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**Research Article**

# Canada's Arctic Policies & Truth and Reconciliation: An Examination of Canada's Arctic and Northern Policy Framework through a Reconciliation Lens

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Abstract: In September 2019, the Canadian Government launched Canada's Arctic and Northern Policy Framework. One of the main goals of the framework is to achieve reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples by way of taking a co-development approach. But what does reconciliation look like exactly? And how are we to know whether the federal government is meeting the objective of reconciliation in the development of this framework? Since the release of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada in December 2015, a number of scholars have written about the question of how to attain reconciliation. One scholar in particular, Deborah McGregor, an Anishinaabe scholar from Whitefish River First Nation, Birch Island, Ontario, proposes six suggestions from which to assess whether reconciliation processes have been implemented in post-secondary institutions. McGregor concludes that these suggestions, while not exhaustive, represent a place from which to begin dialogue about establishing reconciliatory processes within the institution. Using McGregor's suggestions, this article examines whether the federal government has implemented reconciliatory processes in the development of Canada's Arctic and Northern Policy Framework.

## Introduction

In 2018, Deborah McGregor, an Anishinaabe scholar from Whitefish River First Nation, Birch Island, Ontario, put forward the idea of "reconciliation research" in response to the transformative potential of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) and its Calls to Action (McGregor, 2018). Reconciliation research depicts a vision of what would be at the centre of all research practices operating out of the post-secondary institution context if the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and Calls to Action were actually being practised. In the article, McGregor presents six suggestions for evaluating whether such a vision is actualizing, and suggests these can be used as a starting point for dialogue on reconciliation. While McGregor's concept of reconciliation research is used in reference to post-secondary institutions, it offers a unique entry point into evaluating how reconciliation practices can be attained in broader contexts. Using McGregor's suggestions as a lens, this article analyzes Canada's Arctic and Northern Policy Framework (Canada, 2019), in conjunction with the New Shared Arctic Leadership Model report (Simon, 2017), to identify the ways in which Canada's Arctic policy and program development processes are actualizing reconciliatory practices, and to identify further work that needs to be done.

## The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada

The concept of reconciliation in Canada centres around the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples, and the history and contemporary issue of assimilative policies that were (and arguably continue to be) developed by non-Indigenous people. There is a broader discussion on the concept of reconciliation as it relates to truth commissions across the globe, which states that reconciliation is often sought in response to conflict and human atrocities that are in need of both truth and justice, with the intention not solely to prosecute the perpetrators but to ensure that perpetrators are held accountable and that the victims feel heard (for further detail, see Short, 2005). While reconciliation is the end goal, truth commissions are typically the vehicle to arrive at that goal.

In Canada, the term reconciliation began taking shape in 1991, when the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples was established. The Commission developed a report that investigated the historical and contemporary relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples in Canada (RCAP, 1996). It included a specific chapter on the residential school system. In 1997, in response to this report, the federal government released "Gathering Strength: Canada's Aboriginal Action Plan," which included the government's acknowledgement of the role it played in residential schools (Canada, 1997). Following the release of the plan, a commitment of $350 million was announced for community-based healing as a beginning towards reconciliation. In 2006, the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement (IRSSA) was announced. In this settlement of a class action lawsuit initiated by Indigenous Peoples, the Canadian federal government recognized the harm caused by residential schools. In the compensation package for the IRSSA, $60 million was announced for a Truth and Reconciliation Commission to gather the experiences faced by survivors of the residential schools (Canada, 2021). The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) was established in 2008. The purpose of the TRC was to document the history and ongoing impacts of residential schools on Indigenous people in Canada. The TRC defines reconciliation as follows:

> To the Commission, reconciliation is about establishing and maintaining mutually respectful relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in this country. In order for that to happen, there has to be awareness of the past acknowledgement of the harm that has been inflicted, atonement for the causes, and action to change behaviour. (TRC, 2015a, p. 6–7)

The mandate of the TRC was twofold:

> Reveal to Canadians the complex truth about the history and the ongoing legacy of the church-run residential schools, in a manner that fully documents the individual and collective harms perpetrated against Aboriginal peoples, and honours the resilience and courage of former students, their families, and communities; and
>
> Guide and inspire a process of truth and healing, leading toward reconciliation within Aboriginal families, and between Aboriginal peoples and non-Aboriginal communities, churches, governments, and Canadians generally. The process was to work to renew relationships on a basis of inclusion, mutual understanding, and respect. (TRC, 2015a, p. 23)

To achieve this mandate, three commissioners were appointed with a number of requirements for them to fulfill. Some of these requirements included developing an Indian Residential School Survivor Committee (IRSSC) to provide advice, holding events to provide the opportunity to share and document experiences, developing a research centre that would hold all documents and records gathered by the Commission, and providing recommendations based on the overall findings from the Commission. In 2015, the TRC released its final report with a total of 94 Calls to Action (TRC, 2015b). These Calls to Action have become a focus for all institutions in Canada looking to engage in reconciliatory processes

with Indigenous Peoples. It was also upon the release of this report that the term reconciliation became widely used in Canada.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada has been met with various perspectives within Indigenous studies scholarship. A common theme across the literature is the importance of using Indigenous Knowledges, perspectives and practices as the basis from which to define, work towards, and advance reconciliation. A few examples showcase this:

> research agendas should draw upon Indigenous research paradigms which privilege Indigenous worldviews, epistemologies, and knowledges as productive elements in the way forward. (McGregor, 2018, p. 810)

> we focus on Indigenous methodologies and experiential knowledge as a counter-narrative to the Canadian state's notion of reconciliation (Corntassel, 2009, p. 141)

> Indigenous peoples' world views, values, knowledge systems, and laws are integral to reconciliation and resurgence (Regan, 2018, p. 210)

While authors agree on the pertinence of centralizing Indigenous Knowledge, perspectives, and practices towards any kind of reconciliation process, they have different perspectives about how to achieve this. Some authors believe that the TRC is not capable of centring Indigenous world views in the reconciliation process due to the fact that the project itself is coming from the government and not from Indigenous Peoples. Corntassel states, "At its core, reconciliation is a Western concept … Given that reconciliation is not an Indigenous concept, our overarching goals as Indigenous people should not be to restore an asymmetrical power relationship with the state but to restory our communities toward justice" (Corntassel, 2009, p. 145). In alignment with this view, George warns "we must remain critical of the emancipatory potential of these bodies when they work within state-sanctioned legal and political structures" (George, 2020, p. 109). This perspective typically critiques the TRC as doing the opposite of what it claims to do: it is a politics of distraction (George, 2020, p. 88), it is a continuation of colonialism (Kuokkanen, 2020, p. 293), and it mainly seeks to legitimize the status quo (Corntassel, 2009, p. 144). All of these perspectives share the view that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada needs to be put to the side in favour of an Indigenous-based approach to reconciliation.

Other authors highlight that the TRC could offer a transformative opportunity to centre Indigenous Knowledges, perspectives, and practices across Canada. For example, Regan (2018) states that different from other truth and reconciliation commissions, "Canada's TRC was not established unilaterally by the state" and therefore has the ability to provide transformative processes towards reconciliation:

> The commission was created as part of an out-of-court settlement agreement negotiated to resolve lawsuits filed against the federal government and churches by residential school survivors for the abuses they suffered in the schools. Thus the TRC was accountable not only to government and the churches but to residential school survivors, the Assembly of First Nations, and Inuit organizations, who were also parties to the settlement agreement. (Regan, 2018, p. 211)

There is also the view that the TRC has to align with the idea that "Indigenous self-determination is the foundation of authentic reconciliation" (Regan, 2018, p. 212) since the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) is at the centre of the TRC. These authors focus on working with the TRC and the Calls to Action as a transformative possibility towards centring Indigenous Knowledges, perspectives, and practices as opposed to placing the entire Commission's work to the side (Craft & Regan, 2020).

One example of this latter perspective can be seen from Deborah McGregor, an Anishinaabe scholar from Whitefish River First Nation in Ontario, who explores how the findings from the "Truth and Reconciliation Commission can transform the theory and practice of reconciliation research in Canada" (McGregor, 2018, p. 810). Specifically, McGregor uses the TRC as an opportunity to propose the concept of "reconciliation research," meaning that all research within post-secondary institutions should, at its core, be based on reconciliation principles and in alignment with both the Calls to Action and UNDRIP. She provides six suggestions as a place to begin dialogue towards supporting the actualization of reconciliation research, and as a guide to evaluate to what extent a post-secondary institution is addressing reconciliation practices. The six suggestions are: 1. Recognize and reconceptualize the "Indian Problem" as a Canadian problem; 2. Critically assess the existing body of knowledge; 3. Enable structural, systemic and institutional change; 4. Respectfully engage with Indigenous Peoples; 5. Provide for cultural safety; 6. Reconciliation in post-secondary institutions: A call to action. While these suggestions are proposed specifically for post-secondary contexts, they can also provide a way to assess how the Truth and Reconciliation Commission has impacted other institutions identified in the Calls to Action, such as the Canadian Government and, more specifically, Canadian Arctic policy and program development processes.

Since the release of the TRC Final Report, several initiatives developed pertaining to northern Canada have aligned with reconciliation. For example, *CBC News* reported that the 2020 Arctic Winter Games planned for Whitehorse,

Yukon (which were cancelled at the last minute due to the COVID-19 pandemic), would have implemented Call to Action 91—"to ensure that Indigenous peoples' territorial protocols are respected, and local Indigenous communities are engaged in all aspects of planning and participating in such events" (TRC, 2015b). This would have included a celebration at the Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre with Indigenous performers, and creating three button blankets (Rudyk, 2020). There was also the Qajaq art installation at the Ottawa hospital named *Sivuniksattinu* (For Our Future), "a 17-foot long qajaq covered with kiln-formed glass panels depicting different Inuit stories" (Peloquin, 2020), led and informed by the TRC. Most relevant to this article is the federal government's Canadian Arctic and Northern Policy Framework developed post TRC and Calls to Action, which seeks to advance reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples through co-developing the framework with Indigenous, territorial, and provincial partners.

Since the release of the TRC's final report, studies have emerged that are informed by the Calls to Action, recommending reconciliatory initiatives in northern Canada. A number of these studies are located within the sciences. For example, one study by Liboiron et al. (2021), on plastic pollution in the Eastern Arctic, sought to provide ways to "move … scientific work towards reconciliation while … produce knowledge about environmental pollution in Inuit Nunangat and the Arctic more broadly" (p. 2). Wong et al. (2020) put forward ten calls to action to natural scientists, informed by the authors' experiences in the North. To date, there are no studies that examine Canada's Arctic and Northern Policy Framework as it relates to how policy processes have changed or been impacted by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and Calls to Action, though there is literature on the framework more broadly (please see Kikkert & Lackenbauer, 2019; Exner-Pirot, 2019; Greer, 2019). This article seeks to fill that gap through conducting an analysis of Canada's Arctic and Northern Policy Framework (Canada, 2019) in conjunction with the New Shared Arctic Leadership Model Report (Simon, 2017), using the lens of Deborah McGregor's suggestions to assess to what extent Canada is establishing reconciliation processes in Canadian Arctic policy and program development.

## Methodology

In this article, I use a case study approach that enables me to "take a complex and broad topic and narrow it down into a manageable research question" (Heale & Twycross, 2018, p. 7). The "complex and broad topic" concerns the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada and its 94 Calls to Action, and the ability to use these Calls to Action to transform various contexts to attain reconciliation processes. The "narrowing it down" consists of exploring the question of how the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and Calls to Action have transformed Canada's Arctic policy and program development processes. I explore this question through conducting a close reading (Bass & Linkon, 2008) of Canada's Arctic and Northern Policy Framework (Canada, 2019), in conjunction with the New Shared Arctic Leadership Model report (Simon, 2017), using Deborah McGregor's suggestions as a lens (McGregor, 2018).

I chose these two documents as the former was the official federal government framework document developed after the release of the TRC Final Report, and the latter was a report produced two years earlier, which represented the voices of those in the Canadian Arctic in response to the development of a Canadian Arctic and northern policy framework. I chose to use McGregor's suggestions given that they represent a framework rooted in Indigenous perspectives, which provides a tangible way to think through how an institution can use the TRC and Calls to Action to truly transform its practices. Also, these suggestions are themes that can be found across Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholarship. In this particular article, I focus on three of the six suggestions. The three suggestions include: Respectfully engage with Indigenous Peoples; critically assess the existing body of knowledge; and recognize and reconceptualize the "Indian Problem" as a Canadian problem. I chose these three suggestions because they can be assessed in the first phase of development (that the framework is currently in), which primarily develops the overarching goals of the framework. Once the framework enters the second phase, where governance processes, implementation, and financial planning will be developed, McGregor's remaining three suggestions can be used to assess the status of reconciliation in the development and implementation of the framework. These include: Enable structural, systemic, and institutional change; provide for cultural safety; and reconciliation in post-secondary institutions: A call to action (this last suggestion would be modified for the purposes of a Call to Action for the Canadian Government).

## An Analysis of Reconciliation in Canada's Arctic and Northern Policy Framework and the New Shared Arctic Leadership Model Report

In September 2019, the federal government launched Canada's Arctic and Northern Policy Framework. The purpose of the framework is to close the gaps between northerners and people in southern Canada, specifically in terms of "services, opportunities, and standards of living" (Canada, 2019, p. 1), and to do so through a unique co-development approach.

The document itself is informed by a number of foundational documents, one of which is a 2017 report produced by current Governor General Mary Simon, who at the time was the Minister's Special Representative on Arctic Leadership (and is now Canada's first Indigenous Governor General). Entitled "A New Shared

Arctic Leadership Model" (Simon, 2017), this report was submitted two years before the launch of the framework, and was developed by Simon at the request of the former minister of the former Department of Indigenous and Northern Affairs to provide advice from the people of the North on two key topics:

1. New ambitious conservation goals for the Arctic in the context of sustainable development;

2. The social and economic priorities of Arctic leaders and Indigenous people living in remote Arctic communities. (Simon, 2017, p. 6)

Simon's report drew on engagements across northern Canada in order to represent the diverse voices, and was structured into two parts: "(1) What I heard: Our strengths and challenges in the Arctic; (2) Developing a new Arctic Policy Framework" (Simon, 2017).

In addition to this report (and other foundational documents), the framework is also informed by engagements with several organizations, governments, and leaders, as well as the opportunity for Indigenous, territorial, and provincial partners to develop chapters that articulate their own visions and priorities. Based on the feedback received, the framework was developed into three parts. The first section covers the overall vision of the Canadian Arctic and walks through its past and present. The second section addresses the feedback the federal government received from the engagements, chapters, and foundational documents, and articulates a shared future based on these discussions. The final part outlines the specific goals and objectives that have been set out to accomplish this future and concludes with next steps. Following, I conduct an analysis of Canada's Arctic and Northern Policy Framework (Canada, 2019) and the New Shared Arctic Leadership Model report (Simon, 2017) through three of Deborah McGregor's suggestions for reconciliation research—respectfully engage with Indigenous Peoples; critically assess the existing body of knowledge; and recognize and reconceptualize the "Indian Problem" as a Canadian problem—to assess whether Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission and Calls to Action have transformed Canada's Arctic policy and program development context and to identify what aspects still need work.

*Respectfully Engage with Indigenous Peoples*

McGregor states that too often Indigenous people have been brought into projects as "'research subjects' and participants" (McGregor, 2018, p. 824) and not as equal partners or, as she states, "universities have failed consistently to engage with Indigenous peoples as *people*" (p. 825). Coyle (2017) also cites this issue in "The Transformative Potential of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission:

A Skeptic's Perspective," stating that reconciliation will require "reciprocal engagement to establish a more harmonious relationship grounded in respect for the individual and collective aspirations of Indigenous peoples" (Coyle, 2017, p. 791). One of the biggest issues is that Indigenous Peoples are engaged with not on their terms but on the terms of the institution. From this perspective, engagement becomes more of a checklist exercise, as opposed to an authentic approach to engaging collaboratively. Corntassel (2009) discusses this in the context of what is called asymmetrical power relationships. Corntassel states,

When state objectives, such as certainty and legitimation, tend to override questions of justice, it becomes clear that any pursuit of reconciliation with the state must first acknowledge the asymmetrical power relationships between states and Indigenous peoples which can so easily derail questions of justice and decolonization. (Corntassel, 2009, p. 145)

Given these insights, ensuring Indigenous Peoples are collaboratively a part of the process is central. Ultimately, McGregor talks about the importance of establishing relationships at multiple levels to support dialogue and the mutual exchange of ideas, and holding engagements on equal terms as opposed to the institution's own. The co-development approach that the federal government cites in the development of the framework would, in theory, align nicely with these authors' perspectives on engaging with Indigenous Peoples on equal terms as opposed to just on an institution's terms. To begin with, the engagement is framed around consensus-based traditions of Arctic and northern Indigenous Peoples. It reads:

Inspired by the consensus traditions of Arctic and northern Indigenous peoples, the federal government sought to engage representatives of territories, provinces, and Indigenous peoples as partners in the development of this policy framework. (Canada, 2019, p. 6)

The document identifies who the federal government committed to include in co-developing the framework, which includes: Inuit, First Nations, Métis, territorial governments, and the governments of Manitoba, Quebec, and Newfoundland and Labrador (Canada, 2019).

In addition to committing to working with the above partners, the document also details the types of engagements that took place:

This federal framework is informed by extensive engagement, including:
- Regional roundtables held in Arctic and northern communities
- Internet-based roundtables
- A public submission process (Canada, 2019)

Furthermore, the document states that an important part of the co-development approach was the development of chapters from each of the groups the federal government committed to working with. It reads:

> A crucial element of this innovative, cooperative form of policy making is the inclusion of chapters from our Indigenous, territorial and provincial partners. Through these chapters, our partners speak directly to Canadians and to the world, expressing their own visions, aspirations and priorities. These critical components of the Arctic and Northern Policy Framework map out areas of present and future collaboration between partners and the Government of Canada, and will provide guidance on the implementation of the Framework. (Canada, 2019, p. 2)

Finally, the document outlines the prior extensive work it built upon. It reads:

> In developing this framework, we have built on the extensive work already done by Indigenous, territorial and provincial partners. This includes the Pan-Territorial Vision for Sustainable Development, which is foundational to the framework … Other key policy initiatives that have contributed to the development of the framework include:
> - Strategies developed by Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami such as:
>   - *National Inuit Suicide Prevention Strategy*
>   - *National Inuit Strategy for Research*
> - The *Parnasimautik Consultation Report* produced by Nunavik Inuit
> - The Government of Quebec's Plan Nord
> - The work of the Look North steering committee appointed by the Government of Manitoba
>
> … Another important contribution to this framework was made by Mary Simon, the Special Representative of the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, who advised the federal government on the most pressing issues facing the region. (Canada, 2019, p. 7)

In sum, the document identifies what appears as a fulsome engagement process, including everything from committing to working with Indigenous Peoples, using Indigenous consensus-based practice as a foundational approach to engagement, holding roundtables, using past policy documents, and inviting chapters from each of the impacted representatives in the North.

While this co-development approach is quite fulsome, there are other aspects of the document that raise questions around how effective this engagement process actually was. For example, before listing all of the aspects that constituted the engagement, the document reads:

> All have made considerable contributions. There is not unanimous agreement on all issues, but robust and respectful discussion has shaped this document. (Canada, 2019, p. 6)

Identifying the engagements as "contributions" suggests that there is not an equal participation in the development of the framework, but rather a central source, that being the federal government, that is incorporating aspects of the engagement on its own terms. This kind of language indicates a possible reproduction of asymmetry in the engagement process. Further to this, the document ends with a quote regarding the chapters, stating:

> As part of the development of the framework, we decided it was important for partners to be able to express themselves directly, to lay out their visions, aspirations and priorities. While the framework chapters are an integral part of this process, they do not necessarily reflect the views of either the federal government, or of the other partners. (Canada, 2019, p. 38)

Again here, it is confusing to read that on the one hand the chapters formed an integral part of the development of the framework, while on the other hand they do not represent the federal government's views and are seen as separate communications from the actual framework that is outlined in the document. While these remarks raise questions, they could also mark a difficulty encountered in achieving what was intended with the co-development approach.

In the New Shared Arctic Leadership Model final report, Mary Simon provides what she calls "principles of partnership" (Simon, 2017, p. 21), which could serve as a guide to planning engagement, or working through barriers encountered in engagements with Indigenous Peoples in the North; she also provides guidance about how to best work together to establish reconciliatory relationships. A few of the nine principles include:

> 1. Understanding and honouring the intent of Section 35 of the Constitution Act of 1982: All partners should understand and honour Canada's commitment to upholding Section 35 of the Constitution and strive to achieve forward momentum in defining how Section 35 can be applied to evolving policy and program initiatives.
>
> 2. Reconciliation: Reconciliation in partnerships and policy-making involves, at a minimum, a commitment to restoring relationships, seeing things differently than before, and making changes in power relationships.

5. Arctic leaders know their needs: Recognize that Arctic leaders know their priorities and what is required to achieve success.

9. Respecting Indigenous Knowledge: Indigenous and local knowledge must be valued and promoted equally to western science, in research, planning and decision-making. (Simon, 2017, p. 21–22)

Simon's guidance, specifically principle #2 on reconciliation, could help act as a guide for the federal government in terms of approaching potential obstacles. For example, this principle recommends a commitment to seeing things differently and making changes to power relationships. This principle may be useful for the chapters where the framework document states that there are views not shared by the federal government (or other partners), although these chapters are identified as integral to the framework. Perhaps a further step towards reconciliation would be to ask how those views could be shared or be more centralized in the framework as opposed to remaining on the outside.

*Critically Assess the Existing Body of Knowledge*

McGregor talks about the importance of critically examining "what is currently 'known' about Indigenous peoples" (McGregor, 2018, p. 824), and the knowledge that exists within the institution. She cites the fact that most of this "knowledge" is based upon non-Indigenous people doing research on or about Indigenous Peoples, clarifying that this kind of knowledge does not represent who Indigenous Peoples are. Coyle (2017) also speaks to this point, by stating "A determination to correct the continuing manifestation of colonialism in Canada's relationship with Indigenous peoples implies recognition of their existence and their persistence in shaping that relationship today" (Coyle, 2017, p. 784). In fact, Smith's "Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples" (2005) is based upon the idea that all of what is "known" about Indigenous Peoples has been constructed through colonial research practices, and that decolonizing methodologies need to be put in place in order to create space for Indigenous Peoples to define for themselves who they are. In alignment with all of this, McGregor suggests that a reconciliatory approach would create space for Indigenous Peoples to define who they are and what knowledge is important to know.

In the framework document we come to know northern Canada and the Arctic, and the Indigenous people who live there, in a number of ways. First and foremost, we learn that Indigenous Peoples do not have access to the same living standards and opportunities as other Canadians.

For too long, Canada's Arctic and northern residents, especially Indigenous people, have not had access to the same services, opportunities, and standards of living as those enjoyed by other Canadians. (Canada, 2019, p. 1)

We also know that Indigenous Peoples have been deeply impacted by colonialism, and the document recognizes some of the impacts of pre- and post-settlement.

The impacts of colonialism in the Arctic and the North affected Indigenous peoples in many ways, including diseases, cultural assimilation including through residential schools, coerced relocation, and the drawing of international boundaries severing familial and cultural ties. (Canada, 2019, p. 8)

Finally, the document recognizes some of the achievements of northern Indigenous Peoples over the last fifty years. As an example, it lists various land claim agreements that have been settled. Some of these include the 1975 James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement, the 1984 Inuvialuit Final Agreement, the 1993 Yukon Umbrella Final Agreement, and the 1991 Nunavut Agreement.

Northern Canada is also viewed as an area at risk with both climate change and international and security issues. The document states:

The Canadian North is warming at about 3 times the global average rate, which is affecting the land, biodiversity, cultures and traditions. At the same time, climate change and technology are making the Arctic more accessible. The region has become an important crossroad where issues of climate change, international trade and global security meet. As melting sea ice opens shipping routes, it is also putting the rich wealth of northern natural resources within reach. Increased commercial and tourism interests also bring increased safety and security challenges that include search and rescue and human-created disasters … As the region undergoes rapid environmental change and international interests surge, Canada must demonstrate renewed Arctic leadership. (Canada, 2019, p. 3)

While Mary Simon's report (Simon, 2017) would align with some aspects of these descriptions—for example, the acknowledgement of colonialism and its impacts, or the accomplishments that Indigenous Peoples have achieved—other aspects need to be challenged, such as thinking of Indigenous Peoples as needing to "catch up" to southern Canadians, or seeing the Canadian Arctic as centrally a highly desirable region for international trade and commercial and tourism interests.

Simon outlines in her report how Indigenous Peoples in the Canadian Arctic would like to be seen. To begin with, she states that a common thread in her discussions with people has been a request for a "shift in thinking about the Arctic as a remote, marginal and sparsely populated region of Canada, to thinking about the Arctic as a representation of who we are as an Arctic nation, linked to a new era in intercultural relations, global science and sustainable development" (Simon, 2017, p. 6). The framework could begin with making a shift in this very idea of what the Canadian Arctic is. Instead of it being a place that is highly desirable for international trade and interest, it is a place filled with resilient people who have established self-governance over the past fifty years, and who are willing to represent Canada on the international stage in terms of ensuring Canada's Arctic security in the global context.

Further to this, Simon lists the strengths of Indigenous Peoples in northern Canada. She states,

> In the last 40 years, a lot of hard work has produced:
>
> 1. section 35 of the 1982 Constitution Act, providing constitutional protection to the Aboriginal and treaty rights of Aboriginal peoples in Canada
>
> 2. new governance models, including a new government in Nunavut
>
> 3. constitutionally-protected land claims agreements across the Arctic
>
> 4. devolution agreements concluded with two of three Arctic governments and one in discussion
>
> 5. negotiation of Permanent Participant status for Indigenous organizations on the Arctic Council
>
> 6. the emergence of a 21st century economy in the Arctic that includes wide participation by Indigenous-owned companies
>
> 7. successful models where communities and local champions have taken concrete action on social issues
>
> 8. Canada's full endorsement of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and the Calls to Action by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission
>
> 9. a concerted effort to promote and protect Canadian sovereignty in the Arctic. (Simon, 2017, p. 8–9)

The framework certainly mentions some of these accomplishments, for example the land claim agreements, UNDRIP, the new governance models in Nunavut, and the devolution agreements, two of which have been signed with the Northwest Territories and the Yukon, and one currently in negotiation with Nunavut. For the framework to recognize Indigenous Peoples in the Arctic in the way that they are asking to be represented, the framework could go further to discuss section 35, the emergence of a twenty-first century economy specific to Indigenous-owned companies, and Indigenous Peoples' role in promoting and protecting Canadian sovereignty in the Arctic. These suggestions from Simon are a good place to identify the gaps in the framework regarding how Indigenous Peoples in the Canadian Arctic are recognized within the policy development process, and ways to address those gaps.

*Recognizing and Reconceptualizing the "Indian Problem" as a Canadian Problem*

Deborah McGregor talks about "recognizing and reconceptualizing the 'Indian Problem' as a Canadian Problem." Here, she refers to a statement made by the Honourable Justice Murray Sinclair in regard to the TRC:

> The Honourable Justice Murray Sinclair has stated repeatedly that the findings of the TRC highlight problems which are not uniquely Indigenous: they are problems shared with Canada (and Canadians) based on a shared colonial history and conflict-ridden present. Therefore, we must fundamentally challenge the fact that research continues to focus on 'addressing the Indian Problem' or addressing the damage rather than recognizing that the challenges are faced by us all … 'The Indian Problem' or the 'Indian as a Problem' is a persistent yet fictional construct that continues to haunt Indigenous peoples … (McGregor, 2018, p. 823)

This notion of the "Indian Problem" is discussed across Indigenous studies scholarship. Most notably, Newhouse and Belanger give a detailed account of how this framing has been used over many different governments in their chapter entitled "The Canada Problem in Aboriginal Politics" (2011). They state,

> Since the arrival of the Europeans and the establishment of governments in Canada after 1763, government officials have been trying to decide what to do with the original inhabitants: each government over the years has had a particular view of the 'Indian problem'. At one time or another, the problem would be framed as … how to civilize them; how to assimilate them; and now how to transform them into an ethnic group as part of the multicultural environment of Canada. Each of these views of the Indian problem has led to a particular policy solution and a set of actions by government officials. (Newhouse & Belanger, 2011, p. 355).

In "A Move to Distract: Mobilizing Truth and Reconciliation in Settler Colonial States" (George, 2020), George speaks to this concept of "the Indian problem"

stating that there has been a "trajectory of elimination" (p. 90), whereby the state has developed various policies and programs based on the idea that Indigenous sovereignty is a problem and needs to be fixed (as opposed to honouring Indigenous sovereignty and finding a way to co-exist). In alignment with these authors, McGregor highlights Justice Sinclair's quote to suggest that a reconciliatory approach means, first and foremost, ensuring that this approach to the concept of the "Indian problem" is not repeated, and that it be understood that the concept is rooted in assimilatory perspectives and practices. Once this is acknowledged, work towards reconciliation should be done together, with the "problem" involving all Canadians and hence, the "Indian problem" as the "Canadian problem."

Thinking about this idea in the context of Canada's Arctic and Northern Policy Framework, I ask: does the framework reflect this pattern of the "Indian problem" or does it embrace the notion of a "Canadian problem"? At first glance, the framework appears to embrace the notion of a "Canadian problem" by way of acknowledging that the policies about the North made in Ottawa (southern Canada) have not been successful, and suggesting a co-development approach to developing the framework as a way to remedy these past mistakes. This would essentially indicate a shift from the "Indian problem" to the "Canadian problem." The former minister's foreword to the framework states,

> Our government recognizes that 'made in Ottawa' policies have not been successful. The new approach puts the future into the hands of the people who live there to realize the promise of the Arctic and the North. Through the co-development of the framework, and by working in partnership to realize its vision and implement its goals and objectives, this initiative will advance reconciliation and renew Canada's relationship with Inuit, First Nations, Métis and support the non-Indigenous residents of Canada's Arctic and North. (Canada, 2019, p. 2)

The recognition of the lack of success of northern policies "made in Ottawa" suggests that the framework acknowledges the assimilative nature of past policies, and that there may be a move from conceptualizing policy from the perspective of "the Indian problem" in the Canadian Arctic, to one of a "Canadian problem." Using a "co-development" approach as a way in which to remedy past mistakes shows just how the government plans to approach the framework as a Canadian Problem.

And yet, while this has been recognized in the document, the question remains: does the central problem identified in the framework reflect one of a "Canadian problem" or one of an "Indian problem"? As cited earlier when considering critically assessing the existing body of knowledge, another look at the following quote illuminates the central problem identified in the document:

> For too long, Canada's Arctic and northern residents, especially Indigenous people, have not had access to the same services, opportunities, and standards of living as those enjoyed by other Canadians. There are longstanding inequalities in transportation, energy, communications, employment, community infrastructure, health and education. While almost all past governments have put forward northern strategies, none closed the gaps for the people of the North, or created a lasting legacy of sustainable economic development. (Canada, 2019, p. 1)

This statement suggests that the problem is that Indigenous people living in northern Canada do not have "access to the same services, opportunities, and standards of living" as southern Canadians. In this statement then, there is still the suggestion that Indigenous Peoples are the problem and that they need to be "caught up" to southern Canadians. For it to fully reflect a shift to a "Canadian problem," the process would have to start with the problem as identified by those living in the North. A look to Simon's report provides the groundwork for that kind of approach. She states,

> I kept returning to two vexing questions:
>
> Why, in spite of substantive progress over the past 40 years, including remarkable achievements such as land claims agreements, Constitutional inclusion and precedent-setting court rulings, does the Arctic continue to exhibit among the worst national social indicators for basic wellness?
>
> Why, with all the hard-earned tools of empowerment, do many individuals and families not feel empowered and healthy? Embracing the magnitude of these two questions in my opinion, lies at the heart of a new Arctic Policy Framework. (Simon, 2017, p. 7)

Simon makes clear that these two questions should be at "the heart" of any Canadian Arctic Policy Framework. The current problem as outlined in the framework document does not address these questions as central. Perhaps using the above questions as a starting point for the development of the framework would show a shift from the "Indian Problem" to a "Canadian Problem," as it would reflect a willingness on the part of the federal government to examine the answer to these questions, and to frame a problem that comes from northern Indigenous Peoples as opposed to from policies made in Ottawa.

## Conclusion

Craft and Regan (2020) state that

> reconciliation is not only an ultimate goal but a decolonizing process of journeying in ways that embody everyday acts of resistance, resurgence, and solidarity, coupled with renewed commitments to justice, dialogue, and relationship building. Reconciliation is, after all, according to the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Canada, 'an ongoing process of establishing and maintaining respectful relationships'. (Craft & Regan, 2020, p. xi)

This quote is quite fitting for what this reconciliation analysis of Canada's Arctic and Northern Policy Framework (Canada, 2019) and the New Shared Arctic Leadership Model report (Simon, 2017) has illuminated. On the one hand, the analysis reveals the framework has been impacted by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada through nuanced attempts by the federal government to establish reconciliatory processes in the development of the framework. For example, establishing a co-development approach to developing the framework aligns with the suggestion to "respectfully engage with Indigenous Peoples" (McGregor, 2018, p. 824). Recognizing the impacts of colonialism and the accomplishments over the past fifty years aligns with the suggestion to "critically assess the existing body of knowledge" (McGregor, 2018, p. 823). Finally, acknowledging the fact that policies "made in Ottawa" are not always successful aligns with the suggestion to "recognize and reconceptualize the 'Indian problem' as a Canadian problem" (McGregor, 2018, p. 823).

On the other hand, there are still gaps that need to be addressed to truly see a process of reconciliation practices on the ground. For example, using the framework's chapters or Simon's principles of partnership as the starting point for the framework would take the current co-development approach one step further to a reconciliation-based approach. Another example would be using Simon's report to describe who Indigenous Peoples in the Canadian Arctic are as a way in which to move beyond what has been previously produced and to enable Indigenous Peoples to define what that is within the framework. Finally, using Simon's recommendations on what should be at the heart of any future Canadian Arctic and northern policy framework, would ensure that the problem that the framework is based around to begin with starts with the problems identified by northern Indigenous Peoples themselves, and in that way would be based in a reconciliatory approach.

As work on the framework moves into the next stages of implementation, the progress made and the ongoing gaps can be taken to further move dialogue with partners and to continue building relationships so that reconciliatory processes can actualize in the Canadian Arctic policy and program development context. Moving into the next stages of implementation will also allow for an opportunity to further this analysis by examining McGregor's (2018) three remaining suggestions more closely. The lessons from this analysis are also significant for other reconciliatory initiatives taking place in northern and Arctic Canada, and will allow for a "decolonizing process of journeying" (Craft & Regan, 2020) to unfold so that reconciliatory processes can be seen unfolding across the various contexts in the North.

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