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Research Article

The Inuit in the Arctic Council: How Does Depiction Differ?

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Abstract: The fact that Indigenous Peoples' organizations have "Permanent Participant" status in the Arctic Council is often touted as one of the most positive features of the organization. However, the significance of being a permanent participant is contested. How does the Arctic Council itself characterize the status of Inuit, and permanent participants in general? How does the Inuit Circumpolar Council characterize its position in the Arctic Council? How do the governments of Canada, Denmark, Russia, and the United States—countries where Inuit reside—describe the participation of Inuit? This article presents a content analysis of a selection of primary documents to illuminate the answers to these questions. The major finding is that Inuit describe their status as leaders in the Arctic Council, while states and the Arctic Council itself describes them as participants.

Introduction

The fact that Indigenous Peoples' organizations have "Permanent Participant" status in the Arctic Council is one of the defining features of the institution. The Arctic Council (AC) is an international institution consisting of all states with land in the Arctic—Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden, and the United States; permanent participant status means that Indigenous Peoples' organizations work in the institution with most of the same powers as states, save voting rights. The AC is the only international institution in which Indigenous Peoples have such a significant role. This article studies the discourse around the role of Inuit in the AC and the depiction of what the status means. It examines the way that the AC describes the role of Indigenous Peoples, as well as characterizations from governments in the states where Inuit territory lies (Canada, Denmark via Greenland, Russia, and the United States). This article then contrasts these discourses with portrayals of the role of Indigenous Peoples from the Inuit Circumpolar Council, which is the major international group representing Inuit people.

The AC is important because it is the pre-eminent international institution focusing specifically on Arctic issues and consisting of all Arctic states; six Indigenous Peoples' organizations possess permanent participant status—the Inuit Circumpolar Council, the Aleut International Association, the Arctic Athabaskan Council, the Gwich'in Council International, the Inuit Circumpolar Council, the Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples' of the North, and the Saami Council. The AC facilitates cooperation on environmental protection and sustainable development; and it organizes collaborative technical projects, joint research, and information sharing. It is occasionally a venue in which to negotiate international agreements. For example, the AC coordinated the creation of the 2004 *Arctic Climate Impact Assessment*, a climate change synthesis report with key contributions from Indigenous Peoples; this project led to follow-up assessments and information sharing mechanisms. It was the venue that governments used to create international agreements on search and rescue (2011), oil spill response (2013), and scientific cooperation (2017); all eight Arctic states are signatories to these agreements.

Indigenous Peoples, including Inuit, play a key role in the AC as non-voting members. In some ways, the Inuit's significant state-like powers make them leaders in the institution. Indigenous Peoples' organizations have the right to attend all AC meetings, propose AC projects, lead those projects, participate in initiatives, and comment in meetings.¹ The AC's rules of procedure describe permanent participants' status, role, and rights as distinct from states. They

have almost all the powers of states in the institution, save one—the Arctic Council makes decisions by consensus of the member states.² In other words, the institution undertakes decisions if all member states vote yes and Indigenous Peoples' organizations do not get a vote in this process. A norm has emerged in the institution such that a project should not move forward against strong opposition from Indigenous Peoples' organizations. Nonetheless, this convention is informal. Based on the situation around voting, another conclusion might be that Inuit have a role that precludes true leadership, or participation in the truest sense of the word.

The purpose of this article is to understand the framing of the role of Inuit in the AC. The framing of their role impacts the understanding of their power, which can affect their institutional influence in a tangible way. Are they seen as state-like leaders, or watchers? The answer to this question might impact whether states treat Indigenous Peoples' organizations as equals, or more like consultants. Specifically, this research examines three research questions. How does the AC itself characterize the status of the Inuit organizations and permanent participants in general? How does the Inuit Circumpolar Council depict its position in the AC and, by extension, the position of other Indigenous Peoples? How do the governments of Canada, Denmark, Russia, and the United States describe the participation of Inuit in Arctic governance? As mentioned, this research focuses on the four states where Inuit territory lies. This research presents a discourse analysis of eighteen primary documents to illuminate the answers to these questions. As this article will show, official AC documents tend to describe the Inuit and Indigenous Peoples' organizations as full participants in activities. This description is logical given their title (permanent participants), but underplays their potential leadership role in the institution (as potential project leaders). In contrast, some governments ascribe a more active role. Meanwhile, Inuit define their role as true leaders in the region and the AC. The next section provides an overview of existing literature, while the second section describes the method. The third section gives the results of the analysis, and the conclusion summarizes the findings in relation to the hypotheses.

Literature

Literature on Arctic Council discourse focuses on general descriptions of the Arctic in media and concludes that those descriptions impact public opinion. Previous work has found that media description of the AC in Canada and the United States is largely accurate in accounting its role and function; such accounts occur in the context of reporting on climate change or perceived Arctic regional tensions.³ Landriault argues that the way the media writes about the Arctic impacts the way the public understands the issue: "The less attention newspapers pay to the

Arctic, the less public opinion approves of confrontational strategies to deal with circumpolar issues.⁷⁴ The author finds a link between media coverage and public opinion: “In fact, more positive coverage of Arctic issues during the 2010–2015 period coincided with more support for seeking compromises and negotiations in Canadian public opinion.”⁷⁵ He further writes that governmental actors have a particularly crucial role in building discourse: “Thus, public preferences can be tilted in specific directions, which makes them particularly susceptible to partisan political messaging.”⁷⁶ The language used to describe Indigenous Peoples can impact the way people think about these Indigenous organizations and their influence.

Existing literature finds that environment and economy are frames frequently present in discourse about the Arctic region. I have argued that previous governments, namely the Harper government in Canada (2006–2015), underplayed the threat of Arctic climate change to the livelihood of Arctic residents and, by extension, to Indigenous Peoples, focusing instead on the threat to the ecosystem.⁷⁷ Government rhetoric frequently frames climate change as a threat to ecosystems and wildlife.⁷⁸ Lara Johannsdottir and David Cook study the Arctic Circle Assembly, a major international conference sponsored by the Government of Iceland to facilitate collaborative opportunities between governments and non-state actors. They find that early Arctic Circle Assembly events focused on “development, energy, security, research and science, challenges, cooperation and businesses,” but not necessarily Indigenous Peoples.⁷⁹ This article seeks to add to this earlier research by explicitly studying the description of Inuit in government discourse about the Arctic Council.

Extensive literature regarding discourse around Indigenous Peoples often focuses on depictions of Indigenous culture in education materials and government rhetoric; a major finding in this literature is that government discourse is often problematic. The current literature about Indigenous Peoples in the AC examines their role, influence, and power, but not explicitly discourses and frames (i.e., the significance and limits of the language used).⁸⁰ Beyond literature on the AC, Robert Harding finds that, historically, a dominant media discourse regarding Indigenous Peoples is that they represent a threat to Canada, in ways both implicit and explicit.⁸¹ Whitney Lackenbauer finds that media reports frequently mischaracterize the role and powers of the Canadian Rangers (reserves of the Canadian armed forces), the majority of whom are Indigenous.⁸² Peter Nines uncovers that Australian and Canadian textbooks describing Indigenous lifestyles sometimes include language that might inadvertently reinforce negative stereotypes (such as their way of life being “traditional”).⁸³ Writers have been critical that government discourse on Indigenous Peoples draws distinctions between Indigenous people living on reserves and urban centres when discussing their rights.⁸⁴ In contrast, M. Lynn Aylward argues that elements of Inuit culture

and practices are common in the curriculum of Nunavut despite the Western epistemological basis of the material.⁸⁵ Looking beyond the AC, existing literature on discourse finds that government rhetoric often problematizes the role of Indigenous Peoples in history and Canadian society. The research reported in this article helps uncover whether these themes carry forward to discourse on the AC.

Inuit critiques of existing research and discourse on Indigenous Peoples emphasize that interactions in the Arctic region should reflect Inuit Knowledge and priorities. Proponents of community-based research call for information exchanges that are authentic,⁸⁶ co-created, mutually beneficial, and organically constructed,⁸⁷ while developing local capacity and partnerships.⁸⁸ These relationships must arise through experience over time⁸⁹ and be collaborative with community members.⁹⁰ The research often includes strategies for community dissemination.⁹¹ Pitseolak Pfeifer writes,

Arctic research must ensure that 1) Inuit knowledge and everyday practices on the land are recognized as a qualitative mode of inquiry producing scientific evidence, and 2) Western ethical research and publication standards do not exclude recognition of Inuit communities (i.e., hunters, harvesters, and Knowledge Keepers) as equally valid references.⁹²

The largest organization that domestically represents Inuit who live in Canada, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, says, “Current policies that structure federal Inuit Nunangat research funding processes tend to curtail Inuit self-determination in research and consequently marginalize Inuit research priorities.”⁹³ They continue, “This hampers our collective ability to document and create the knowledge required to more effectively address the needs of our people.”⁹⁴ A dominant theme in this literature is that Indigenous Peoples must be partners and leaders in developing Arctic research. This article examines whether this theme of collaboration carries forward to discourse on the AC.

Method

This article undertakes a discourse analysis that examines the narrative around permanent participants. It examines eighteen key documents that describe the role of Inuit. Documents include: 1) all of the existing up-to-date Arctic Council documents that describe its role and structure, chosen from the complete set of documents available online;⁹⁵ 2) all of the most recent annual reports from the Inuit Circumpolar Council that describe the role and activities of the group, also available online;⁹⁶ and 3) the most recent national Arctic strategies from Canada, Denmark, Russia, and the United States, which discuss official policies on the AC and Indigenous Peoples. Table 1 summarizes these documents.

Table 1. Summary of documents included in analysis.

Document Title	Year	Origin (SAO or Ministerial Meeting)
The Ottawa Declaration	1996	Arctic Council Ministerial Meeting
Basics of the State Policy of the Russian Federation in the Arctic for the Period till 2020 and for a Further Perspective	2009	Russian Federation
Kingdom of Denmark Strategy for the Arctic 2011–2020	2011	Kingdom of Denmark Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Arctic Council Rules of Procedure	2013	Arctic Council Ministerial Meeting
2014-2015 Annual Report	2015	Inuit Circumpolar Council Canada
2015-2016 Annual Report	2016	Inuit Circumpolar Council Canada
Report on Arctic Policy: International Security Advisory Board	2016	United States Department of Defence
2016-2017 Annual Report	2017	Inuit Circumpolar Council Canada
The Arctic Council: A Backgrounder	2017	Arctic Council Secretariat
The Arctic Council: A Forum for Peace and Cooperation	2017	Arctic Council Ministerial Meeting
2017-2018 Annual Report	2018	Inuit Circumpolar Council Canada
2018-2019 Annual Report	2019	Inuit Circumpolar Council Canada
Arctic Council – ICC Activities	2019	Inuit Circumpolar Council International
Arctic and Northern Policy Framework International Chapter	2019	Crown–Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada
Ministerial Statement Presented by Jimmy Stotts – Arctic Change	2019	Arctic Council Ministerial Meeting
A Quick Guide to the Arctic Council	2019	Arctic Council Secretariat
Report to Congress: Department of Defense Arctic Strategy	2019	United States Department of Defence
Together Towards a Sustainable Arctic: Iceland’s Arctic Council Chairmanship 2019–2021	2019	Arctic Council Ministerial Meeting

The goal was to choose the most important documents out of all documents available. The explicit and implicit meanings of the words used are the diagnostic variable of this research. Discourse analysis has shortcomings in that it often assumes that descriptions and rhetoric reflect real positions and policy; this research assumes, based on previously summarized work by Landriault, that discourse can shape our understandings regardless of intent. This article focuses specifically on Inuit and on policy currently in effect.

To complete the analysis, the words “Inuit,” “Indigenous,” and “Permanent Participant” were searched in the documents using a standard word processor and the wording employed was noted, summarized below. I noted, for example, whether the documents describe Inuit as leaders, contributors, or participants. This difference in language, between “participant” and “contributor,” is not a passive variation; participation involves taking part in something, while contributing involves supplying something of significance. To say that Inuit contribute means that they supply something that impacts the outcome of a process; to say that Inuit participate means they share in a process. For example, the Canadian Oxford Dictionary (2004) defines “participate” as, “To share or take part in”; “contribute” means, “Give (money, an idea, help, etc.) towards a common purpose; help to bring about a result.” A contribution is greater than mere participation, with or without being described as “active.” Table 2 summarizes these results.

Analysis

The Arctic Council

Arctic Council documents frequently indicate that Indigenous Peoples are participants and consultants, as opposed to contributors; however, these documents acknowledge that their contributions are important. The AC has created two documents intended to be a reference for those who are not familiar with the institution; neither identifies Indigenous Peoples as leaders. The document *The Arctic Council: A Backgrounder* (2017) says, “The category of Permanent Participant was created to provide for active participation and full consultation with the Arctic Indigenous Peoples within the Council.”²⁷ As per a *Quick Guide To the Arctic Council* (2019), “The eight Arctic States together with the six Arctic Indigenous Peoples’ Organizations have achieved mutual understanding and trust, addressed issues of common concern, strengthened cooperation, and influenced international action.”²⁸ It adds, “Moreover, the cooperation with Arctic Council Observers and other stakeholders is essential to tackle the interconnected effects of Arctic change.”²⁹ The document that established the role of Indigenous Peoples in the Arctic Council (the 1996 Ottawa Declaration) acknowledges in its preamble the importance of the role these groups can play in the region: “Recognizing traditional knowledge of the [I]ndigenous people of the Arctic and

their communities and taking note of its importance and that of Arctic science and research to the collective understanding of the circumpolar Arctic.³⁰ Overall, however, the AC does not use the word “leadership” to describe Indigenous Peoples; it describes them as participants or consultants. These documents clearly frame that states lead the AC.

Recent documents continue these trends. An update to the first articulation of the role of Indigenous Peoples, created to mark the twentieth anniversary of the AC (in the 2017 *The Arctic Council: A Forum for Peace and Cooperation*), indicates that states intend to work together with these groups: “The success of the Arctic Council can also be attributed to the active participation of the [I]ndigenous Permanent Participants”; “On this twentieth anniversary of the Arctic Council, we the Arctic States reaffirm our commitment to the principles of the Ottawa Declaration, to work together and with the [Indigenous Permanent Participants], and to promote prosperity, development, and environmental sustainability for the benefit of generations to come.”³¹ The *Arctic Council Rules of Procedure* (1998, updated 2013 and 2016) clearly indicate that the role of Indigenous Peoples is to participate: “Arctic States and Permanent Participants may participate in all meetings and activities of the Arctic Council, and may be represented by a head of delegation and such other representatives as each Arctic State and Permanent Participant deems necessary.”³² In 2019, the Government of Iceland released a chairmanship program for the AC, laying out broad goals for the future. It identified permanent participants as key consultants with whom states must work: “In partnership with the other Member States and Permanent Participants, the Chairmanship will continue supporting many ongoing activities of Working Groups and other subsidiary bodies, as well as introducing a number of new projects in the Arctic Council work plan for 2019–2021.”³³ It says, “Close consultations between the Member States and the Permanent Participants must continue.”³⁴ It indicates that Inuit have involvement in governance of the institution: “Decisions are taken by consensus among the eight Arctic Council States, with full consultation and involvement of the Permanent Participants.”³⁵

Overall, official AC documents are fairly conservative when describing the role of Inuit in the Arctic region, and Indigenous Peoples in general, but are not entirely problematic. They describe these groups as participants in the AC, which is accurate in terms of their formal role as permanent participants.

Table 2. Key descriptions of Indigenous Peoples’ organizations in documents related to the Arctic Council

Document Title	Year	Key Description of Indigenous Peoples’ Organizations
<i>Arctic Council Documents</i>		
The Ottawa Declaration	1996	“Recognizing traditional knowledge”
Arctic Council Rules of Procedure	2013 (updated 2016)	“Participate in all meetings and activities”
The Arctic Council: A Backgrounder	2017	“Active participation and full consultation”
The Arctic Council: A Forum for Peace and Cooperation	2017	“Active participation”
A Quick Guide to the Arctic Council	2019	“Achieved mutual understanding and trust”
Together Towards a Sustainable Arctic: Iceland’s Arctic Council Chairmanship 2019–2021	2019	“Consultation and involvement”
<i>ICC Documents</i>		
2014-2015 Annual Report	2015	“Strong leadership role”
2015-2016 Annual Report	2016	“Leadership on ... initiatives”
2016-2017 Annual Report	2017	“Active participation and full consultation”
2017-2018 Annual Report	2018	“Active participation and full consultation”
2018-2019 Annual Report	2019	“Strong voice”
Arctic Council ICC Activities	2019	“Work ... towards the creation of the Arctic Council”
Ministerial Statement Presented by Jimmy Stotts – Arctic Change	2019	“Meaningful engagement”
<i>Government Documents</i>		
Basics of the State Policy of the Russian Federation in the Arctic for the Period till 2020 and for a Further Perspective	2009	<No mention>
Kingdom of Denmark Strategy for the Arctic 2011–2020	2011	“Involved in research”
Report on Arctic Policy: International Security Advisory Board	2016	Engagement
Arctic and Northern Policy Framework International Chapter	2019	“Partner”
Report to Congress: Department of Defense Arctic Strategy	2019	Engagement

The Inuit Circumpolar Council

The Canadian branch of the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC) is more likely to describe Inuit as leaders in Arctic governance, painting a picture of the ICC as a contributor to solving important regional issues. Its *2014-2015 Annual Report* said, “ICC Canada continues to play a strong leadership role within the Arctic Council.”³⁶ It goes on, “The work undertaken by ICC Canada on behalf of Canadian Inuit and in collaboration with other ICC offices in the 8-state Arctic Council is at both the technical and political levels.”³⁷ The *2018-2019 Annual Report* clearly indicates that the ICC is a leader in the AC: “ICC has continued its leadership on suicide prevention and mental wellness initiatives within the Arctic Council.”³⁸ The report also emphasizes that the group plays an important role: “The ICC (Canada) President also noted that ICC represents over 160,000 Inuit voices from four countries and is a strong voice for Inuit rights at the Arctic Council, holding well-respected Permanent Participant status”³⁹; and “ICC also actively uses its Consultative Status within the United Nations.”⁴⁰ The report also says, “The Arctic Council is a platform for Inuit voices to be heard in the Arctic and globally.”⁴¹ It continues, “ICC (Canada) participation is supported by a multi-year Global Affairs Canada agreement which allows the organization to secure other government funding [and] allows ICC (Canada) to leverage support from non-government funders.”⁴²

However, ICC discourse does mirror AC descriptions of the group to an extent, sometimes describing the group as a participant. Annual reports from 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 both contain this description: “The Indigenous Peoples in the respective countries have active participation and full consultation as Permanent Participants.”⁴³ Overall, the most progressive descriptions of the leadership role of Indigenous Peoples in Arctic governance come from descriptions found in documents from the ICC; they use the word “leadership” when describing their role.

The ICC website includes a description of its work in the AC, which paints the group as a leader by emphasizing its role in the founding of the AC. The site says, “We are proud of the work we have done towards the creation of the Arctic Council in 1996, notably the efforts of former ICC Chair Mary Simon.”⁴⁴ It also says, “In fact, it was founded in Ottawa, and Canada was the first Chair from 1996-1998.”⁴⁵ A major statement on the role of Indigenous Peoples in Arctic governance occurred at the May 2019 meetings of the AC. The president of ICC Alaska, Jimmy Stotts, said, “Participation is one thing, having influence is another.”⁴⁶ He elaborated, “The term meaningful engagement has a different meaning for the Arctic states than it does for the Permanent Participants.”⁴⁷ He set out a set of priorities for the AC:

We would like to see the Arctic Council address some of the issues important to us: wildlife management and food security; the infrastructure and social services deficit; physical and environmental health issues, including the horror of suicide; and culture and language protection. It’s time to address the problems faced by Arctic [I]ndigenous communities. It’s time to seriously listen to the solutions offered by ICC and the other Permanent Participants. It’s time to use Indigenous Knowledge as called for at the beginning of the Arctic Council.⁴⁸

Overall, the ICC describes itself as a leader possessing influence in Arctic governance and the AC on a fairly consistent basis; the AC does not describe the role in this way, however, demonstrating discordance in framing. The ICC does not always describe itself as a leader in the AC, but it does so more than states.

Governments

The national Arctic strategies for the governments of Canada and Denmark describe Indigenous Peoples not as participants, contributors, or leaders, but rather as partners. Canada’s “Arctic and Northern Policy Framework International Chapter” (2019) uses the word partner in several instances. It says, “This arrangement has been crucial to the Arctic Council’s success, as it ensures Indigenous voices are heard and reflected in Arctic Council deliberations and decisions.”⁴⁹ It also says, for example,

We will take an active role in supporting the development of a pan-Arctic network of marine protected areas at the Arctic Council and we will continue to partner with Indigenous Peoples to recognize and manage culturally and environmentally significant areas and pursue additional conservation measures, including those led through Indigenous management authorities.⁵⁰

Denmark’s *Kingdom of Denmark Strategy for the Arctic 2011–2020* (2011) also describes a partnership that gives Indigenous Peoples significant independence and self-determination: “Denmark and Greenland will continue constructive cooperation to strengthen [I]ndigenous Peoples’ rights to control their own development and their own political, economic, social and cultural situation.”⁵¹ It also says, “Indigenous Peoples in the Arctic to a larger extent should be involved in research, health promotion and prevention.”⁵² The descriptions from Canada and Denmark are fairly progressive, describing Inuit as an active contributor to government initiatives.

The governments of Russia and the United States both barely mention Inuit or Indigenous Peoples in their official state positions, each with only a few mentions. Russia's "Basics of the State Policy of the Russian Federation in the Arctic for the Period till 2020 and for a Further Perspective" (2009) mentions Indigenous Peoples only in three instances and does not mention Inuit at all. It says that a goal is "improvement of quality of life of the indigenous population and social conditions of economic activities in the Arctic."⁵³ None of these instances describe Inuit as contributors or leaders. The most up-to-date articulation of United States Arctic policy is in the 2019 *Report to Congress: Department of Defense Arctic Strategy* and the 2016 *Report on Arctic Policy: International Security Advisory Board*. Between these two documents, there are only two mentions of Indigenous Peoples, pledging engagement with these communities. Once again, there is no description of Inuit as leaders in these documents.⁵⁴

Overall, the governments of Canada and Denmark are more expansive in their description of Indigenous Peoples in Arctic governance, indicating that Indigenous organizations and people are partners with domestic governments. They depict these groups as being separate from sovereign states to an extent. The governments of Russia and the United States are more notable for what they do *not* say. They barely mention Indigenous Peoples in Arctic governance and do not clearly assign a role for these actors.

Table 2 reveals some trends. Arctic Council documents do not describe Inuit or Indigenous Peoples' organizations as leaders—they are participants in three of the documents examined and consultants in another. The other two documents consulted do not use the word "leadership" to describe Indigenous Peoples. The ICC describes itself as a leader in the AC in three documents. Two others describe a strong voice and meaningful participation. Two other documents are in line with AC documents; one other emphasizes the leadership role the ICC has played in creating the AC. Finally, the governments of Canada and Denmark describe Indigenous Peoples as partners, and the governments of Russia and the United States do not.

Conclusion

How does the Arctic Council itself characterize the status of Inuit, and permanent participants in general? Official AC documents describe permanent participants fairly conservatively, as groups that participate in the institution. However, the descriptions are not problematic. They do not describe these groups as passive actors; they identify their role as "active," "essential," and of "importance." The description is accurate given the current formal position of Inuit in the AC as permanent participants through the Inuit Circumpolar Council. In explaining

institutional success, the AC indicates that cooperation with Indigenous Peoples is important, and necessary to address issues in the future. More recent AC documents are a bit more liberal in describing the role of Indigenous Peoples, using words like "involvement" and "consultation."

How do the governments of Canada, Denmark, Russia, and the United States describe the participation of Inuit in Arctic governance? A contrast is present in official government policy from Canada and Denmark, putting Inuit forward as partners in governance and the region overall. Government policy from Canada and Denmark assert a commitment to be partners with Indigenous Peoples. They indicate that Inuit and Indigenous Peoples have a right to involvement in decisions impacting their interests. Meanwhile, documents from the governments of Russia and the United States mention Indigenous Peoples only briefly. However, none of the eleven documents examined from governments and the AC used a word related to leadership to describe Inuit or any other Arctic Indigenous group.

How does the Inuit Circumpolar Council depict its position in the AC, and by extension the position of other Indigenous Peoples? Inuit themselves, through the primary advocacy organization delegated to speak on their behalf (the ICC), often emphasize their leadership in the region and their important contributions. Of the seven documents examined, depictions of Inuit as important leaders in solving regional issues are not difficult to find. The documents describe Inuit as working in "collaboration" with "leadership" and "a strong voice for Inuit rights." They also describe the AC as a "platform" to further Inuit rights that Inuit helped to create. Nonetheless, there are several depictions of Inuit that are in line with that which we see in government and AC documents. Inuit portray their activities in a way that emphasizes their role as contributors to Arctic governance. Statements from Inuit have indicated that their role in the affairs of the AC should be greater.

Why is this information significant? What are directions for future research? It may seem obvious that Inuit would describe their role more liberally than would states; they have made many important contributions to the AC, such as previously mentioned contributions to the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment. Yet, given their unique role in the AC, and general international rhetoric to recognize and empower Indigenous Peoples, we might find state conservatism somewhat surprising. Advocates for Indigenous rights may find this conclusion disappointing. State rhetoric ascribes more traditional labels to the permanent participants, as organizations that participate but do not provide the same leadership roles in international institutions as do states. However, we do not find the type of problematic rhetoric found in previous studies looking at items such as government textbooks. Inuit describe their activities in terms that put them in the same category as states, to which we can ascribe certain sovereignty and rights in the international system. These descriptions are similar to the type of

language found in literature about the role of Inuit in research about their home region. From this situation, we can draw a rhetorical disconnect. While the AC usually is a collaborative and cooperative body, the lack of recognition for the role of Indigenous Peoples in general could be a source of disagreement and tension in the future.

Previous research (such as work by Landriault) has demonstrated that the language used about Indigenous Peoples can impact the way people think about Indigenous organizations and their influence. It is reasonable to speculate that more depictions describing Inuit as leaders in the Arctic Council are likely to increase their perceived legitimacy in the region among the general public. This work does not examine the sources of discourse around Indigenous Peoples, the motivation of actors for this discourse, or the specific leadership activities of Indigenous Peoples in Arctic governance. It limits the analysis to one Indigenous group, Inuit; future research might study other Indigenous Peoples and permanent participants. It also focuses specifically on policy currently in effect; future work might examine historical institutions such as the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy.

Future research can examine whether descriptions of Indigenous Peoples as participants in processes, rather than as contributors, impacts public or individual perceptions of their power. Governments increasingly pledge to work constructively with Indigenous Peoples as an important goal in reconciliation in the post-colonial context. This work shows that discourse from governments lags behind that from Indigenous Peoples themselves.

Notes

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