LETTER TO THE EDITOR

A Principled Approach to Research and Development in Inuit Nunangat Starts with the People

Dear Editor:

The Inuit of Canada, through our respective national and international representative organizations, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK) and Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC)-Canada, are providing this joint response to *The Lakehead Manifesto: Principles for Research and Development in the North*, which appeared in the June 2013 issue of *Arctic* (Morris et al., 2013). It is extremely discouraging to find that the *Manifesto* was developed and published without the involvement of the very people whose interests the *Manifesto's* principles purport to serve. We are not surprised to see that other Northerners also share similar concerns (Ogden and Thomas, 2013). We recognize that many of the researchers involved with the drafting of this *Manifesto* have built their careers on decades of dedicated research in the Arctic, and that the *Manifesto* was written out of passionate concern about intensifying and competing pressures on the Arctic and its peoples. However, it is precisely because of the authors' substantial knowledge of the Arctic that we are particularly troubled by what we would describe as the colonial approach of the *Manifesto*.

It is at best naïve—and at worst, highly paternalistic—to discount the efforts and the capacity of Inuit residents of the Arctic to envision and develop solutions to meet the intensifying pressures faced in their homelands. We agree that the Arctic is a harbinger of impending change in other areas of the world, but it is also the homeland of societies and cultures actively developing and implementing innovative and integrated solutions to the complex challenges and opportunities they are facing. In contrast, the *Manifesto's* principles imply to an uninformed reader that the Arctic, like the Antarctic, is the common heritage of humanity and essentially devoid of research and development governance structures. Neither the historical nor recent instructive and important statements provided by Inuit are referred to, noted, or reflected in the *Manifesto*. We can only conclude that they were not considered in the deliberations of its authors. Additionally, from conversations with Inuit organizations throughout Canada, it is evident that no consultations or dialogue were cultivated in advance of the *Manifesto's* publication.

A number of institutions emanating from Inuit land claims have long developed and cultivated collaborative research and development opportunities with Arctic and non-Arctic partners and continue to do so. Several Inuit land-claim organizations in Canada (Inuvialuit Regional Corporation, Nunavut Tunngavik, Inc., Makivik Corporation, Nunatsiavut Government) have developed their own protocols, policies, and guidelines for northern research (Nickels et al., 2006, Nickels and Knotsch, 2011). In addition, ITK's Inuit Qaujisarvingat: Inuit Knowledge Centre (IQ) acts as a focal point to ensure an increasingly active role for Inuit in research and provides equal space and opportunity for Inuit and scientists to work together, allowing for new and important questions to arise and solutions to be found. IQ is guided by a National Committee composed of representatives from each of the four Inuit land-claim regions, the National Inuit Youth Council, Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, and ICC-Canada. Members of the IQ National Committee are dedicated, knowledgeable experts in the various arenas where research intersects with Inuit communities across Inuit Nunangat.

ITK and ICC-Canada have a long history of advocacy for the adoption and implementation of principles regarding research, resource development, and other activities that affect Inuit communities and Arctic environments. Our organizations were established more than 40 years ago in direct response to development occurring in the Arctic without our engagement, and thus, without due deliberation on the considerable impact that development would have on Inuit.

Inuit took a lead role in the negotiation of the Arctic Council, a high-level forum addressing circumpolar Arctic issues and including active and permanent participation by several indigenous peoples' organizations, including the ICC. More recently, Inuit leaders of the circumpolar Arctic (Russia, Alaska, Canada, and Greenland) have finalized separate declarations that include *A Circumpolar Inuit Declaration on Sovereignty in the Arctic* in 2009 and *A Circumpolar Inuit Declaration on Resource Development Principles in Inuit Nunaat* in 2011.

It is clear from the publication of this *Manifesto* that, despite the history of these efforts, a multigenerational and apparently continuing challenge for Inuit is raising awareness of the obligations of non-Inuit to value and respect Inuit leadership, governance, decision making, institutions, knowledge systems, and vision for the Arctic.

We view the *Manifesto's* approach as entirely inappropriate and cannot emphasize enough that our early and prior inclusion in any proposed set of statements, principles, and recommendations that directly or indirectly affect Inuit interests must be respected and pursued. As signatories who are active in the modern land-claim process in Canada, we hold that consultation within a multi-interest environment is of critical importance. Additionally, our success at gaining global recognition of our rights with a host of other indigenous peoples obliges Inuit to uphold a standard for others to follow. Our experience is that the principles of respect and recognition encourage greater understanding and that the creation of meaningful partnerships can be of great value and service toward the acceptance of broader principles.

Inuit partnerships with academics and the research community go back several decades, and we value these partnerships, including partnerships with some of the authors and institutions noted in the *Manifesto*. It is evident, however, that more must be done to communicate why it is not only audacious but ethically unacceptable in the 21st

century to issue a public declaration to guide the research and development of the circumpolar Arctic, indeed to "save" the Arctic for the common good of humanity, while neglecting to even consider engaging with the peoples and institutions of the Arctic themselves. In parallel with our efforts and interests in drawing attention to the issues of our circumpolar homeland, including the development, adoption, and implementation of overarching principles, we will continue to encourage engagement to provide our perspectives, our experience, and our knowledge as long as it is done in a respectful and meaningful way.

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