

# Module 8

## Self-Determination throughout History

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### Course objectives

This module will introduce and explain the terms “self-determination”, “self-government” and “political autonomy”, and discuss examples from the circumpolar world. Furthermore, the term “tertiary societies” is explained Whereas “primary societies” refer to the society prior to contact with European settlers (discussed in Module 5), and “secondary societies” to the proto-colonial phase whereby settlers expanded their colonies (discussed in Module 6), tertiary societies include the decolonized phase where the northern regions began to develop greater autonomy within their nation, here defined as a group of people who have a shared sense of belonging associated with a shared language and homeland with which they identify. The tertiary society is characterized by the creation of formal institutions and government bodies that signal increasing local control and self-determination, such as assemblies, cultural revival and political autonomy. In the final section, we discuss circumpolar institutional

cooperation by indigenous and non-indigenous peoples to respond to cross-national issues, such as climate change.

Upon completion of this module you should be able to:

1. analyze the strategies of indigenous cultures and non-indigenous northern cultures to maintain political, social and cultural self-determination;
2. understand and critique the concept of northern identity.

## Introduction

Many culturally rich and diverse indigenous peoples populate the circumpolar north, a region that covers 15 per cent of the Earth's land mass but comprises only 4 million of its inhabitants.<sup>1</sup> These peoples have long histories in and with the North. The previous modules of this course described the increasing influence on the social, political, and economic activities of the region by southern societies in the past few centuries. However, as circumpolar peoples begin to recognize their shared priorities and concerns, the past generation has witnessed a resurgence of regional and indigenous autonomy, cultural self-determination and a shift from traditional North-South relations to East-West relations around the North. The most obvious examples of this shift include Home Rule in Greenland, the creation of Nunavut in Canada, and Sami parliaments in Scandinavia and the subsequent establishment of northern networks such as the Arctic Council, the Northern Forum, and the University of the Arctic. These developments can be attributed partly to transformations in the international sphere, including decolonization after World War II and recognition of indigenous rights movements. Perhaps more importantly, Home Rule in Greenland and the creation of Nunavut succeeded because the lands that were turned over to Inuit were sparsely populated, geographically remote, and economically undeveloped.

Beyond advances made in the political sphere, circumpolar peoples – with varying degrees of political autonomy – express their self-determination in the cultural sphere: preserving indigenous languages and identity, conveying their way of life through literature, arts, and the media, and reflecting their “northernness” in the institutions of the family, education, and

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<sup>1</sup> Arctic Human Development Report (2004:27).

sports/recreation. The circumpolar North has also tried to address circumpolar regional issues that involve and cut across all eight Arctic states. Organizations such as the Inuit Circumpolar Conference, the Arctic Council, and even the University of the Arctic are evidence of these efforts. These changes bring great expectations, not for the survival, but for the flourishing of northern peoples and cultures, as the circumpolar region etches out its deserved place and recognition in international society.

The idea of a common northern identity, however, is not without criticism. Although there is less discussion regarding the need for preserving and strengthening a genetic northern culture that incorporates the indigenous, it is not always clear how this could be achieved. Identity is essentially the answer to the question ‘Who are you?’ Each person has an individual identity and identifies him- or herself with various cultural groups, places of birth, profession etc., but what is a northern identity? What makes someone a northerner? The identity, culture and impact of the inhabitants of the north may vary widely. The term aboriginal person, for instance, would not have been used prior to contact with European settlers. An aboriginal identity can be understood and defined in different ways by different people. Some would argue that a northern or Arctic aboriginal person is someone who is a descendent of the native peoples who lived in the Americas, whereas others claim that those who consider themselves to be aboriginal people should be accepted as aboriginal peoples. But then are people of mixed descent included in this definition? Others argue that an aboriginal person needs to grow up in an aboriginal community and live a traditional lifestyle in order to be identified as aboriginal; opening up the possibility that non-native people could be regarded as aboriginals. It is obvious that these varied definitions and understandings regarding identity contradict each other which in turn could lead to an identity crisis among people who are not sure about their identity, including non-indigenous inhabitants of the North. There are a great variety of non-aboriginal people living in the north who have not been there as long or identified with the north for as long as the First Nations peoples and they often feel disconnected from the colonial history of their European ancestors. Moreover, more and more non-indigenous people are influenced by aboriginal cultures with the development of mixed cultures as a result. Hence, the challenge for all inhabitants of the north is to foster a group identity that maintains social cohesion and stability and allows them to exist as unique peoples rather than building one common northern identity.

## Regionalism, nationalism and self-determination

Regionalism, nationalism and self-determination are terms usually associated with matters of politics and refer to processes by which social collectivities seek greater autonomy from larger societies or distant governments. It is often politics and the institutions that emerge from politics that frame issues of self-determination in areas as diverse as language, education and family. All of us belong to at least one political community and, thus, have at least one political identity. Political identity is important in defining what values we share in common. In Canada, for example, a person may feel attachment as a member of the Lac La Ronge Indian Band, as a resident of the province of Saskatchewan, and as a citizen of Canada. Some identities are stronger than others. When a political identity expresses itself in terms of attachment to a region or place, such as Chukotka or Sápmi, we are observing the phenomenon of *regionalism*. Where a political identity expresses itself in terms of attachment to a people, such as the Siberian Yupik people, we are observing the phenomenon of *nationalism*.

Self-determination can be defined most generally as the idea that human beings, individually and as groups, are equally entitled to be in control of their own destinies. Where the political identity of a people provides the basis for quests for greater political autonomy, either within a nation-state or completely independent of it, we are observing a movement towards political self-determination. The term has gained international legal significance, since being included in the two United Nations international human rights covenants – the 1966 *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*; and the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* – adopted in the same year – as well as in the 1960 *Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples*. The international Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA), an independent and non-profit organization based in Denmark, describes self-determination as:

the right to *participate* in the democratic process of governance and to influence one's future – politically, socially and culturally. Self-determination embodies the right for all peoples to determine their own economic, social and cultural development. (accessed February 18<sup>th</sup> 2014 from <http://www.iwgia.org/sw228.asp>).

The term “self-government” implies a more rigid political and legal construct. The Council of Europe’s 2010 European Charter of Local Self-Government defines it as such:

Local self-government denotes the right and the ability of local authorities, within the limits of the law, to regulate and manage a substantial share of public affairs under their own responsibility and in the interests of their local populations (Article 3-1 European Charter of Local Self-Government).

Thus, political self-determination may lead to greater autonomy and greater autonomy in turn to the creation of a local or regional government within the state. While governments and indigenous groups around the world may disagree with the kinds and share of responsibilities, the basic principle – that groups will manage (some of) their public affairs – is generally accepted. When greater autonomy leads to decentralization of the decision-making process we are talking about self-government. Self-government is a form of self-determination. However, it is important to understand the difference between *self-government* and *self-determination*; the two are not simply interchangeable. While self-government implies autonomy in the political and legal spheres, self-determination is broader, encompassing cultural and social spheres. Self-governance in the North generally entails the adoption by indigenous peoples of European political and legal norms. While this kind of institutionalization is important, it is the preservation of a peoples’ culture and traditions that truly determines their degree of autonomy from larger societies. In the following sections, we discuss different models of self-determination across different regions in the circumpolar North: political self-determination in Greenland and Nunavut and cultural self-determination of the Sami. In the final section of this module, we briefly discuss international cooperation between indigenous organizations, and organizations contributing to addressing circumpolar issues and opportunities such as the University of the Arctic. The University of the Arctic is an institution established *in* the north and working *for* the north, hereby further contributing to a regional identity of both indigenous and non-indigenous people living in the circumpolar region.

## Political self-determination in Greenland

Before presenting three cases of self-determination and self-government among indigenous populations across three different regions in the Arctic, we briefly discuss how indigenous

people generally organize themselves to secure the survival of their culture in the face of threats as a result of colonization. The struggle of indigenous people to survive has been discussed in detail in the previous modules. There seems currently to be an increase in indigenous organizations consisting of herders, whalers, hunters, fishers, and trappers, that organize themselves politically, both at national and international level. The benefits of these organizations are not only that they provide international fora where Sami or Inuit people living in different nation-states can meet each other to discuss aboriginal rights in international working groups, but also opportunities to learn from other indigenous populations facing similar threats and sharing similar interests. International aboriginal organizations link the strategies and communication campaigns of various aboriginal groups together and, as such, they are better equipped to struggle for the protection of their traditional livelihoods and to gain recognition for their culture and political interests by decision-making processes at various governmental levels (Freeman 2000:xviii). Another advantage of indigenous organizations operating at the global level, is that they are able to support indigenous people in other parts of the world who have less resources at their disposal but who nonetheless face similar threats and challenges. Freeman expects that improvements in the lives of indigenous peoples will accelerate as communication and cooperation between different groups improves and becomes more effective (Freeman 2000:xix).

Home Rule for Greenland, the creation of Nunavut and of the Sami Council are just a few examples of political self-determination where the indigenous peoples of the circumpolar north have taken the initiative to control their own affairs and to raise a common voice against the governments of the nation-states in which they live, with the objectives to protect their languages and cultures and gain control over their territories. Other examples can be found on the Pribilof Islands where the Aleuts and the Yupik gained more influence in the decision-making process when the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act was signed or in Russia after the creation of an association defending the interests of – following Russian terminology - lesser numbered peoples of the Russian North or the establishment of administrative units such as Autonomous Districts. Many of these developments were achieved with the help of global indigenous networks.

In addition to influence in the political decision-making process with the objective to secure their interests, cultural self-determination has received renewed attention among indigenous organizations in recent years. Their main objective is without any doubt to highlight their

traditional ways of life developed over centuries, and to pass on or impact their traditional knowledge of hunting and fishing – the very essence of traditional livelihood, to the next generation using their traditional languages.

Greenland's path to self-determination began in the aftermath of the Second World War. The Nazi invasion of Denmark in 1940 severed Greenland's communications with Denmark almost completely for several years. The building of Allied military bases and the influx of American goods and soldiers further reinforced a sense of independence from Denmark (Caulfield 1997:34-35). The period of decolonization around the world that came after the Second World War, resulted in several recommendations by a joint Greenlandic-Danish commission written down in a ten-year state modernization plan, popularly known as G-50. These recommendations were followed in 1953 by the official ending of Greenland's colonial status after a referendum vote held in Denmark. The G-50 plan led to both the abolition of the trade monopoly of the Royal Greenland Trade Company – Det Kongelige Grønlandske Handelskompagni (KGH) – and to the creation of an autonomous province within the Danish Kingdom (alongside the Faroe Islands).

The Greenland Committee of 1960 (referred to as G-60) followed the G-50, with the goals of normalizing relations between Greenlandic and Danish institutions. Ultimately, the G-50 and G-60 served three functions: demonstrating and aggravating disparities between Greenland and Denmark, especially with resettlement schemes and preferential wages for Danes; establishing a Greenlandic sense of identity; and awakening a serious political class of Greenlanders who would push for real political power.

Two events sparked increased feelings of nationalism among Greenlanders and discontent with the Danish government in the early 1970s: the shutting down in 1972 by the Danish authorities of Qullissat, a community on Disko Island built around an unsuccessful coal mine, and a referendum in the same year on Denmark's membership of the European Economic Community.<sup>2</sup> The Danes supported EEC-membership but the Greenlanders voted two to one against membership out of concern for the allocation of fishing rights in Greenlandic waters to other European nations. Such allocation of fishing rights occurred when Denmark joined the EEC and led to the formation of Greenlandic political parties and the subsequent creation

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<sup>2</sup> The European Economic Community was in 2009 succeeded by the European Union.

of a commission on Home Rule in Greenland, which began work in 1975. The most contentious debate was over the ownership of non-renewable resources. A compromise was obtained by affirming Greenlanders' 'fundamental rights' to the natural resources of Greenland in the *Home Rule Act* (Caulfield 1997:38).

The Danish parliament adopted Greenlandic Home Rule in November 1978, and after a referendum in January 1979 in which 63% of the voters voted in favour of the proposed administrative model, Home Rule was established on May 1, 1979. The Home Rule was evaluated twenty years after its establishment which led to the Self-Government Act, replacing the Home Rule Act on Greenland's National Day on June 21<sup>st</sup> 2009 after another referendum in 2008 at which 75% of the voters voted in favour of this act. Through the Self-Government Act Greenland has the right to elect its own parliament and government and develop its own policy in the fields of education, environment and health. The opportunity for Greenland to become a fully independent state under its own jurisdiction is also included in the act: some have suggested that the year 2021 – the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Greenland's colonization by Denmark – would be a suitable date for potential independence. The Greenlandic parliament, called "Inatsisartut", consists of 31 elected members, who approve the administration headed by a Premier.

## **Self-government in Nunavut, Canada**

Nunavut, the territory of which had previously been a part of Canada's North West Territories, was created as a separate Canadian territory only a short time ago, in 1999; the path to self-government, however, was long. The road to self-government began as early as the 1950s and 1960s, when the Northwest Territorial Council debated the establishment of a separate Mackenzie Territory in the west. Far from aiming to provide Inuit with greater independence, the motivation for the proposal was to free the west "from the constraining influence of the more 'backward' Eastern Arctic" (Cameron and White 1995:92). Legislation was even introduced in the federal House of Commons towards separation, but the bills died when the parliament was dissolved in 1963.

The Inuit eventually in 1976 submitted their own proposal for a settlement of Inuit land claims after a period of similar claims from other Aboriginal peoples around Canada. The

proposal argued for the creation of a separate Nunavut territory, with the basic goal of “[preserving] Inuit identity and the traditional way-of-life so far as possible...” (ITC 1976, 1, as cited in Cameron and White 1995:93). While the proposal was eventually withdrawn, its principle remained and several documents calling for the creation of a separate Nunavut territory followed the original proposal.

In 1982, the Canadian constitution underwent significant change that opened the door for creative constitutional arrangements. Non-Inuit in the Northwest Territories became more sympathetic to the Inuit cause, and a plebiscite in the territory was put forth that asked whether people were in favour of division (it passed with a slim majority). Finally, a new Inuit organization named the Tunngavik Federation of Nunavut (TFN) was established to represent a broad coalition of Inuit organizations and interests, dealing exclusively with the Nunavut claim and associated members (Cameron and White 1995:94).

The most contentious issue turned out to be the demarcation of the boundary between Nunavut and the remaining Northwest Territories (NWT). The Inuit and Dene-Métis both contested large tracts of land in the central Arctic as traditional hunting grounds and a compromise could not be reached (Cameron and White 1995:95). In 1991, the federal government intervened, appointing a former NWT commissioner, John Parker, to recommend a boundary. Inuit generally accepted Parker’s proposal, but the Dene-Métis argued it ran too far west. A plebiscite was put forth to accept or reject the boundary, and in doing so the results provided tacit approval for the creation of Nunavut in 1992. Like the 1982 plebiscite, it passed with a narrow majority, with residents in the east voting overwhelmingly in favour of separation, and residents in the western Arctic voting three to one against (Cameron and White 1995:94). The planning now turned to constitutional issues.

In effect, Inuit were making a land claim for the Nunavut territory, under the legal framework of the Inuit’s Aboriginal rights protected by the Canadian Constitution. This arrangement was deemed unacceptable to the federal government, “considering that Nunavut was to be a public government representing, serving and including all Canadians living in the area...[and] it would be inappropriate to use a land claim with an Aboriginal group as the instrument to establish public government” (Cameron and White 1995:94). A compromise was struck and the planning went ahead.

The *Nunavut Act* was drafted in Ottawa and passed in Parliament in June 1993 after a successful ratification vote in the eastern Arctic in October 1992. The amazingly fast and smooth process to pass such an unprecedented act with far-reaching consequences was largely because of the high level of popular support, both in and outside of Nunavut, for the creation of a separate territory. The Nunavut Implementation Commission (NIC) was put into place to ensure a smooth handover of political responsibilities by April 1999, the agreed-upon date of the legal transfer of power from NWT to the new Government of Nunavut.

On April 1, 1999, the territory of Nunavut was officially created, with a land mass of more than 2 million km<sup>2</sup>, about five times the size of Sweden. In 2011 Nunavut had a population of approximately 31,000 people, with Iqaluit – also known as Frobisher Bay - with 6,700 inhabitants in 2011, is its capital.

## **Cultural self-determination of the Sami**

The case of the Sami is significantly different from that of the Inuit of Nunavut and Greenland. The Sami people are spread across several national borders and make up a very small – not always coherent – minority in their nation-states.<sup>3</sup> Numbering only 65,000 people in total, the majority of the population lives between Norwegian borders.<sup>4</sup> Most “live among members of the dominant culture and therefore do not constitute a natural territorial entity” (Korsmo 1996:163). In contrast to the form of self-determination the Inuit of Greenland and Nunavut have been able to achieve – that is, self-government – the increased self-determination for the Sami of Northern Europe and Northwest Russia has meant more cultural autonomy and better political representation through Sami parliaments. The Sami also have Permanent Participant status at the Arctic Council (as do the Inuit through ICC representation). Although greater political representation has been achieved and Sami issues are now placed on the political agenda, Sami parliaments and assemblies do not provide perfect solutions for meeting Sami aspirations for greater political autonomy. Korsmo, for instance, observes a lack of support for the Sami assemblies, perhaps because of individual’s ambivalence toward formal ethno-political institutions (Korsmo 1996”173). In this section,

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<sup>3</sup> The Sami people do not always agree internally about herding and non-herding issues, particularly in Sweden, and as long as the Sami have unresolved intra-ethnic disputes or unsettled land claims, their ability to effectively influence legislation in their favour will be hindered.

<sup>4</sup> There are currently estimated to be 38,000 Sami in Norway; 15,000 in Sweden; 9,000 in Finland; and 2,000 in Russia.

we briefly identify key-historic moments leading to greater self-determination for the Sami people.

### *Finland*

After a Finnish government commission's inquiry into Sami rights, the first Sami parliament was established in Finland in 1973. At the same time, the northern municipalities of Enontekiö, Inari, Utsjoki, and part of Sodankylä were established as the Sami Homeland. The Finnish Sami Assembly is made up of 20 elected representatives, drawn from a pool of individuals rather than from organizations or political parties, and elected every four years. A constitutional amendment was passed in 1994 guaranteeing Sami certain rights to develop and maintain their language and culture. However, disputes over the ownership and use of the Sami homeland still need to be settled, and the Sami in Finland continue to express their concern over the impact of industrial activities on their land. Finland has not signed the 1989 International Labour Organization Convention No. 169, addressing indigenous and tribal populations and has recently even been told by the UN Human Rights Commission to speed up its efforts to protect Sami rights to land and resources.

### *Norway*

The construction of the Alta dam in northern Norway in the 1970s served as a catalyst for the Sami rights movement, and, in 1980, the Norwegian Sami Rights Commission was established. The commission offered a number of recommendations among them the creation of a Sami Assembly to replace the Norwegian Sami Council which had been established in 1964 and had acted as an advisory group to "municipal, county, and national authorities on economic, social, cultural, legal and natural-resource management issues of concern to Sami" (Korsmo 1996:166). The Sami Act, which included provisions for the establishment of the Sami Parliament was passed by the Norwegian parliament in 1987. The Norwegian Sami parliament is located in Karasjok and consists of 39 representatives. A president heads the executive council. The responsibilities of the Norwegian Sami parliament increased gradually since the beginning of the 1990s – mainly with the aim to protect and develop Sami culture - and today the main task of the parliament is to serve Sami interests and to carry out administrative tasks delegated from the government. The Norwegian state, moreover, consults the parliament over state policies that affect Sami interests. Another result of the conflict between the Norwegian authorities and the Sami population in the 1970s was the establishment of the Finnmark Act in 2005. The Finnmark Act strengthened the autonomy of

the Sami people by transferring the management of Finnmark county to the inhabitants of this area, although the right to oil, gas, minerals and fish is excluded. The Finnmark Act included the creation of a Board of in total six representatives which are chosen by the Sami Parliament and the Finnmark County Council (both select three representatives). Further, Norway became the first state to recognize the Sami as indigenous people by ratifying the International Labour Organization Convention No. 169 (ILO C169) concerning indigenous and tribal peoples in 1989, which “committed nation-states to protect the rights of indigenous populations living within [their] boundaries...Compared to the response of Sweden or Finland, Norway’s policy response to Sami demands was comprehensive and thorough” (Korsmo 1996:167).

### *Sweden*

The process for the establishment of a Swedish Sami Assembly began after the Skattefjälls (Taxed Mountains) decision in 1981. The Sami filed a lawsuit asking the Swedish Crown to declare the Sami to be the true owners of the lands they used for herding, hunting, and fishing in the county of Jämtland. The Court determined that the State owned the land, though the Sami had strong usufruct rights in the area based on usage since time immemorial (Lehtola 2002:84).

After the decision – which was seen as a defeat by the Sami – the National Association of Swedish Sami made a request to the government in September 1981 to set up a commission of inquiry to draft a proposal for a Sami Assembly; investigate Sami herding, fishing and hunting rights; and draft legislation protecting Sami livelihoods (Korsmo 1993:40). In response, the Swedish Sami Rights Commission was established to provide “an overview of reindeer herding law, a feasibility study of a Sami ‘parliament’ and a proposal to enhance the Sami languages” (Korsmo 1993:41). The Sami Rights Commission was hampered from the beginning by the apprehensions of the Sami, divisions between herders and non-herders, and a lack of interest and resources from the Swedish government.

After eight years of study, the commission presented a report that provided the basis for a legislative proposal which was approved by the Swedish Parliament in 1992 resulting in the Swedish Sami Assembly. Furthermore, the Swedish government officially recognized the Sami language as a minority language in 2000. However, the Sami Assembly has only an

advisory role in the political decision-making process and the Swedish government had not (yet) ratified ILO C169 the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention by 2013.

### *Russia*

The Sami population in Russia is much smaller compared to those in the Nordic states, but nonetheless founded the Association of Sámi in Murmansk Oblast in 2002. However, the Sami people living on the Kola Peninsula – where by far most of the Sami people in Russia currently reside – are not the only aboriginal people living in this area; resulting in a competition between Sami and Komi people. There are also others – such as industrial actors – competing for the resources available in this area. International cooperation with the Sami people from the Nordic states is therefore vital if their traditional livelihood – such as reindeer herding – is to survive in the north-western part of Russia. In 1992, the word “Nordic” was dropped from the original name – the Nordic Saami Council – after the Russian organization was accepted as a member.

Greenland’s Home Rule, the creation of Nunavut and Sami assemblies all contribute to self-determination of the indigenous people of the circumpolar north. At the same time we witness the emergence of institutions and organizations that are fostering a new circumpolar regional identity that spans across the eight northern nations, with varying degrees of success. In the cases outlined above, indigenous populations gained more autonomy when political decisions came under the control of native political organizations, although the extent to which native actors have been able to influence the outcome of political decisions varies from state to state. In cases where access to the formal political decision-making process was – or sometimes still is – limited, such as in Finland, Sweden, and Russia, indigenous populations have searched for other options in an attempt to protect their language and traditional livelihoods. The survival of the Cree in the Canadian Arctic, the Chukchi in the Russian North, and sea-mammal hunters across the circumpolar Arctic are concrete examples of indigenous livelihoods threatened by the impact of industrial activities and import restrictions on fur. Media campaigns or more formal protests to present their positions to a wider public have, however, turned out to be unsuccessful so far. International cooperation between these and other aboriginal groups in worldwide operating networks is therefore desirable to protect their traditional livelihoods from extinction. The next section, discusses circumpolar co-operation as a response to circumpolar problems, but also as a vibrant force of self-determination among people living in the circumpolar North.

## Circumpolar co-operation

There has been an increasing recognition of the common problems and circumstances that northern circumpolar peoples face; for instance the impact of climate change on indigenous settlements across the coastal Arctic. Such threats cross several borders of the circumpolar world. This in turn has led to the development of a variety of circumpolar institutions and organizations such as the Arctic Council, Northern Forum and several cross-national indigenous organizations.

### *Arctic Council*

The circumpolar north has changed much over the past two decades. During the Cold War, the North was reserved as a military space lying between the two hostile superpowers, and international co-operation across the region was not feasible. As the relationship between East and West warmed, during the Russian period of glasnost and perestroika in the end of the 1980s, then-President Mikhail Gorbachev laid out a program for co-operation in a speech in Murmansk in 1987, emphasizing Soviet interest in peace and cooperation in the North. The new opportunity for international co-operation that followed this speech was seized upon by the Finns and Scandinavians and manifested itself in the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy (AEPS). The AEPS was a declaration signed in 1991 in Rovaniemi, Finland, by the eight Arctic states regarding the protection of the Arctic environment.<sup>5</sup> The AEPS led to co-operation in environmental issues and the establishment of several working groups, such as the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Program (AMAP); the Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF); the workgroup on Emergency Prevention, Preparedness and Response (EPPR); and the Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment (PAME).

Given the success of the AEPS, the eight Arctic states with Canadian leadership met in Ottawa in September 1996 to found the Arctic Council, “a high-level intergovernmental forum that provides a mechanism to address the common concerns and challenges faced by the Arctic governments and the people of the Arctic” (accessed on February 20<sup>th</sup> from the Arctic Council home page, <http://arctic-council.org/index.php/en/>). Besides environmental

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<sup>5</sup> The eight Arctic states are: Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, the United States, and Russia (USSR at the time the declaration was signed).

issues, the Arctic Council would also be concerned with the social and economic development of the North. Its declared objectives are (Arctic Council 1996):

1. To provide a means for promoting cooperation, coordination and interaction among the Arctic States, with the involvement of the Arctic indigenous communities and other Arctic inhabitants on common arctic issues, in particular issues of sustainable development and environmental protection in the Arctic.
2. To oversee and coordinate the programs established under the AEPS the AMAP; CAFF and EDPR.
3. To adopt terms of reference for and oversee and coordinate a sustainable development program.
4. To disseminate information, encourage education and promote interest in Arctic-related issues.

One particularly distinguishing feature of the Arctic Council is its category of *permanent participants*, which provides for the active participation of and full consultation with the Arctic indigenous representatives within the Arctic Council. The Permanent Participants are the following (see Figure 1):

- Aleut International Association, representing the Russian and American indigenous peoples of the Aleutian Islands;
- Arctic Athabaskan Council, representing the interests of Athabaskan peoples of Arctic North America;
- Gwich'in Council International, representing indigenous people living on both sides of the Canadian-Alaskan border
- Inuit Circumpolar Council, representing the 150,000 Inuit living in Alaska, Canada, Greenland and Chukotka Russia.
- Saami Council, a representative body for co-operation among the Sami of Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Russia
- Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North (RAIPON), representing more than 40 indigenous peoples, with a total population of more than 200,000 people.

The Arctic Council has biennial ministerial meetings, with senior Arctic officials meeting biannually. The office of the chair of the council rotates among members for two-years terms. Some people regard the Arctic Council as an ineffective organization lacking necessary resources. Despite its limitations the Arctic Council serves as a unique and important forum for governments and Permanent Participants, and Observers to discuss issues of common interest among them and the council holds real promise for the development of solutions to the unique problems faced by northerners.

Earlier we described how the Sami people are spread over several nation-states across the circumpolar north: the same is true for the other indigenous Permanent Participants. Cross-national cooperation is therefore essential in order to address circumpolar indigenous issues. As mentioned, the Arctic Council Permanent Participants include a number of indigenous groups: their organizations are critically important in terms of representing indigenous concerns and voices to regional and national governments and international and non-governmental organizations. Their status as Permanent Participants in the Arctic Council demonstrates the level of organization and political influence they have achieved. Cooperation with indigenous groups within the Arctic Council and their cooperation with each other through the Arctic Council Indigenous Peoples' Secretariat, serves to strengthen indigenous claims for environmental protection, land claims, resource use, and cultural protection.



Fig. 1. Permanent Participants of the Arctic Council

*Northern Forum*

The Northern Forum is a non-profit, international organization established in Anchorage, Alaska in 1991 by representatives from regional authorities from eight northern states: Norway, Mongolia, United States, Soviet Union, Finland, Canada, Japan and China (Hasanat 2011). The organization was officially established in 1991 but has its roots in a series of

meetings. Its membership consists of sub-national governments from three different continents. The “First International Conference on Human Environment in Northern Regions” was held in Hokkaido, Japan in 1974. A second conference followed in 1979 in Edmonton, Canada, and a third in 1990 in Anchorage, United States, where the foundation for the Northern Forum was laid and where the organization was formally inaugurated at another conference in 1991. In the Northern Forum, sub-national governments discuss practical solutions to problems posed by the unique circumstances of northern regions, including the following (accessed on February 20<sup>th</sup> 2014 from the Northern Forum home page, <http://www.thenorthernforum.org>):

- Economies based upon the extraction of natural resources
- Lack of internal capital resources.
- Limited infrastructural development.
- Harsh climate and vulnerable ecosystems.
- Diverse and relatively strong indigenous cultures.
- Sparse populations.

In an effort to foster co-operation with business communities and to stimulate economic development, the Northern Forum also accepts commercial enterprises as members. The Northern Forum is composed of the Board of Governors; Executive Committee; Advisory Council; Regional Coordinators; Secretariat; and members.

## **The University of the Arctic – contributing to regional identity**

The University of the Arctic (UArctic) is an international cooperative network consisting of higher education institutions, research institutions and other organizations concerned with education and research in and about the North. Its secretariat is based in Rovaniemi, Finland, and its members all have a vote in the UArctic Council which meets annually. Under the slogan, *in the north, for the north, by the north*, the university unites organizations, governments and educational institutions representing both indigenous and non-indigenous people and is seen as an important instrument to promote self-determination among the

inhabitants of the circumpolar north. The need for an institution that would provide unparalleled opportunities to share information about Arctic and northern sustainability, promote and improve the exchange of students within the north, and validate northern cultures, languages, and learning systems, has concerned northern residents for many years. With the transformation of the international political climate in the Arctic, the growing awareness of environmental and other threats to the stability of the Arctic, and with the emergence of new information technologies, a new climate was created that gave rise to an organization devoted to putting a new educational vision for the Arctic in place. Consequently, the Circumpolar Universities Association developed a proposal to create the University of the Arctic.

The Arctic Council first endorsed the idea of a circumpolar university in 1997, followed by approval of the University of the Arctic's Development Plan by the council in October of the same year. The aim, according to this plan, was not to establish a standard university in a geographically northern locale, but a virtual university made up of a network of northern member educational institutions that would redefine the way typical universities work and would focus on serving the needs and interests of Arctic communities. Upon review of a feasibility study prepared by the Circumpolar Universities Association, the Ministers of the Arctic Council announced their support for the proposed University of the Arctic in October 1998. The University of the Arctic was officially established in 2001.

According to their homepage, UArctic "builds and strengthens collective resources and collaborative infrastructure that enables member institutions to better serve their members and their regions. Through cooperation in education, research and outreach, UArctic enhances human capacity in the North, promotes viable communities, sustainable economies, and global partnerships" (University of the Arctic: [www.uarctic.org](http://www.uarctic.org)).

Furthermore, a key characteristic of the University of the Arctic is its inclusion of indigenous knowledge and experiences. The UArctic Shared Voices principle (1997) states:

The University of the Arctic must involve indigenous peoples. It must not be like other educational institutions experienced by some.... as "systems of pain" that ignore or even repress our cultures and economies. Considerable energy and time must be

devoted to recruit indigenous societies to join the university (University of the Arctic 1997).

## Suggested reading

Vitebsky, Piers. 2000. "Landscape and People" The Arctic as a Homeland. Developed in partnership with the EU Raphael Programme. Retrieved February 18<sup>th</sup> 2014 from <http://www.thearctic.is/articles/overviews/homeland/enska/index.htm>.

## Glossary of terms

nationalism	a patriotic feeling, principle, etc.; loyalty of a people who share a common language, history, culture, religion, and/or political values; normally involves the quest for greater political autonomy.
political representation	"the activity of making citizens voices, opinions, and perspectives present in the public policy making process" (Pitkin 1967).
regionalism	allegiance to or concern for one's region rather than one's country; loyalty to a political community based on region or place, normally involving the quest for increased political autonomy.
self-determination	the freedom of a people to decide their own allegiance or form of government; the freedom to live or act as one chooses, without needing to consult others. The quest by a group for greater autonomy from other societies and/or polities signals a movement towards self-determination.
self-government	(especially of a former colony, etc.) government by its own people; self-control. Involves increasing a group's political decision-making powers and granting that group with the authority to govern over its own affairs without interference from other levels of government.

## Literature

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Council of Europe. 2010. European Charter of Local Self-Government. Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing. Retrieved February 18<sup>th</sup> 2014 from: [http://www.ccre.org/img/uploads/piecesjointe/filename/charter\\_localselfgovernment\\_en.pdf](http://www.ccre.org/img/uploads/piecesjointe/filename/charter_localselfgovernment_en.pdf)

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Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. 2002. Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. Adopted by General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) of 14 December 1960.

Retrieved February 18<sup>th</sup> 2014 from:

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## Supplementary readings/internet sites

Arctic Council Indigenous People's Secretariat: [online] <http://www.arcticpeoples.org/>

Aleut International Association: [online] <http://www.arctic-council.org/index.php/en/about-us/permanent-participants/aleut-international-association-aia>

Arctic Athabaskan Council: [online] <http://www.arctic-council.org/index.php/en/about-us/permanent-participants/arctic-athabaskan-council-aac>

Greenland Home Rule, official website: [online] <http://www.nanoq.gl>

Gwich'in Council International [online] <http://www.gwichin.org>

Inuit Circumpolar Conference: [online] <http://www.inuit.org> and <http://www.inuitcircumpolar.com>.

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Nunavut Land Claim Agreement. Agreement between the Inuit of the Nunavut settlement area and Her Majesty the Queen in Rights of Canada [online]: [http://www.nucj.ca/library/bar\\_ads\\_mat/Nunavut\\_Land\\_Claims\\_Agreement.pdf](http://www.nucj.ca/library/bar_ads_mat/Nunavut_Land_Claims_Agreement.pdf)

Saami Council: [online] <http://www.saamicouncil.net>

University of the Arctic: [online] <http://www.uarctic.org>