Inuit homeland are not ones Inuit have created but rather government, professional institutions and associations have established. It is these bodies and institutions that also have access to the scarce funding available for research. Now things are beginning to change with land claims and self-government negotiations. There lies a possibility within these processes that Inuit will have the power to establish the rules of the game by which anyone who chooses to do research in the North will have to play.

In our work at Pauktuutit, there is a growing concern among Inuit women about the exploitation and appropriation of Inuit knowledge, practices and culture by well-intentioned, well-meaning researchers. I am not only talking about academics who do fundamental research associated with their particular area of interest but also the same who undertake research as part of government or business contracts.

Pauktuutit has identified the need for further research in several areas related to economic development opportunities for Inuit women. Some of this research requires technical expertise we do not have in the communities or within our organization and that we know academics could assist us with. However, we are reluctant to approach these individuals. Ideally, we would welcome the opportunity to work with academics on the understanding their research is being done for our benefit and therefore we control its outcome. This is a very difficult standard to uphold, especially with all the talk of freedom of expression in universities. However, we take this strict line because we know the power and consequences of such research

and its uses when not restricted.

We confront a lot of difficulty in undertaking our own research at the community level and even within Pauktuutit at the national level, not because we lack expertise but because we lack funding. I often ask myself what is it that the funders are afraid of? What is it that makes them so reluctant to support Inuit to do our own research? In attempting to answer these questions, I have found a direct link between funding and the nature of research and the nature of Inuit participation in research that affect our lives. When research is being proposed that is part of a larger component of social change that may directly challenge the status quo and the funders are major institutions comfortably operating within the status quo, it is not surprising our research is not considered a priority. The level of awareness around the need for such research is not readily apparent to these individuals. We must take time to educate the funders about the methods we use and the importance of our research. We are not always successful but we must be careful to secure funds that will allow us to conduct our research using our own methods and our own people.

There is a real pressure placed upon Pauktuutit, albeit external, to use the language, methods and practices of those we are lobbying, seeking research funds from, and advocating to make changes. We must be careful to not exploit Inuit in our own research projects. We therefore must also have some rules from which to operate. We must ensure that the research we undertake is doing something the community wants and needs and that we do not abandon such initiatives because there is funding available to do something else the funders are interested in. As an organization we are always committed to ensuring the researched control the research process from beginning to end. Ultimately, it is the researched who determine what is to be done with the results of the research. Pauktuutit is prepared to give up its ultimate control over a project to the researched because it is committed to true participatory research.

As students of northern studies, you will be familiar with the practice where southerners come north, do their field research over a number of months, usually the summer, get to know people in the community, get local help, then go south to write and publish their findings, they are acknowledged as the "experts," more so if they have included Inuit in the data collection and can cite them in their research. The researchers are the ones policy-makers listen to when making decisions about design, delivery or funding programs for Inuit. They are also the ones with the funding sources to do such

research. There is an inherent bias in government and especially funding sources to place academic and formal education credentials ahead of practice and experience of being Inuk when deciding upon expertise and identifying research priorities and research projects to fund. The inherent bias continues to undermine our inherent right to be a self-determining people and share the power.

In conclusion, I encourage you as students to seriously consider your research and where it fits within the communities you study. Furthermore, I ask you to question how willing you are to give control to the community to share in the decision-making of the identification and design of the research, the process and its uses. Are you willing to negotiate a new relationship with those who will be the researched in your work to ensure they too are the researchers? I ask you to recognize the privilege you have in our society by virtue of your academic achievements and formal credentials and I challenge you to not abuse these but use them in order that Inuit and their communities benefit alongside you rather than be exploited by you. My comments are intended to contribute to further reflection and informed debate about research methods and guidelines for researchers in the North. I wish you luck in your deliberations today and future endeavours.

Thank you.

"The Idea of North"

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Keynote Address Given to the 4th Circumpolar Universities Cooperation Conference, University of Northern British Columbia, Prince George.

The North, or the idea of North, has fascinated people for centuries. Explorers from Britain, Russia, and Scandinavia risked their lives for the glory of "discovering" and mapping the North. Until recently, European and American writers painted the North as a distant, desolate and dangerous place. For Solzenitsyn, the Siberian Gulag represented a vision of hell on earth. But for others, such as the twentieth-century composer, Jean Sibelius, the northern landscape echoed with the sounds of nature, legends and folk songs. Glenn Gould's compo-