**OUR ICE DEPENDENT WORLD**

**IMPACTS AND CHALLENGES FOR THE INUIT OF NUNAVIK, ARCTIC QUEBEC, CANADA**

**PRESENTATION BY**

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The focus of this 6th Assembly of the Northern Research Forum in on the relationship and working of the society/nature interface requiring two intertwined questions to be addressed:

FIRST, what will be the economic, industrial, cultural and political *consequences* of the accelerating global ice melt in different time spans, medium and long term?

SECOND, what economic, industrial, cultural and political *possibilities* and *challenges* are facing humankind in light of global ice reduction?

**The Arctic has changed and will continue to change**

What have we been hearing or reading in recent years?

*The Arctic is being squizzed!*

*In 2007, the largest recorded tundra fire in the circumpolar Arctic released approximately as much carbon into the atmosphere as the tundra has stored in the previous 50 years (Journal Nature, 2011).*

*According to the U.S. Geological Survey, Greenland’s offshore regions may contain up to 50 billion barrels of oil, the equivalent of Lybia’s reserves.*

*International interest in the Arctic is heating up, because, to put it simply, the Arctic is heating up, it has become a Global Hot Topic (Peter Harrison, former Deputy Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada).*

*Are non-Arctic nations have suddenly been bitten by the gold rush bug?*

*From the 1940s to the 1980s, extensive mining exploration campaigns were carried out in Northern Quebec, Canada, and left a total of 595 potential abandoned mining exploration sites (Report of Makivik Corporation and Kativik Regional Governement, 2003). Since then, a major program of cleanup has been initiated.*

*Once the first line of defence against a Soviet missile attack, 42 radar sites in Arctic Canada were left contaminated with oil, fuel and PCBs. Cleaning up those sites cost a fortune (Arthur Johnson, Canadian Geographic, 2007).*

*In the space of a few years, the Arctic has gone from being totally ignored to being the flashpoint for a new form of geopolitics.*

*The old way of doing business doesn’t work anymore (James Stotts, President of Inuit Circumpolar Council – Alaska, 2011).*

*With the melting of the polar ice, the world sees emerging opportunities. Climate change may have escalated the urgency of the sovereign debate. Environment, economics, ocean transit, and the right of Indigenous peoples are all part of the equation (Duane Smith, President of Inuit Circumpolar Council – Canada, 2008).*

*Denmark and its self-governing dependency of Greenland plan to present a seabed claim extending to the North Pole before the end of 2014 against competing claims from other Arctic states according to Danish officials (Reuters, August 2011).*

**Arctic Sovereignty and the Inuit**

The Arctic is at the forefront of public policy as well as political and academic discussion centered on very important and critical issues.

Climate change and subsequent race for Arctic resources have forced Inuit to address questions such as: Who owns the Arctic? Who can traverse the Arctic? Who has the rights to develop Arctic resources?

In the spirit of *taking control of the Arctic sovereignty debate*, the Inuit Circumpolar Council of Canada hosted in November 2008 the historic Inuit Leaders Summit on Arctic Sovereignty in Kuujjuaq, regional capital of Nunavik, Arctic Quebec, Canada.

Inuit delegations of Leaders from Alaska, Canada, Greenland and Russia attended to discuss assertions of sovereignty and sovereign rights in the Arctic, the Inuit homeland.

On April 28, 2009, Inuit Leaders launched a “*Circumpolar Inuit Declaration on Resource Development Principles in Inuit Nunaat”.*

The Declaration sets out basic principles to guide development, the principles that lead to responsible sustainable development. These principles should apply to all involved in Arctic development including: local, province, state and national governments; industry, civil society organizations; and Indigenous organizations, including those controlled by Inuit.

As the first inhabitants and stewards of the Arctic, Inuit have the responsibility and right to ensure the protection of their environment and culture. You will find this philosophy and perspective throughout the Inuit Circumpolar Council Declaration.

Here are some highlights of this Declaration:

* This Declaration emphasizes the unity of Inuit as a people across four countries.
* Addresses the unique relationships Inuit have with each of the respective state.
* Calls for closer cooperation among Arctic states and Inuit on all matters of Arctic sovereignty.
* It is in the interest of the states, industry, and others to include Inuit as partners in the new Arctic, and to respect Inuit land claims and self-government arrangements.
* Inuit decision, expertise and perspectives are critical to progress on international issues involving the Arctic, such as global environmental security, sustainable development, militarization, commercial fishing, shipping, human health, and economic and social development.

**Sovereign Rights in the Arctic and Inuit Self-determination**

The Inuit have always found themselves in a sovereign state. They have always been able to govern themselves and to satisfy their basic needs.

Recognition and respect for Inuit right to self-determination is developing at varying paces and in various forms in the Arctic states in which Inuit live.

In Canada, there are 5 land claims agreements with Inuit:

1. 1975: James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement (Inuit of Nunavik).
2. 1984: Inuvialuit Final Agreement (Western Arctic)
3. 1993: Nunavut Land Claim Agreement
4. 2005: The Labrador (Nunatsiavut) Inuit Land Claim Agreement
5. 2008: Nunavik Inuit Land Claims Agreement (offshore islands)

These land claim agreements give the Inuit control over large portions of lands and offshore islands. These agreements enjoy protection under the Constitution of Canada and cannot be amended by legislation or by a court of law, without the explicit consent of the Inuit party.

These land claims agreements are key building blocks of Inuit rights. The agreements and self-government arrangements provide a foundation on which to construct future, creative governance arrangements tailored to diverse circumstances in states, regions and communities.

Stronger Indigenous governance through land claims: how these land claims can become a major governance force in the Arctic?

In exercising their right to self-determination in the circumpolar Arctic, Inuit continue to develop innovative and creative jurisdictional arrangements that will appropriately balance Inuit rights and responsibilities as an Indigenous people, the rights and responsibilities Inuit share with other peoples who live among them, and the rights and responsibilities of states.

Inuit are also exercising their rights of self-determination in the Arctic by building on institutions such as the Inuit Circumpolar Council and the Arctic Council, Arctic-specific features of international instruments such as the ice-covered-waters provision of the United Nations Convention of the Law of the Sea, and the Arctic-related work of international mechanism such as the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, and the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

**The Inuit of Nunavik, Northern Quebec, Canada**

Nunavik is part of the Arctic world and covers 500,164 square kilometers, and none of the 14 Nunavik communities where 10,000 Inuit live are inter-connected by road, and there are no road connections to the rest of the Province of Quebec. Statistics show that 65% of the population are under 29 years of age.

For more than 60 years, in fact since World War II and the Cold War of the 1950s, major and drastic changes have occurred that had serious impacts on the Inuit in general and on the Inuit of Nunavik: militarization of the Arctic, arrival of governments and establishment of new governance systems, compulsory residential schools which provoked the breakdown of families, Inuit dogs slaughtering and relocation of Inuit of Nunavik to the High Arctic by the government of Canada.

On August 8, 2011, the Government of Quebec recognized through the signing of an agreement with Makivik Corporation, the effect that the historic slaughter of sled dogs had on Inuit society and their way of life. Events surrounding the slaughter of thousands of sled dogs occurred in Nunavik in the 1950s and 1960s. At this point in time, the Government of Canada who held responsibilities in the region during that time, has not yet replied to the request of the Inuit of Nunavik to have a similar official recognition, and has been very silent on this issue.

It took 57 years for the Government of Canada, in a declaration by its Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, to apologize in August 2010 for having relocated to the High Arctic Inuit families from Inukjuak, a Nunavik community, and to recognize that the High Arctic Relocation resulted in extreme hardship and suffering for Inuit who were relocated. Minister Duncan: “*We deeply regret the mistakes and broken promises of this dark chapter of our history”.*

All these changes occurred very rapidly and abruptly and resulted in major social difficulties, high level of school dropout, high level of suicide among Inuit youth, poverty, and sadly, Nunavik has the highest level of overcrowding ratio in houses in Canada, which has culminated in a major housing crisis.

For the President of Makivik, a major catch-up housing program involving both the governments of Quebec and of Canada should be established immediately. A recent agreement with the government of Quebec will alleviate part of this problem. Unfortunately, the Government of Canada seems reluctant to sign on to any major construction catch-up program.

This overcrowding is a major impediment to a decent living for the families and the youth, to a better education and stability in the communities. We do not want Inuit youth to become a lost generation.

Nunavik Inuit pay income tax and sales taxes on the same basis as other citizens of the Province of Quebec and Canadians, but do not receive the same services.

Nunavik Inuit are no longer simple traditional harvesters of wildlife pursuing a nomadic existence. Today, the majority of the Nunavik Inuit are part of the larger modern economy. Country food is not enough for them to survive which results in food insecurity; they need houses, income for fuel, transportation. Despite tangible benefits and improvements in the Nunavik region, the quality of life is both a shocking and disturbing reality.

Makivik Corporation means “to rise up”, the organization that represents the 10,000 Inuit of Nunavik, region located north of the 55th parallel in the Province of Quebec, Canada. Pita Aatami is the President of Makivik.

The President of Makivik is also a Board Member of *Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami*, organization that represents the 55,000 Inuit of Canada living in 53 communities scattered from the Western Arctic, Nunavut territory, Nunavik to Nunatsiavut (Labrador). President of ITK is Mary Simon, a well-known Inuk and former Canada’s Ambassador to Denmark and Circumpolar Affairs.

The President of Makivik is also a Board Member of Inuit Circumpolar Council Canada.

Makivik was created in 1978 and is mandated to protect the rights, interests and financial compensation provided by the 1975 James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement to the Inuit of Nunavik, the first comprehensive land claim agreement in Canada, and the more recent Offshore Nunavik Land Claim Agreement that came into effect in 2008.

Makivik’s mandate range from owning and operating successful business enterprises including in airlines, construction, fisheries, transportation, geomatics. These initiatives generate jobs and further social and economic development, protection and development of the Inuit language and culture and the natural environment.

Politically, culturally and economically, Makivik has been a leader in building and developing a vibrant region called Nunavik, where Inuit have established their own distinct place and identity within the Province of Quebec and Canada.

Implicit in everything Makivik and indeed the Inuit of Nunavik have done in the past 30 years has been ensuring they participate as full partners and at every level in the development of Nunavik and of the country.

Put another way, the Inuit of Nunavik have settled their comprehensive land claims and are building the political, institutional and economic development structures necessary to control their own destiny.

Traditions that have governed the daily lives of Inuit are no longer suited to all new realities of an ever-changing world. *“Seeing beyond the present”* is the goal of the President of Makivik Corporation and further: *“We must recognize the need to challenge ourselves to find ways to engage the mind and spirit of a generation of Inuit”.*

The Conference Board of Canada’s report on *“Security in Canada’s North – Looking Beyond Arctic Sovereignty”,* states clearly: *“Community Security must focus on addressing inhabitants’ basic needs (food, water, shelter, education, health, community governance and public safety)”.*

Makivik is of the opinion that modern aboriginal treaties or land claim settlements can benefit Inuit, governments and all citizens, locally, regionally and nationally.

**The Arctic is the focus of major attention by many countries**

The Arctic is undergoing rapid changes, from the impacts of climate change to the growth of Northern and Aboriginal governments and institutions. At the same time, domestic and international interest in the Arctic region is growing.

International interest in the North and in the Arctic has intensified because of the potential for resource development, the opening of new transportation routes, and the growing impacts of climate change. Although the Northwest Passage is not expected to become a safe and reliable transportation route in the near future, reduced ice coverage and longer periods of navigability may result in an increased number of ships undertaking destination travel for tourism, natural resource development exploration or development.

The effects of environmental change, such as shifting and melting permafrost, melting glaciers, shrinking ocean ice and a shortened season for ice roads could have significant cultural and economic consequences for the people of the North. Furthermore, new development projects may increase the number of pollutants, threatening Inuit’s health and the region’s fragile ecosystems.

The 8 countries that form the Arctic Council, the European Parliament and China all have developed or in the midst of developing their strategies and policies regarding the Arctic.

We are definitely witnessing a race for Arctic natural resources. Are we are at the crossroads of cooperation or conflict?

**The Government of Canada’s Northern Vision: WHY IS NUNAVIK EXCLUDED?**

Government of Canada’s Northern Vision sees the great economic potential of the vast northern or Arctic natural resources as key to Canada overall economic future.

Canada’s Northern Strategy focuses on 4 priority areas:

1. Exercising our Arctic sovereignty.
2. Promoting social and economic development.
3. Protecting the North’s environmental heritage.
4. Improving and devolving northern governance, so that Northerners have a greater say in their own destiny.

From the perspective of Makivik Corporation and the Inuit of Nunavik, it is important to clarify exactly what do we mean when the Government of Canada uses the term “Arctic”.

A serious challenge for the government of Canada concern how it will develop and implement its Northern Strategy as it pertains to Nunavik. That is still a very important issue for the Inuit of Nunavik. The “north of 60” definition of the North on which the government of Canada uses which is confined to Canada’s 3 territories (Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut), does not reflect the reality of the North and of the Arctic. Nunavik is an integral part of the Canadian Arctic.

Rather than focusing exclusively on the region “North of 60”, the Conference Board of Canada’s scope includes 7 provinces that have a northern presence or interest, including Nunavik.

Makivik had suggested to the Government of Canada to engage in a scoping out exercise with the objective to identify the key issues that should be part of the Northern Strategy initiatives that would be of direct benefit to Nunavik, but the Government of Canada took another route and turned down the proposal.

The exclusion of Nunavik in Canada’s Northern Strategy must be corrected: this is a serious challenge the government of Canada has to address immediately.

**The Province of Quebec and its PLAN NORD**

In May 2011, the Government of Quebec announced its PLAN NORD, a 25-year Plan that would engender an estimated $80 billion in private and public investments, creation of thousands of jobs and economic spinoff, and its major focus is on energy, mining, forests and tourism potentials.

The Premier of Quebec is presently touring several major countries including the USA, Europe and Asia to promote his government’s PLAN NORD.

For the Inuit of Nunavik, the PLAN NORD must respect all current treaties and agreements between the government of Quebec and Nunavik Inuit. In particular, PLAN NORD must ensure that Quebec continues to implement all its obligations under the 1975 James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement and other agreements it signed in recent years.

PLAN NORD does not replace Quebec’s obligations and undertakings under the above treaties and agreements but is simply supplementary to them.

PLAN NORD must overall take into account the long-term impacts of development in the Nunavik region on Nunavik Inuit harvesting activities.

PLAN NORD’s goal of respecting the principle of sustainable development in the development of the territory must involve directly the Inuit of Nunavik.

**The PLAN NUNAVIK of the Nunavik Inuit**

Over the years, the Nunavik Inuit and Inuit organizations, have thoroughly developed their priorities (PLAN NUNAVIK) for the next 5 to 25 years in several areas including housing, health, education, access to the territory, mining, energy, tourism, bio-food, wildlife, culture and identity, telecommunications, community development.

The Inuit of Nunavik and the Nunavik region have set forth numerous concerns and priorities in their PLAN NUNAVIK. PLAN NORD must address effectively these priorities, otherwise the PLAN NORD is of no value to the Inuit of Nunavik.

If Quebec is to provide benefits of the North to all citizens of the Province of Quebec, it must accept as a fundamental principle of its PLAN NORD, before anything else, it has to invest much more to improve the standard of living of the Nunavik Inuit taxpayers inhabiting the territory.

Furthermore, private industry is being strongly invited and sometimes forced to consult with Aboriginal and Inuit groups and communities, especially when it comes to sought after natural resources.

For example, in 1995, Makivik Corporation and Falconbridge (now Xstrata) signed the Raglan Mine Agreement. Falconbridge wanted to exploit a nickel mine. Objects of this agreement were to ensure the Inuit of Nunavik derive direct and indirect economic benefits from the project, to ensure monitoring of the impacts, to facilitate equitable and meaningful participation of Inuit with respect to the mining project, and finally to provide an efficient ongoing working relationship between the Inuit Party and the Raglan Project.

Another agreement of the same nature was signed with Canadian Royalties, now a Chinese company Jilien Canada, also for the exploitation of a nickel mine.

**The Inuit of Nunavik and the changing Arctic**

The position of the Inuit of Nunavik in light of all these changes and challenges is clear and consistent.

The overall philosophy that the Inuit of Nunavik land claims is built upon, should apply to whatever initiatives are undertaken in the future of the Arctic.

Future developments are welcome, but the Inuit of Nunavik must be involved and the terms of our claims must be respected. We will insist our communities benefit and there are opportunities for Inuit businesses and for the Inuit and especially the youth.

Future developments must be supported by solid research initiatives to protect Inuit of Nunavik lands and the environment, especially the wildlife.

Inuit of Nunavik will ensure their involvement through Makivik’s Nunavik Research Centre, in the development and application of major national or international research programs that affect their areas.

Makivik will continue to work and collaborate very closely with the Inuit Circumpolar Council, organization that represents the 160,000 Inuit of Alaska, Canada, Greenland and Russia. Inuit are increasingly engaged and vocal on these matters regarding sovereignty and related issues. Inuit as active partners is central to all national and international deliberations on the Arctic.

Makivik is also developing its circumpolar and international strategy in order to inform governments at all levels, regionally, nationally and internationally on the Nunavik region, its inhabitants, its concerns, priorities and initiatives, and seek opportunities of collaboration and cooperation.

It is simply ensuring that what we do and the way we do it, improves on the social, cultural, economic and environmental conditions of the people who live in Nunavik.

That can only be achieved through continued consultation, involvement and through partnership.

Nakurmik! Thank you! Merci!

Takk fyrir!