



WALTER & DUNCAN
GORDON FOUNDATION

Northern Lights Should Illuminate the Arctic Council

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Outline

- A) Changing the Arctic Paradigm: the influence of Indigenous leaders
- B) The Situation Today: Why northern lights are needed
- C) Developing Funding and Capacity Building: A proposal to the Arctic Council and the United States Chair
- D) Proposal

A) Changing the Arctic Paradigm

- Indigenous leaders, especially in Canada, were crucial to the creation of the Arctic Council. (See ""Changing the Arctic Paradigm from Cold War to Cooperation: How Canada's Indigenous Leaders Shaped the Arctic Council,"" by Thomas S. Axworthy in The Yearbook of Polar Law 5, 2014)
- Article 2 (b) of the Declaration Establishing the Arctic Council states:
"The category of Permanent Participant is created to provide for active participation and full consultation with the Arctic indigenous representatives within the Arctic Council"
- In the initial drafts, many ideas were on the table, which were not included in the initial 1996 Declaration but have overtime been accepted by the states: for example, a permanent secretariat.
- Two early ideas which have not yet been accepted by the Arctic states are an institutional linkage to the Council of the state and local governments who have jurisdictions in the Arctic (Alaska, the 3 Canadian territories, etc.) and a funding formula to get the full benefit of the participation of the six Permanent Participants.

B) The Situation Today

- Building capacity among the Permanent Participants was recognized from the first ministerial declaration in 1998 (i.e. “take note of proposals which reflect the importance of traditional and indigenous knowledge” and therefore “request Arctic States to consider the financial questions involved in securing the participation of the Permanent Participants in the work of the Arctic Council.”)
- The 1998 Declaration was followed by similar aspiration in the 2000s. The 2002 Inari Declaration, the 2004 Reykjavik Declaration, the 2006 Salekard Declaration, the 2009 Tromso Declaration and Nuuk in 2011, like 1998, continued to reiterate “the need to finance circumpolar cooperation, as well as the importance of providing adequate funding to Permanent Participants.” Despite these many pledges, nothing has been done in a systematic way to address the Permanent Participants capacity issues that were highlighted at the Council’s beginning.
- In 2004, the Permanent Participants drafted a proposal for a Permanent Participants core fund. The idea was rejected by the states but the analysis is still valuable. In 2012, the Permanent Participants produced another paper calling for the creation of a Task Force on Permanent Participant capacity: a draft document was put forward at an SAO meeting in October 2012, with a final document brought forward to SAOs in January 2013. The proposal for a Task Force was not included in the Kiruna Declaration in May 2013.

B) The Situation Today

- The 2004 paper by the Permanent Participants stated that “Permanent Participants lacked the resources of member states. For some, simply attending SAO and ministerial meetings is difficult. The situation prevents the Permanent Participants from making the full contribution they would like to, and means that the Arctic Council’s mandate is unfulfilled.”
- And since 2004, the gap has widened: the working groups are addressing about every issue conceivable, save military security, and the Council has evolved into a treaty-negotiating forum. The agenda and significance of the Arctic Council has expanded, but the level of support for Permanent Participants has not kept pace.
- Like Arctic states, the six Permanent Participants are not the same: it is a mistake to have a mental map of conformity. Some like the Inuit Circumpolar Council and the Saami Council predate the Arctic Council and are relatively well-established. Others have very basic level of staff and resources with only one or two fulltime employees. RAIPON has had an especially difficult relationship with Russia. But all of them need more support, as every ministerial declaration since 1998 has proclaimed.

C) Developing Funding and Capacity Building

- An argument could be made that supporting the Permanent Participants is an indigenous right, supported by the values of the UN Declaration on the Rights on Indigenous Peoples. Another could be the argument of subsidiarity, in article 5 of the European Union that decisions should be taken as closely as possible to the citizens. And who closer to good Arctic decisions than those who live on the land?
- But my argument is based on the value of effectiveness – that Arctic Council decisions not informed by the values and knowledge of citizens who live in the North are weaker decisions.

C) Developing Funding and Capacity Building

- Allow me two examples, suggested by Terry Fenge, an Arctic expert and long time friend of The Gordon Foundation. Indigenous leadership was central to the successful conclusion of the 2001 Stockholm Convention to eliminate or prohibit the use of Persistent Organic Pollutants. Scientists had discovered that 65% of Inuit women on Baffin Island had had levels of toxins five-times the safe level recommended by Health Canada. These women had ingested pollutants that arrived from around the globe and were not local to the North. these findings were confirmed by the Arctic Council Monitoring and Assessment Report: "Arctic Environmental Issues." In his book, *Northern Lights against POPs*, Terry Fenge documents the work of Sheila Watt-Cloutier, who attended all the negotiations and intervened to drive the negotiating process forward. In 2001, 111 nations signed the agreement. In 2005, Sheila Watt-Cloutier played a similar role in promoting the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment, which called on the world to look at the Arctic as a barometer of climate change.

D) Proposal

- Permanent Participants now rely on ad-hoc support from Arctic state governments, their own financing or philanthropic support to meet their Arctic Council responsibilities. The 2004 proposal recommended a core fund that would fund Permanent Participant attendees both at all SAO and ministerial meetings and representation at working groups. They suggested a core budget of \$2 million USD.
- Beyond settling on an amount, a core fund would have to decide on a formula for the equitable sharing of the fund among Arctic states and observers, and then on an equitable formula for the distribution of these resources to Permanent Participant organizations according to their needs.
- Given the commitments made to Permanent Participants since 1998, it would be fitting if the United States as the new chair undertook to complete the architecture of the Arctic Council by adding a buttress missing since 1996. The Northern Lights of Indigenous Knowledge would shine a new glow on how best to solve the challenges of a changing Arctic.