

The Northern Forum Report

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OVERVIEW

The Coastal Zone Canada (CZC) Association is a national organization interested in promoting integrated coastal zone management goals in Canada and abroad. It holds an international conference every two years to promote these goals. The 2006 CZC conference was held from 14 to 18 August in Tuktoyaktuk, Northwest Territories, on the shore of the Beaufort Sea. Its theme, *Arctic Change and Coastal Communities*, recognized the large-scale and pervasive changes taking place in the North and the unprecedented challenges faced by coastal people as they adapt to new situations.

The conference's three sub-themes—Drivers of Change, Community Well-being, and Ocean Management and Governance—explored the transformations taking place in the Arctic climate, as well as the opportunities and challenges faced by government, communities, industry, and Arctic researchers in the quest for sustainable economic development. Arctic shipping, oil and gas exploration, and new fisheries are expected to provide opportunities, whereas altered contaminant pathways, shoreline erosion, and the deterioration of ice-dependent infrastructure will require special solutions. The impacts of change on human health and the capacity of coastal communities to manage these impacts are important considerations. In addition, it is necessary to re-assess whether existing planning frameworks and governance models are adequate to cope with emerging Arctic conditions. Marine management programs and institutions must also be evaluated on their ability to meet the needs of Arctic communities.

For the first time, the CZC Association gave voice to Canadian Inuit for the purpose of understanding their views, their unique knowledge, and their needs as they adapt to the changing conditions. Approximately one-third of the conference participants were Northerners. Inuit were actively involved in planning and organizing the program and conference themes and in publicizing the CZC conference in the North. As well, Inuit spoke to the conference through the opening ceremonies, special performances, a keynote address, formal presentations, and the Northern Forum.

NORTHERN FORUM SUMMARY

The Northern Forum was provided as a special venue where Inuit leaders could formulate views and recommendations regarding CZC conference topics and priorities. It

consisted of three sessions co-chaired by Thomas Suluk of Nunavut and Randall Pokiak of the Inuvialuit Settlement Region (ISR) during the afternoons of 15, 16, and 17 August. The meetings were open to the public, but active participation was restricted to northern leaders and their staff. They were conducted primarily in Inuktitut, with English interpretation provided. The deliberations began with a roundtable discussion, in which a number of issues were raised for the Forum's consideration.

A major issue discussed by the Forum was the potential creation of an Arctic working group associated with the CZC Association. Would such a working group serve as a medium for communication, consultation, and dissemination of knowledge between the North and South and for the development of management policy under the land-claim agreements? Who should participate if an Arctic working group were established?

Much discussion revolved around whether the creation of a new working group would provide the best forum for addressing northern concerns and the advantages of creating this working group within a regional Arctic CZC Association. Rapid transformation is coming to the North via climate change and economic development, so Inuit will increasingly be in contact with the federal government, territorial governments, researchers, and other Aboriginal groups.

Inuit want to be involved when dealing with the government, university scientists, and other researchers on questions of sovereignty, education, health, water, communications, and fundamental infrastructure. Greater communication and increased understanding are needed so that the South can comprehend why issues of self-determination, devolution of decision-making power, community health and well-being, community-based management, and environmental education are so important to the North. Yet concern was expressed that if a regional Arctic CZC Association were created, the agenda would be formed and controlled by southern researchers and policy makers who are not aware of the intricacies and interrelationships of Arctic life. Inuit leaders are concerned that the decisions of southern experts with limited and spotty knowledge of the North would be used to form policies subsequently imposed on Inuit people and communities. Some non-Inuit organizations have strong mandates and responsibilities to report to policy makers and governments. However, their incomplete knowledge of the interrelations between Inuit and the natural environment could make their advice detrimental to the well-being of the North. Could the CZC be trusted to work for

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the good of the people in the Arctic region? After much discussion, the Northern Forum decided that greater communication and understanding are the paramount concerns, and that a regional Arctic CZC Association should be formed. The Northern Forum decided that Inuit organizations from Nunatsiavut, Nunavik, Nunavut, and the ISR should be informed of the need for a regional Arctic CZC Association.

Delegates felt it was important that all coastal communities be consulted when regional working groups were making policy-related proposals because Inuit represent different regions and are not all under one claim. Canadian Inuit from all four claims should be involved. Although inland Inuit communities (e.g., Baker Lake) have concerns that differ considerably from those of coastal communities, they too are incorporated into the land-claim agreements and should be consulted once the coastal communities have agreed on how they want to proceed.

Discussion regarding the inclusion of non-Inuit aboriginal groups such as the James Bay Cree, Gwich'in, and Dene was inconclusive. Several members thought that discussions should include all relevant coastal aboriginal representatives, while others were concerned that non-Inuit groups, culturally and linguistically different from Inuit, could make decisions that would adversely affect the Inuit.

The formation of a new regional Arctic CZC Association would require considerable funding for start-up and maintenance. Although human resources in terms of talent and skills exist in the North, office space, equipment, Internet access, and funds for salaries are needed.

Several issues of concern were raised as possible agenda topics for a putative regional Arctic CZC Association: Arctic sovereignty; federal and territorial harvesting legislation; the Tuktoyaktuk Declaration and the implementation of Canada's Oceans Action Plan under the land-claim agreements; environmental change and critical habitat areas; guidelines and regulations to protect the safety of wildlife and Inuit hunters under conditions of increased marine traffic; global warming; and a potential working relationship with a science and technology development organization, the Ocean Science and Technology Partnerships.

Arctic Sovereignty

Sovereignty was the first and most fundamental concern. Sovereignty within a northern context refers to self-determination and the devolution of decision-making power in relation to community health and well-being, community-based management, environmental education, and the inclusion of *Inuit Qaujimaqatuqangit* or Traditional Knowledge (IQ/TK) alongside Western scientific knowledge. Delegates stated that Inuit and Inuvialuit practiced sovereignty in their territories long before the coming of the Canadian parliament and Canada's use of Inuit people to maintain the country's sovereignty. The leaders asserted that the government should take Inuit more seriously and respect the people who live in the North.

Federal and Territorial Harvesting Legislation

There are differences between Inuit people and regions, and one group cannot speak for the others. Feedback from all affected peoples is needed. The Northern Forum recommended that all federal proposals, including the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) recommendations, be given to the affected communities for consultation before being turned into legislation. Although some agreements, particularly the Nunavut Agreement, require a working group to be established to revise existing legislation, the leaders were indecisive as to whether a regional Arctic CZC Association would be the proper forum in which to address these issues.

Tuktoyaktuk Declaration, Canada's Oceans Action Plan and Land Claims

Health and education are important components of the Tuktoyaktuk Declaration (see this issue of *Arctic*). However, health and education committees already exist under the land-claim agreements to deal with these concerns. The leaders did not want the South to be setting health and education agendas without consultation and approval of the appropriate territorial committees. Therefore, further discussion is needed to explore potential overlaps and decide how to proceed. Leaders were also concerned about how well the general principles of Canada's Oceans Action Plan and Canada's Oceans Strategy would integrate with the land-claim agreements. Concerns were voiced over differences in both wording and concepts between Inuktitut and English. However, because members of working groups are usually appointed, it was decided that a regional Arctic CZC Association would be appropriate to address the smaller issues.

Environmental Damage and Critical Habitat Areas

Legislation regarding royalty sharing and penalties for damage to the environment and critical habitat areas should be revisited. Oil and gas exploration, mining, and other development in the North have resulted in damage to the environment. Development companies should be required by law to pay compensation to the local residents affected by environmental damage. It is the responsibility of the land-claim organizations to negotiate what they want to see in any new legislation. The Nunavut agreement protects Inuit from environmental damage and provides royalties from northern resources. However, the Inuvialuit Final Agreement allows all royalties to go to the federal government. Both Inuvialuit and First Nations groups in the Northwest Territories want royalties to be shared because the federal government cannot compensate aboriginal people for the impacts of oil and gas development. Royalty sharing is needed to enable devolution of decision-making powers to local regions. Inuit cannot make

responsible management and environmental decisions without the resources to implement these decisions.

Guidelines and Regulations to Protect Wildlife and Inuit

Concerns were expressed regarding planning of ocean and transportation routes and related regulatory and safety issues. The activities of the vessels of the Canadian Coast Guard, Canadian Armed Forces, and other large vessels were seen as disruptive and disturbing to whales, other wildlife, and marine habitat. Forum delegates maintained that the Coast Guard does not have authority to travel through land-claim waters at its own discretion, but is required to obtain permission. Incidents were cited involving other large vessels that had discharged oil and sewage in land-claim waters and overwintered in communities without asking permission or paying fees. Tourism was another area of concern. Although the industry has guidelines, Inuit want control over the forms of transportation used by tourists. Northern Forum delegates want regulations established to prevent the disruption of wildlife, the environment, and communities.

Global Warming

Serious consideration must be given to the immediate changes caused by global warming. IQ/TK must be given priority in discussing these issues and included in all decisions. As Inuit travel back and forth, they see changes happening on the land. Inuit priorities must be made known to governments, and governments must acknowledge the importance of IQ/TK to decisions about hunting and wildlife management. Leaders assert that IQ/TK must be included in all land- and marine-related decisions, and only Inuit should be overseeing this issue. In the past, Inuit have not been very active in documenting their ideas and plans, since IQ was transmitted through the oral tradition. Now, however, documentation has become necessary, so that other Inuit can read it and adapt it to current situations and so non-Inuit can have access to it.

Ocean Science and Technology Partnerships

Paul Lecroix, President of Ocean Science and Technology Partnerships (OSTP), submitted a request to make a presentation to the Northern Forum on the use of ocean glider technology. OSTP is a nongovernmental organization consisting of seven organizations joined to create the technology and equipment needed to meet northern objectives. With the anticipated opening of northern waterways, the OSTP recommends that governments invest in surveillance and observation systems that will provide immediate environmental and security information to communities and governments. In the ISR, the Fisheries Joint Management Committee and Fisheries and Oceans Canada-Winnipeg have partnered to develop surveillance and observation systems. However, all groups and stakeholders must be involved for these systems to work effectively.

CONCLUSION

The Northern Forum provided a unique opportunity for Canadian Inuit leaders from each of the four Arctic regions of Canada to express their views and consult with each other on common concerns. The outcome was the presentation of a united voice that emphasized important topics that were not specific to isolated regions of the North, but relevant across the Canadian Arctic. The leaders look forward to working on these issues in the future with academic researchers and government representatives in the proposed regional Arctic CZC Association.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The northern leaders express sincere thanks to the CZC Association and Conference organizers for providing the Northern Forum as a venue for consultation and gaining direction from the Arctic regions regarding future working relationships and partnerships with academic researchers and governments. Special appreciation goes to the Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation for generous financial support of the Forum. The author thanks Thomas Suluk, who co-chaired the Northern Forum, for reviewing this summary.