Empowering Arctic Indigenous Peoples

Celebrating 50 Years of Indigenous Diplomacy

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IWGIA

SÁMIRÁÐÐI
SAAMELAISNEUVOSTO
SAMERÅDET
СОЮЗ САМОВ
SAAMI COUNCIL

INUIT

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Introduction

By Jens Dahl, Áslat Holmberg, Sara Olsvig and Kathrin Wessendorf

The first Arctic Peoples' Conference was convened in Copenhagen in 1973 by Indigenous Peoples' Organizations and representatives, the University of Copenhagen and IWGIA. From November 22nd to 25th, 40 delegates representing 21 organizations of Indigenous Peoples from Arctic Canada, Kalaallit Nunaat (Greenland), and Sápmi (Finland, Norway and Sweden) participated in this groundbreaking and successful conference, which demonstrated a clear vision and demand for states to recognize the political rights of Arctic Indigenous Peoples, as well as for land rights, human rights, and equality.

The vision of Arctic Peoples developed in the conference was indeed a key factor in the future engagement of Arctic Indigenous Peoples in international processes for the recognition of Indigenous Peoples as distinct peoples as well as their inherent rights, significantly influencing their involvement in the International Indigenous Peoples' movement and its achievements.

Fifty years later, the Inuit Circumpolar Council and the Saami Council co-hosted a 50th commemorative conference, inviting representatives of Arctic Indigenous Peoples' Organizations to meet in Ilulissat, Kalaallit Nunaat (Greenland). The purpose of the 50th-anniversary Arctic Peoples' Conference was to celebrate the cooperation, successes and achievements of Arctic Indigenous Peoples while taking stock of the current situation and discussing visions for the next 50 years. What have we achieved? What have we learned? What is the way forward? Some of those invited had been at the Copenhagen conference while others had not yet been born in 1973, but all could witness that the Indigenous Arctic of today is completely different from the realities that were discussed in 1973. We have asked several people who have witnessed and been a part of the past 50 years of Indigenous Arctic diplomacy and politics to give their perspectives on these decades.

From the articles and statements printed in this volume, several issues, facts and realities catch the eye. First and foremost, the fact that Indigenous Peoples have asserted their rights and recognition and demanded to be viewed not merely as colonized peoples subject

to external impacts without much say in either regional or international decision-making but as proactive promoters of the visions put forward in the 1973 resolutions, bringing transformation to the region and the international arena. This is a political as well as a psychological transformation, which requires change in thinking and acting by the dominant powers as well as academia and governance structures. Indigenous Peoples of the Arctic are "Bashful No Longer" to use the title of a book published in 1990 about Inuit ethnohistory.[1] Or, to put it differently: Arctic Indigenous Peoples have demonstrated an early and clear move from being reactive to being people who take the initiative to promote self-determination and inherent rights. Indigenous women have taken perhaps the most impressive leadership to create strong organizations based on solidarity and identity, as so brilliantly narrated by Máret Sárá in this volume. In 1973 it was clear that there was much work to be done and much to fight for.

Two resolutions were passed in concluding the first Arctic Peoples' Conference, stating that: "*The states from which we come should recognize and respect the unique features of our identity.*" The participants also "*... request the obvious: that the governments of each state from which we come recognize our rights as peoples entitled to the dignity of self-fulfilment [sic] and realization.*"[2] In other words: Indigenous Peoples have inherent rights, including the right of self-determination as the prerequisite for the enjoyment of all other rights, as described by Dalee Sambo Dorough in her insightful keynote speech at the 2023 Arctic Peoples' Conference, printed in this publication.

In the negotiation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Arctic Indigenous Peoples promoted principles such as the fact that rights are inherent. Documentation of these efforts and achievements is another aspiration this publication set out to achieve by publishing the keynote speech of ICC Chair, Sara Olsvig, as well as a shortened version of a peer-reviewed article by her and Miriam Cullen.

Fifty years later, in the statement from the Arctic Peoples' Conference in Ilulissat (included in this volume as Annex 4), the message is clear:

1. Wendell H. Oswalt: An Alaskan Eskimo Ethnohistory, 1778-1988. Univ. of Oklahoma Press 1990.
2. IWGIA Newsletter no. 10, December 1973, pp. 2-3.

> *"We reaffirm our interdependent, interrelated, interconnected, and indivisible rights as affirmed by the United Nations (UN) in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), including our right to self-determination, which is the pre-requisite for the exercise and enjoyment of all of our human rights as Arctic Indigenous Peoples."*

Following the 1973 conference, and parallel to the development of the global Indigenous Peoples' movement, Arctic Indigenous Peoples continued to be transformative in each their constituencies. If Inuit in Kalaallit Nunaat had not proactively promoted their own visions of self-government, they would never have achieved Home Rule in 1979 and Self-Government 30 years later. And it was the Inuit of Northern Canada who continuously pushed the process forward, leading to the establishment of Nunavut and Nunatsiavut Developments in Nunavik and Inuvialuit Nunangat are underway and, in Alaska, the early 1970s were decisive in the development of the existing agreements to form the Native Corporations, distinctly governed by Inuit. The self-government regimes that have been established are continuously being debated, and voices of change from public governance to more distinct Inuit governance can be heard across both Canada and Kalaallit Nunaat, while inherited colonial structures are increasingly being questioned across the Arctic. States seldom give anything to Indigenous Peoples unless pushed to do so and it was continuous pressure from the Sámi that resulted in the establishment of Sámi Parliaments in Norway, Sweden and Finland, forming the most unambiguously Indigenous parliaments of the Arctic, albeit with continued challenges posed by the ongoing lack of recognition of the right of self-identification, for example in Finland. Several authors highlight these achievements and developments, and most of them are compiled in the chapter by Utsi et. al.

Since 1973, Arctic Indigenous Peoples have further developed their own organizations and representative institutions, while the rights of Indigenous Peoples have been affirmed in, *inter alia*, ILO Convention 169 as well as the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, adopted in 2007 by the UN General Assembly. Arctic Indigenous Peoples have continuously participated in and strongly influenced the international development of Indigenous Peoples' political recognition.

In 1973, the unity and organizational capacity of the North American Indigenous Peoples was already strong. As Aqqaluk Lynge writes, *"Although we young Greenlanders considered ourselves very rebellious, our worldview was much more restricted than those from North America."* This was definitely to change! The rush for oil, gas and minerals in the Arctic in the 1960s and 1970s made it clear that the area and the communities were going to change permanently. There was a wind of change and Arctic Peoples realized that political changes were necessary and that Indigenous Peoples across the Arctic had common challenges and common interests. There were therefore good reasons why International Indigenous Organizations saw the light of day, and the international community was of enormous transformative potential to the national Indigenous processes, as narrated by several authors. The Arctic Indigenous Peoples, including the Sámi, the Inuit and the Indigenous Peoples of the Russian North, became key actors in the transformation of international Indigenous rights, as strongly highlighted Dalee Sambo, Gunn-Britt Retter, Sara Olsvig and Miriam Cullen.

Over these 50 years, Arctic Indigenous Organizations have learned the importance of unity and cooperation. It was not the least the visions, stamina and patience that made the Arctic Peoples key actors in the establishment of UN human rights institutions such as the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (Olsvig and Cullen, Sambo and Magga) and also the drivers behind the inclusion of Indigenous Peoples in the Arctic Council (Retter). As true diplomats, Arctic Peoples carefully negotiated with governments, entering compromise after compromise without ever losing sight of the final goal. As Sara Olsvig said in her introductory speech in Ilulissat: *"We have added perspectives to the world that have only made international agreements and institutions stronger and more responsive to the issues we share as a human species: climate change, cross-border and people-to-people cooperation, the understanding of the interconnectedness to nature and our rich environment, feeding and sustaining all peoples".*

Those who have witnessed the processes in the United Nations have witnessed all the conflicts and diverging interests between and within Indigenous Peoples' Organizations. But, in the end, when unity was achieved, the result was supported by all. This is also relevant when it comes to those steps that finally, after years and years of ne-

gotiations led to the establishment of national self-government arrangements. As documented by Máret Sárá in this volume, there were obvious divergences in the Greenlandic delegation in 1973, between the submissive approach of the Chair of the Greenlandic Provincial Council and the more radical young students but also between the attendees from Greenland and those from Canada, as noted by Aqqaluk Lynge.[3] However, the impressing thing is how these discrepancies have been overcome and how types of self-government have been established and, once in place, used as platforms for further promotion of the rights of Indigenous Peoples.

There were no Indigenous Peoples' representatives from Russia in Copenhagen in 1973 and, although the cooperation and contact have grown extensively in the 50 years since, there were no Russian Indigenous delegates at the 2023 commemorative conference. As had been the tradition in, for example, the Inuit Circumpolar Council prior to Russian Inuit joining the organization formally, empty seats were left at the table to represent the non-attending Russian Indigenous Peoples' representatives.

We here wish to recognize the development and contributions of Russian Indigenous Peoples' Organizations. Contact with fellow Inuit and Sámi in Russia was established even before the end of the Cold War, and the formal cooperation developed since 1989 has been of great importance and value to Arctic Indigenous Peoples. The Association of the Indigenous Minorities of the North, Siberia, and the Far East of the Russian Federation were co-founders of the Arctic Council, together with Inuit Circumpolar Council and the Saami Council, and is recognized in the founding documents of the Council. The Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North (RAIPON) has since been active as a Permanent Participant.

Indigenous Peoples and organizations from Arctic Russia have also been active in all relevant negotiations in the United Nations system. The solidarity and support of Indigenous Peoples from other parts of the Arctic has been a strong factor in these achievements, as described in Alona Yefimenko's article in this volume.

3. See also Kleivan, Inge: The Arctic Peoples' Conference in Copenhagen. November 22-25, 1973. Etudes/Inuit Studies 1992, 161 (1-2):227-36.

Since the 2010s, the Russian government has been tightening its legislation governing the activities of civil society organizations. In 2012, the State Duma passed legislation that allows non-profit organizations that receive foreign funding and, at the same time, engage in political activities, such as human rights activism, to be designated as "foreign agents". In 2019, the practice was extended to individuals. While the first versions of the law have significantly reduced the possibility of Russian civil society organizations, including Indigenous Peoples Organizations, to receive foreign funding, according to its newest version adopted in 2022, mere "foreign influence", as determined by the Russian authorities, is sufficient for an organization or an individual to be included on the list of foreign agents. In a parallel process in 2012, the Russian authorities introduced a concept of undesirable organizations to be applied to foreign and international organizations whose activities threaten "the foundations of the constitutional order of the Russian Federation, the defence capability of the country or the security of the state". Over the past decade, many foreign partners of Russian Indigenous Peoples' Organizations, including foundations, have found themselves on the list of undesirable partners.

Furthermore, geopolitical developments had an impact on the work of the Arctic Council, as the seven Western states paused their participation in the Council's work in 2022. This decision was taken without the participation of the six Indigenous Peoples' Organizations that hold the status of Permanent Participants in the Arctic Council. With the transition of the chairship of the Arctic Council from Russia to Norway in May 2023, the work has gradually resumed and, although state representatives continue not to meet at Senior Arctic Official and ministerial level, the six Permanent Participants have continuously met in person with the Norwegian chairship, while online meetings of the Arctic Council Working Groups were resumed in February 2024.

The war in Ukraine has also impacted cross-border Indigenous Peoples' collaboration. Restrictions on the transfer of funds and requirements by funders to not collaborate with Russia or its citizens have basically halted any cross-border projects. As of 2024, it is still not possible to apply for tourist visas from Russia to Finland and, in general, visas are only granted to people with work or family relations in Finland. Most recently, Norway has tightened its position and installed similar arrangements. Although organizing in-person meetings in Europe with Indigenous Peoples' representatives from Russia is limited, the in-per-

son meetings between Arctic Indigenous Peoples held under the auspices of the Arctic Council should be noted.

The 1973 Arctic Peoples' Conference resolutions proposed forming "a Circumpolar Body of Indigenous Peoples to pursue and advance our shared and collective interests".[4] As Gunn-Britt Retter describes in her article on the Arctic Council in this publication, Arctic Indigenous Peoples played an active and transformative role in Arctic governance in the years after 1973 and, once states had matured their thinking and agreed to establish the Arctic Council in 1996, Arctic Indigenous Peoples were ready to take seats at the table. Furthermore, Inuit, Sámi and Aleut all have relatives and families living across state borders between Western states and Russia, and the first cooperative efforts took place against the backdrop of the Cold War, forging skilful diplomacy by Arctic Indigenous Peoples when establishing their cooperation.

Today, Arctic Indigenous Peoples continue to play a decisive role in maintaining, safeguarding and strengthening cooperation and institutional development in Arctic governance. It is this development that we aim to describe and make available to the broader reader by compiling the keynote speeches and reflective articles in this publication. The first section of this book consists of the keynote speeches from the 2023 Arctic Peoples' Conference held in Ilulissat, Kalaallit Nunaat. The second section consists of reflective articles describing 50 years of Arctic Indigenous Peoples' advocacy and diplomacy in reaching their achievements and solutions, while describing current and future challenges. The resolutions of the 1973 Arctic Peoples' Conference, the outcome document of the 2014 commemoration as well as the Statement of the Arctic Peoples' Conference 2023 are included in the third section, alongside a chronology of events. A selection of photos from the past 50 years are also included in middle of the book (pages 81-96). When asking for contributions to this commemorative volume, we aimed to have input from Indigenous persons and leaders with varied backgrounds and experiences. Some authors approach Arctic Indigenous Peoples' issues from an academic perspective, others give priority to a participatory approach. As editors we have deliberately wanted to retain such varied approaches, which are reflected in the collection of articles that spans short statements to academic articles. Each in their own right.

4. Ibid.

Section I: Keynotes and speeches held at the 2023 Arctic Peoples' Conference

Keynote: Enhanced Participation of Indigenous Peoples in the UN

By Sara Olsvig, Chair, Inuit Circumpolar Council

One hundred years ago, Indigenous Peoples' representatives approached the League of Nations, the precursor to the United Nations that we know today. They not only met a closed door but also no understanding of why Indigenous Peoples would want to represent themselves among other nations and peoples. Since then, Indigenous Peoples have never let go of the vision of being included in international and intergovernmental institutions and bodies, representing ourselves. But, as we know here in the Arctic, the desire and push to gain seats at negotiating tables and speak on our own behalf has been strong.

After the UN was established, Indigenous Peoples continued their advocacy and the UN gradually started to listen. In 1970, the UN Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities recommended a comprehensive study on the specific issue of discrimination against Indigenous Peoples. This is seen as a turning point, and the Special Rapporteur who was assigned the task bears a name we have heard many times since: José Martínez Cobo. Cobo's final reports were submitted in the years 1981 to 1984 and were among – if not the first – UN documents that have since been referred to time and time again in discussions on, among other things, the definition of Indigenous Peoples. With his recommendations on the rights of Indigenous Peoples, Mr. Cobo delivered a much-needed focus on the elimination of discrimination against Indigenous Peoples, based on generally recognized grounds and human rights principles. Cobo's reports led to the establishment of the Working Group on Indigenous Populations under the Economic and Social Council in 1982. The working group was open to representatives of all Indigenous Peoples, communities, and organizations and, in 1985, the preparations for drafting a UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was initiated.

Parallel to this development, Indigenous Peoples from around the world started to unite and organize their cooperation. The first Arctic

Peoples' Conference in 1973, which we are commemorating here today, played a role in this, as this meeting was the start of cooperation among Arctic Indigenous Peoples. By the end of the 1970s, Inuit were organized in the Inuit Circumpolar Conference, as our organization was first called, and our ties and allyship with other Arctic Indigenous Peoples, through personal relations built over the course of many, many meetings but also, more formally, organization to organization, quickly grew strong.

Gatherings as drivers of success

Indigenous Peoples' gatherings have been the drivers in advancing our rights, ultimately resulting in success when the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was endorsed by a vast majority of UN Member States. Detailed negotiations were conducted over more than 25 years and, when I think of what was at stake for Indigenous Peoples, I truly understand the passion and commitment I witnessed at some of the later meetings I was fortunate to attend before the end of these negotiations.

I vividly remember our leaders standing shoulder to shoulder, making clear and passionate points as to why the apostrophe was to be after the 's' in the word "peoples". I watched in awe as one by one they spoke, and I felt the are almost thick in the room – from their concentration and perseverance in maintaining the push for Indigenous Peoples to be recognized as peoples equal to all other peoples, as the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples ended up enshrining. The apostrophe was and is that little detail that made the difference of including our fundamental and collective right of self-determination as peoples, the right which is the pre-requisite to all our rights.

The Inuit Circumpolar Council was an integral part of these negotiations. Together with other Indigenous Peoples' Organizations, ICC representatives pushed for the fundamental and instrumental recognition of Indigenous Peoples' right of self-determination. As far back as 1983, Inuit participating in the UN were represented tirelessly by, among others, the ICC's former chair Dr. Dalee Sambo Dorough.[1] In 1985, the

1. The World Council of Indigenous Peoples gathering was the precursor to the 1985 action memorialized in the 1987 document that was attached to the reference shown below.

ICC was involved in proposing the following text, which largely remained part of the final version of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples:[2]

> *All indigenous nations and peoples have the right to self-determination by virtue of which they have the right to whatever degree of autonomy or self-government they choose. This includes the right to freely determine their political status, freely pursue their own economic, social, religious and cultural development and determine their own membership and/or citizenship without external interference.*[3]

Furthermore, the ICC proposed principles that are today recognized as integral to Indigenous Peoples' rights, including the rights of self-determination and self-identification. The principles laid out were as follows:

> *All indigenous peoples have the right to determine the person or group of persons who are included within its population.*[4]

> *Each indigenous people has the right to determine the form, structure and authority of its institutions.*[5]

Throughout the negotiations on the Declaration, the ICC maintained a focus on equality and non-discrimination as peremptory norms and

2. As an ICC delegate to the WCIP Fourth General Assembly, Panama City, Panama, September 1984 and reprinted in UN Document E/CN.4/1985/22, Annex 2 (1985), Dalee Sambo Dorough and six other Indigenous Peoples prepared the Declaration of Principles of Indigenous Rights, which opened with "Principle 1. All Indigenous Peoples have the right of self-determination. By virtue of this right they may freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social, religious, and cultural development".
3. Adopted by representatives of Indigenous Peoples and organizations meeting in Geneva, July 1985, in preparation for the fourth session of the UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations; as reaffirmed and amended by representatives of Indigenous Peoples and organizations meeting in Geneva, July 1987, in preparation for the working group's fifth session. Reprinted in UN Doc E/CN.4/Sub.2/1987/22, Annex 5 (1987).
4. WCIP Fourth General Assembly, Panama City, Panama, September 1984 and reprinted in UN Document E/CN.4/1985/22, Annex 2 (1985), Principle 5.
5. WCIP Fourth General Assembly, Panama City, Panama, September 1984 and reprinted in UN Document E/CN.4/1985/22, Annex 2 (1985), Principle 6

demanded that the rights recognized through the declaration were not rights "*granted to us by others*" but rights that are *inherent*. These are principles on which we, together with many other Indigenous Peoples, have continued to base our advocacy. After the Declaration was adopted by a majority of 144 states in favour, and four against, being Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and the US, with 11 abstentions including Russia, the push continued. Firstly, three out of eight Arctic states had not endorsed the UNDRIP, although Canada and the US later did, and, secondly, writing and agreeing a declaration is one thing but actually implementing the rights enshrined in it is quite another. Today, we continue to push for implementation of the rights of which we fought so hard to gain recognition.

In 2014, seven years after the adoption of the Declaration, the first World Conference on Indigenous Peoples was held with the aim of *"shar[ing] perspectives and best practices on the realization of the rights of indigenous peoples, including pursuing the objectives of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples"*.[6] Prior to the 2014 World Conference, Indigenous Peoples once again demonstrated their power in uniting for a preparatory meeting when we met in Alta, Sápmi, in 2013. Here, representatives of the seven socio-cultural regions that Indigenous Peoples are organized into when engaging with the UN met and negotiated an outcome document – the Alta Outcome Document.

Through the negotiations for the Alta Outcome Document, Arctic peoples pushed for the inclusion of wording on enhancing our participation in the UN, given that the UN had been an important catalyst for advancing our rights but that it was still a forum for states, not equally including our Indigenous nations and peoples. After all, the UN Charter's preamble starts with "We the peoples", and while the UN does stand for United "Nations", it does not include all peoples and nations

6. The World Conference on Indigenous Peoples was held as a high-level plenary meeting of the UN General Assembly and took place 22 and 23 September 2014. The decision to hold the Conference was taken by resolution 65/198 of 21 December 2010. The World Conference on Indigenous Peoples is not to be confused with the World Council of Indigenous Peoples, which is also known under the abbreviation "WCIP". See more about the World Council of Indigenous Peoples in Ole Henrik Magga's article in this publication entitled: "From the Arctic Peoples' Conference 1973 to the UN Permanent Forum 2002" on page 50.

equally. The Alta Outcome Document, under its second theme" of UN system action for the implementation of the rights of Indigenous Peoples" therefore included the paragraph:

> *Pursuant to the universal application of the right of self-determination for all Peoples, recommends that the UN recognize Indigenous Peoples and Nations based on our original free existence, inherent sovereignty and the right of self- determination in international law. We call for, at a minimum, permanent observer status within the UN system enabling our direct participation through our own governments and parliaments. Our own governments include inter alia our traditional councils and authorities.*

It was a significant achievement and important to note that the Alta Outcome Document was adopted as an annex to the resolution of the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples, which was held as a formal part of the UN General Assembly in 2014. This was only made possible through the well-preparedness and active advocacy of Indigenous Peoples throughout the process leading up to the World Conference.

Enhancing the participation of Indigenous Peoples in the UN

Based on the developments depicted above, the process of enhancing the participation of Indigenous Peoples in the UN had begun and Indigenous Peoples, including the Sámi Parliamentary Council, met once more in Quito, Ecuador, in 2020, to strategize on how to advance this goal. Here, the decision to establish the Indigenous Coordinating Body (ICB) was taken. The Sámi Parliamentary Council and the Inuit Circumpolar Council hold two seats in the Indigenous Coordinating Body, representing the Arctic Region.

Since then, the ICB has continuously advanced and strategized the further development of the goal of enhancing Indigenous Peoples' participation in the UN, taking stock of the most recent developments, preparing for sessions of the UN Human Rights Council, the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and the UN Perma-

nent Forum on Indigenous Issues, all of which serve as important platforms through which recognition of a distinct status for Indigenous Peoples in the UN is advanced. Through the hard and tireless work of the Indigenous Coordinating Body, the UN is starting to focus on the question of enhancing the participation of Indigenous Peoples.

Several outcomes from UN activities and entities over the past years are important to note. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights' (OHCHR) report on the expert workshop held in Geneva in November last year, where Indigenous experts – together with state-selected experts, held in-depth discussions on four main aspects of enhancing the participation of Indigenous Peoples in the UN: venues of participation; participation modalities; accreditation criteria; and accreditation mechanism. The summary reports from the hearings and interactive dialogues between Indigenous Peoples and the President of the UN General Assembly, held in New York during the sessions of the UN Permanent Forum, as well as the reports of the Permanent Forum sessions, all contain important summaries, expressions of support and recommendations related to the enhanced participation process, as do the UN General Assembly resolutions on Indigenous Peoples. Each of these documents includes important wording in support of advancing a distinct status for Indigenous Peoples' representative institutions, differentiating these from other accreditations such as accreditation as NGOs, which is the accreditation that the ICC, for example, holds today, and has held for 40 years. The 2023 report from the hearing with the President of the UN General Assembly emphasizes that the status should reflect Indigenous Peoples' right to self-determination and should not mirror NGOs, civil society, observers, or states.

The road ahead will be long but we are heading in the direction of greater recognition of Indigenous Peoples and our own representative institutions in the UN – our own governments, parliaments, including, i.a., traditional councils. The Sámi Parliaments are clear examples of such representative institutions. Across Inuit Nunaat, we have various representative institutions but we do not have one body clearly defined as a representative institution that represents all Inuit. Greenland has its own government and parliament, as does Nunavut and other self-governing Inuit nations, while land claim organizations and as native corporations also demonstrate and exercise self-determination across Inuit Nunaat. In the years to come, it will be our task to further debate how

and if we collectively want to be represented in the UN as something other than an NGO. We must do the work to identify how and by whom we wish to be represented and be ready when a distinct status for Indigenous Peoples' representative institutions is established. One thing is for sure: the push and advocacy for our participation in the UN, and our use of our status of NGO accreditation, has brought us a long way. Much has been achieved because we have succeeded in gathering, preparing, deliberating, and writing down our common goals and principles, and have presented them to the world. Developing and achieving a new distinct status in the UN will also take time and effort but, as we have shown before, our perseverance and our ability to work together will get us there. I wish to thank our good partners and allies who are here with us today – the other Indigenous Peoples' Organizations and others who have supported us. I especially want to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to the states who have already clearly supported the cause of enhancing the participation of Indigenous Peoples in the UN, finally, and hopefully, recognizing our right to represent ourselves as equals.

Each of the persons who has represented Arctic Indigenous Peoples over the years, and done the hard work for our peoples, has done so for us to be able to speak with our own voices in matters concerning us. This has been done not only because of the principle of participation but because we have substantial and important contributions which – in the end – result in stronger outcomes for these international forums and agreements and the work done within them. The UN is stronger because of us – and we are strongest when we find common ground and stand shoulder to shoulder.

Qujanaq.

Credit: *Angu Motzfeldt*

About the author

Sara Olsvig is the Chair of Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC). Olsvig is an Indigenous Peoples' rights defender and advocate, and a politician previously serving as member of the Parliament of Denmark and the Parliament of Greenland. Sara Olsvig actively contributed to the work of the Constitutional Commission as well as the Human Rights Council of Kalaallit Nunaat, Greenland. Olsvig holds a Master of Science in Anthropology and is currently a PhD candidate at Ilisimatusarfik - the University of Greenland.

Keynote: Removing the Cloak of Colonialism to Fully Secure Our Future

By Dalee Sambo Dorough, PhD

Thank you for the opportunity to address the matter of human rights developments in favor of Indigenous Peoples on this auspicious occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Arctic Peoples' Conference. I am honored to have been asked to do so. I want to highlight a few breakthroughs, urge increased efforts to occupy the space we have created and, finally, suggest ways in which we can remove the cloak of colonialism that persists across our Arctic traditional territories.

Allow me to quote objectives from one of the original resolutions that emerged 50 years ago in Copenhagen.

"In any negotiations of the crucial issues we expect participation in a position of full equality."[1]

"Recognize with honesty and clarity the collective ownership to the lands and waters traditionally used and occupied by each Indigenous group."

Recognition of rights "as peoples entitled to the dignity of self-fulfillment and realization... This further means that there must not be any displacement or interference with our rights by governments and/or industry, nor can there be any disturbance of our lands."[2]

Solely based on our own determination and political enterprises, we have organized our respective institutions to pursue these fundamental objectives. We have made extraordinary gains, not based on the goodwill of governments. Certainly, governments had and continue to have a role to play, and we continue to extend a hand in partnership in various fora to solidify the recognition of our human rights. However, my point, my message, is that such gains are the result of our political will, diplomacy, capacity, intellect, and our understanding of the world around us.

1. 1973 Arctic Peoples' Conference Resolution
2. Supra.

Two days ago [18 July 2023 – sic], in Geneva, the Haudenosaunee memorialized the 100th anniversary of Deskaheh's struggles to gain the attention of the League of Nations.[3] Indigenous Peoples have also celebrated the anniversary of the 1977 Conference on Racism and Racial Discrimination Against the Indigenous Peoples of the Americas. In this context, it is remarkable that, even prior to this conference, the Inuit and Sámi were organized to advance their respective efforts to safeguard their distinct cultural integrity.

If one takes the broad view and understands the holistic nature of our political, economic, social, cultural, and spiritual rights, everything we have done concerns human rights and our separate or collective actions in every national, regional, and international context.

Our engagement in devising human rights standards stems from what Eben Hopson (former mayor of the North Slope Borough, Alaska) referred to as the need for uniform respect for our distinct rights.[4] The trilogy of international human rights instruments in the *Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989,*[5] *the American Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples,*[6] *and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*[7] are all relevant to us as Arctic Indigenous Peoples. What a triumph!

I reference all three instruments because of the "complementary and mutually reinforcing"[8] nature of these norms, as well as those in

3. Ka'nhehsí:io Deer. "Haudenosaunee mark 100th anniversary of Deskaheh's attempt to speak to League of Nations: Deskaheh has become a symbol for Indigenous rights at the United Nations." CBC News, 24 July 2023. https://www.cbc.ca/news/indigenous/deskaheh-100-haudenosaunee-geneva-1.6913959
4. Eben Hopson. "Welcoming Address." Utqiagvik, Alaska, 13 June 1977. https://ebenhopson.com/mayor-eben-hopsons-welcoming-address-first-inuit-circumpolar-conference-utkeagvikmi-barrow-ak/
5. ILO C169 - Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169)
6. Organization of American States. General Assembly. Regular Session. (46th, 2016, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic) American Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, AG/RES.2888 (XLVI-O/16). (Adopted at the third plenary session held on 15 June 2016).
7. UN General Assembly, United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, resolution / adopted by the General Assembly, 2 October 2007, A/RES/61/295. https://www.refworld.org/docid/471355a82.html [accessed 9 November 2023]
8. International Labor Organization, ILO standards and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: Information note for ILO staff and partners.

other international human rights instruments that apply to the Arctic. Indeed, one must acknowledge the right of all peoples to self-determination in common Article 1 of the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*, both adopted in 1966 just seven years prior to the 1973 Arctic Peoples' Conference.

Allow me to make a point about the *UN Declaration*, especially because it is, to my knowledge, the longest discussed and negotiated human rights instrument in UN history. It was also the first time that the subjects of the instrument – in this case, Indigenous Peoples – participated extensively along with States in its formulation. This process set an important benchmark for Indigenous Peoples' democratic participation in UN standard-setting. To be sure, Arctic Indigenous Peoples and, particularly, the ICC and the Saami Council, made significant, influential contributions.

The *UN Declaration* continues to grow in significance. Regional and domestic courts and commissions are increasingly relying on it. It is important to comment on its status. Our present challenges include the comprehensive implementation – as well as a lack of understanding – of the legal status of the *UN Declaration*.

As the former UN Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples, Professor James Anaya, has stated, one of the contributing factors to the lack of implementation is how the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* is characterized by UN member states. He has emphasized the "normative weight" of this important instrument as well as its crucial foundation for equality and human rights.[9]

From 2011 to 2014, the International Law Association Committee (ILA) on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples undertook and prepared an Expert Commentary on the *UN Declaration* wherein they confirmed several notable features about its legal status and the effects of its comprehensive provisions. The ILA Committee concluded that the *UN Declaration* has diverse legal effects and, in particular, a few of its provisions fall into the category of customary international law, thereby resulting in significant legal effects and UN member state obligations.

9. Anaya, James. "Report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples, James Anaya, in accordance with Human Rights Council resolution 21/24 [UN Document A/68/317]." New York: UN, 14 August 2013, 16.

Regarding the ILA 2010 Committee Report delivered at The Hague, the Committee affirmed that the relevant areas of Indigenous Peoples' rights with respect to which the discourse on customary international law arises are self-determination, autonomy or self-government, cultural rights and identity, and land rights, as well as reparation, redress, and remedies (ILA 2010, 43).

Furthermore, it is crucial for us to move implementation forward by undertaking our own engagement to aggressively activate the employment of all interrelated norms in everything we do. Our continuing work helps to educate governments about the content of the norms as well as UN member state obligations to Indigenous Peoples concerning our distinct status, rights, and role.

Turning to my message of the need to occupy the space that we have carved out within the international sphere – it is crucial that we show up and that, when we do, we must be prepared and focused with strategic and tactical methods. This means reviewing and assessing the content of the subject matter, venue, and actors but, even more importantly, identifying and determining what is the benefit to us as Arctic Indigenous Peoples. Recognizing our financial and human resource conditions and being highly selective about engaging in measures that ultimately strengthen our status, role, and rights consistent with the minimum standards embraced by the world community, and effectively working to raise those standards. These are acts of self-determination.

We have demonstrated impressive diplomacy as Arctic Indigenous Peoples, within the Arctic Council as well as multiple, diverse international venues. At the same time, we must be both selective about engagement plus strengthening our diplomatic actions by threading human rights throughout every effort. Too often, leaders have treated human rights as a portfolio distinct from discrete forums when, in fact, human rights should inform and saturate every policy and action that we take. These are acts of self-determination.

We have arrived at a time when a succession plan is needed. We must become genuine about mentoring and sharing responsibility with our young people. Providing real opportunities and not simply internships, fellowships, and short-term engagement. Encouraging the participation of our young people means all young people, recognizing the diversity of our youth, including LGBTQ2S+. We must also include youth that may not have grown up connected to their culture; we need to wel-

come them and encourage them. The space that we create must also be inclusive and inviting to young people. Sharing responsibility means recognizing young peoples' contributions, not just in tokenistic expressions of inclusion but prioritizing their goals, their perspectives, and their collective decisions.

Of course, this requires increased financial support. In my view, this increased Arctic focus has increased the Arctic interest among many actors, including the philanthropic community. Here, too, we must devote time and energy to capturing a greater bulk of such support, and we must do so consistent with the human rights standards that we have influenced and agreed to. These are acts of self-determination.

Finally, my third point emphasizes actions that may help us to remove the cloak of colonialism that has stymied our unity and stifled our political development. Across our respective societies, as Arctic Indigenous Peoples, we must recognize our foundation of strength. The foundation that we have quietly but effectively built over millennia.

We must also be intentional about encouraging all to embrace our identity as Arctic Indigenous Peoples. To be proud of who we are, where we come from, proud of our families and communities. This goes to the heart of our right to be different and to be respected as such as affirmed in the *UN Declaration*.

Our strength is that we occupy a unique region of the world. Indeed, we are the only people of the cryosphere as there are no people "Indigenous" to Antarctica. Our lands, ice, snow, and waters and our profound relationship with our natural world is a strength. Our cultures and languages are a strength. Our families, youth, and of course, our Elders are a strength. Our holistic view of the whole Arctic ecosystem and the longevity of our knowledge and observations, and our extraordinary understanding of the Arctic and the fact that it is embedded in our languages and our way of life all contribute to our strength.

As Arctic Indigenous Peoples, as one young Inuk from Alaska, Addy Ahmasuk, stated at a recent gathering, we need to "be determined to be self-determined". She was urging others to undertake actions, statements, and initiatives to demonstrate that we, as distinct peoples, are determined to be self-determining in everything we do. Simply getting by is insufficient. We need to raise up our values and our long-term desires and aspirations, and truly let them guide our day-to-day actions as Arctic Indigenous Peoples, as leaders of Arctic Indigenous Peoples.

We must engage in intentional expressions and definitive actions that are grounded in self-determination, which is a pre-requisite for the exercise and enjoyment of all other human rights. We also need to understand how we can shed the nation-state colonial cloak that has socialized our people, the one that has too often shrouded our actions. We must insist on a paradigm shift, and we must be the first to make that change in thinking ourselves. Decolonization clearly requires full respect for our right of self-determination.

We must think of security not in terms of the national security of our respective nation-states but in our overall security as distinct Indigenous Peoples. One example is that of the security of Inuit Nunaat. Our security is not necessarily within the realm of Nordic state security because Denmark colonized Kalaallit Nunaat (Greenland); it is not solely based on the sovereignty of Canada across the high Arctic; it should not be based on the great power politics of the United States and the Russian Federation. Furthermore, the people of Kalaallit Nunaat, geographically a part of North America and intimately tied to all Inuit to the West, may consider joining the regional intergovernmental Organization of American States[10] in the future. They would thus be able to take advantage of the human rights regime of this regional organization as well as all other international human rights instruments.

In conclusion, our security should be based upon our capacity and our identity, which has informed our distinct status, role, and rights as Arctic Indigenous Peoples. We engaged in the "quest for equality" in every argument to gain the unqualified application and attachment of the right of self-determination to us as distinct peoples. We won this battle based on the absolute prohibition of racial discrimination in international human rights law. Indeed, this is the understanding of legal scholars, many UN member states, human rights treaty bodies, and

10. Conceived of in 1889, the OAS was formally established in 1948 and, consistent with Article 1 of its Charter, pursues initiatives to maintain "an order of peace and justice, to promote their solidarity, to strengthen their collaboration, and to defend their sovereignty, their territorial integrity, and their independence." The regime includes 35 nation states of the Americas as well as observer states. The OAS General Assembly is served by a General Secretariat and, in the field of human rights, the Inter-American Court on Human Rights and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. Significantly, the OAS has a Rapporteurship on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. See https://www.oas.org/en/ [last accessed on 15 December 2023].

others. As provided in the *UN Declaration*, we must also be intentional about and interpret the human rights that we have gained in accordance with principles of justice, democracy, respect for human rights, equality, non-discrimination, good governance, and good faith.

Now, let us move toward the next 50 years based on the rigorous exercise of our right of self-determination to safeguard the political, economic, social, cultural, and environmental security of our people and our traditional territory. May we always be the people of the cryosphere. May we always be Arctic Indigenous Peoples.

About the author

Dalee Sambo Dorough, PhD is an Iñupiaq advocate for Indigenous rights as well as an expert in international human rights law, international relations, and Alaska Native rights. Dorough was part of the Alaskan tribal sovereignty movement for decades, serving as the Chairperson (2014) and Expert Member (2010-2016) of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, and as the International Chair of the Inuit Circumpolar Council (2018-2022). She holds a PhD from the University of British Columbia, Faculty of Law and a Master of Arts in Law and Diplomacy from The Fletcher School at Tufts University.

Keynote: Arctic Council

By Gunn-Britt Retter

It was back in 2015, Canada was about to conclude their second biennial Arctic Council Chairmanship and preparing the Ministerial to take place in Iqaluit in April. The eight member states and the six Permanent Participant Organizations[1] were negotiating the Iqaluit Declaration, and I was in charge on behalf of the Saami Council. In those days the negotiation was mostly done at meetings, but also by e-mail. Since the last meeting two weeks before the Ministerial, there was a last round of negotiations via e-mail, when a member state introduced the word ''conservation'' into the text. The Saami Council opposed the use of this word in the specific context, and that we preferred the version we had agreed to at the meeting. We submitted our view within the deadline by e-mail – whereafter I more or less moved on to other work. On Tuesday evening at CEST 10:30 pm, in the week the Ministeral was to take place, I received a call from Ottawa. It was the SAO (Senior Arctic Officials) Chair that was on the line, asking if the Saami Council could live with his latest version of the paragraph where we had opposed the wording, and he gently added: ''you know, it is only the Saami Council holding back the concensus now - it is Tuesday already, and we really need to get this set to get the declaration copied and ready for the Ministerial on Friday''. (quoted according to my own memory). For people not knowledgable of the Arctic Council, I should mention that the Ottawa Declaration (1996) establishing the Arctic Council declares that decisions of the Arctic Council are to be made by consensus of its members.

I share this story to illustrate that over the years the Permanent Participants have clearly demonstratred their ability to operate meaningfully for all actors in the Arctic Council, and legitimated the Indigenous Peoples' Organizations' position in the Council and not least that the informal position already by 2015 was much stronger than it was and still is – on the paper.

1. Inuit Circumpolar Council, Saami Council, RAIPON, Aleut International Association, Arctic Athabaskan Council and Gwich'in Council International.

My keynote here is going to reflect a bit upon how we got to that kind of position and how this kind of question can be formalized in the future.

I'm presently the Saami Council's head of Delegation to the Arctic Council. I have coordinated the Saami Council's role as Permanent Participant in the Arctic Council since 2005. Before that I worked four years in the Indigenous Peoples' Secretariat. So, I have 22 years of experience from the Arctic Council. We have already heard many references to both the establishment and the present situation of the Arctic Council at this conference. I will touch upon three time periods of the Arctic Council: the beginning, the 27 years of cooperation and then conclude with the present situation.

The Arctic Indigenous Peoples gathered already in 1973 when they established contacts and shared a joint vision and a path to address the challenges they were facing. The visions however, were quite different from those picked up by a Saami newspaper that reported from the conference when they quoted from one of the resolutions and misspelled the word and wrote *revolution* in the newspaper. So, there were two "revolutions" coming out of the '73 meeting, and the second resolution says that: "the conference proposes to form a circumpolar body of Indigenous Peoples to pursue and advance our shared and collective interests. We emphasize that we are profoundly concerned about protecting now the interests of succeeding generations of our peoples".[2]

I would claim that even though it has expanded beyond a circumpolar body of Indigenous Peoples, the Arctic Council is such a body with states involved. It was the circumpolar cooperation that we wanted, that people who were there in 1973 were calling for. Usually when we hear about the history of Arctic Council it starts with the Gorbachev speech in Murmansk in 1987 on which Finland, with the Rovaniemi initiative or the Rovaniemi process, followed up in 1989 by starting to talk about cooperation on Environmental Protection, which led to the establishment of the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy in 1991. During those two years of negotiations of the Rovaniemi Process, the Indigenous Peoples were ready to negotiate a seat in that cooperation, saying that this is about our environment our lives, the foundation of our culture, so

2. 1973 Arctic Peoples' Conference Resolution

we need to be at the table. As a result, Arctic Indigenous Peoples were first recognized as observers but later became Permanent Participants.

In 1994 we got the Indigenous Peoples' Secretariat that was hosted in the same offices as the Greenlandic Home Rule representation in Copenhagen. The Arctic cooperation developed into the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy which was established at the level of the Environmental Ministers, and driven by Canada, at that time headed by Inuit leader Mary Simon as Canada's Arctic Ambassador. The Arctic Council was established in 1996 at the level of Foreign Ministers rather than Environmental Ministers.

At first there were three Permanent Participants. This evolved with the Aleut International Association joining in 1998 and the Gwich'in Council International and Arctic Athabascan Council joining in 2000. I consider the role as Permanent Participants in the Arctic Council, at the level of the eight Arctic States' Foreign Ministers, as quite an achievement. As we heard a Norwegian senior Arctic officials say, it's quite a unique body where Arctic States and Indigenous Peoples' Organizations are sitting at the same table and the Indigenous Peoples have a stronger position than the 38 observer states and organizations.

I also would like to claim that the resolutions and the visions developed in the 1973 Arctic Peoples' conference were the reason why the representatives of our organizations ICC, the Saami Council, as well as RAIPON, were ready to negotiate a strong seat at the table. We, if I may say "we", were very prepared. I also see that since 1973 the process and participation developed into two paths or two tracks. One was the global Indigenous Peoples' rights movement where we got the World Council of Indigenous Peoples, the ILO Convention169, the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The other track is the Arctic focus on environment and the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy and later the Arctic Council. It was two different groups of people engaged in those different processes.

During 27 years of engagement, I often quoted Carl Christian Olsen (Puju), who is among us here today. When I worked in IPS I was interviewing Puju to the Indigenous Peoples' Secretariat Newsletter and he said that the Indigenous Peoples give the Arctic Council a human face. I think that without the Permanent Participants and their involvement in the Arctic Council, the Arctic Council would probably be very heavy on

the environmental issues, the polar bear situation, disconnected from the peoples, so I think Puju was right in saying that we are the human face of the Arctic Council.

To keep quoting good advisors and good educators, I want to quote my predecessor in this role - because there was a person working in this position before me. That was Rune Fjellheim, he always says that it is a three-party cooperation in the Arctic Council where you have Arctic States and the working groups, which are the scientists and researchers, and the Indigenous Peoples promoting the Indigenous Knowledge – brought together. I think we see a wealth of reports and knowledge about the Arctic generated through the Arctic Council work. We have added our values, and our recognition of Indigenous Knowledge. We have really been able to lift our values and achieved a lot of recognition and contributed to the assessments as well. It can always get better, of course.

I have to say that it's not perfect and to quote Sara Olsvig, on what she said in the ICC delegation meeting yesterday, we contribute with what research questions should be asked and what should be studied, and if we don't do that others will do that. That is why we need to be at the table.

Then to the present situation. As we heard in the morning session, we are now in a situation we have never seen before. We are six Permanent Participants organizations, four of us have membership on the Russian side. That includes RAIPON, Aleut, Saami, and the Inuit. The formal participation of Saami on the Russian side is temporarily on hold, much due to the concern of their individual security. I will also take this opportunity to emphasize that nobody is excluded from the Arctic Council – no one is excluded from the Arctic Council, but there has been a pause.

It is important to distinguish between being a pause, being on hold or being excluded. The whole balancing act was or is about nobody being excluded. The pause was declared early March 2022. Norway took over the Chairship on the 11th of May, 2023, as we heard from the representative of the Norwegian government Ina Mossin this morning, and is dedicated to get it back on track again, going slowly, to find ways on how we can get back to operating, starting up with working groups and see how we can continue our work. Aqqaluk Lynge said something very important in the morning session, too; it is about a people-to-people cooperation, we need to speak with each other, find ways to speak at a personal level, at least, and that is what we should maintain and build

upon. I think the important thing is, to bring it on to a level beyond the pause into a certain operational level. I am glad to hear that this is also Norway's Chairship approach: to get started again.

Why do we want this to get started again? I think the Arctic Council is very important for us as Indigenous Peoples because it is a forum where we have a very strong position. It is about our lands, our food security, our environment which all are the fundaments for our cultures. We have established a very strong position, and we have a strong influence at all levels of the Arctic Council, which we have to constantly keep nurturing and kicking as well. It is an intergovernmental body working on the issues that are important to us.

This will bring me to the conclusion. When we had the 40 years anniversary of the 1973 meeting, the outcome document said that we should strive for having an Indigenous co-chair/vice-chair at the SAO level in the Arctic Council. Now and then we have brought this up, but we have not moved to any decision on that. I want to round off this keynote with the beginning: that we de facto are part of the consensus.

I started with saying how the Canadian SAO-chair called the Saami Council and said: - you are the one holding back consensus on the Declaration, and he did that even though we are not part of the consensus according to the Arctic Council Rules of Procedures. I told this story to demonstrate that, de facto, we are part of the consensus, but it is not formalized. We realized during these rough times that we have been through, that our informal position of being part of the consensus is a very vulnerable situation when you get into rough waters. Because then it was easy to leave us out as there was no obligation to have us part of the consensus. I think that as we evolve, and I might be naive hoping that we get through these rough waters, that we need to start to discuss how to formalize the informal strong position and role, which in fact is considered almost as being part of the consensus - without being that. That was a very complicated way to say simple things.

In one of the 1973 resolutions our then leaders requested the obvious; that states recognise our right of self-determination as Peoples.[3] I think the establishment of the Arctic Council with the Permanent Par-

3. "We request the obvious; that the governments of each state from which we come recognize our rights as peoples intitled to the dignity of self-fulfilment and realization".

ticipants is a unique construction with the member states and Indigenous Peoples around the same table has generated volumes of Arctic knowledge. We have to remember that the Permanent Participants are founding members of the Arctic Council - and that means something. We will do what we can to maintain the cooperation also through these rough waters and at the other end we need to start to discuss how we continue to strengthen that body.

About the author

Gunn-Britt Retter is coastal Sámi from Unjárga-Nesseby by Varangerfjord in northeast Norway. Retter has worked with Arctic and environmental issues since 2001, She is the current Head of Arctic and Environmental Unit of the Saami Council, a position she's held since 2005. Among other things, she coordinates the Saami Council's role as Permanent Participant to the Arctic Council and attends Arctic Council meetings at all levels.

Keynote: Youth Statement

A special section of the Ilulissat meeting was devoted to Youth. The following is a collective statement delivered by four of the youth delegates.

Nika Silverfox-Young

Good morning everybody! It is nice to see everyone again!

We wanted to open today with spirituality and a beautiful cultural tradition. We also recognize that we are stronger and our voices more powerful when we stand together, so we ask that all Youth please come stand with us as we give our keynote address - it gives us strength even when the challenges we face are grim.

We thank the Arctic Peoples' Conference for the opportunity to host you this morning. We will begin with this keynote speech and reflect on some of the most topical challenges and issues concerning Indigenous youth. Yesterday's session focused on what the last 50 years have looked like for Arctic Peoples and, today, we the Youth, will be talking about our futures and our hopes and goals for the next 50 years.

As we've come together to learn about each other's backgrounds and cultural contexts, it is heartwarming to know you are with people who understand exactly what kind of challenges your community faces. Issues such as the loss of our Indigenous languages, mass extinction of our rich biodiversity and the mental health crisis our Youth are facing - we are losing all aspects of our traditional ways of life due to the climate crisis.

Today, we want to raise up themes of health, education, and quality of life for Indigenous youths.

Keryn Andersen

Today, I draw your attention to the pressing healthcare issues affecting our Indigenous communities. We're acutely aware of the harrowing rates of depression, anxiety, substance abuse, alcoholism, and the dev-

astatingly high instances of suicide among our people. These are issues often rooted in younger people, starkly reminding us of the scarcity of mental health resources within our Indigenous communities. As we traverse the long distances to seek the essential healthcare we need, we are frequently met with systems lacking cultural sensitivity or understanding, sometimes causing more harm than good.

Yet we remain a resilient Arctic Indigenous people, and we look towards the future not in fear, but with resolve. The current healthcare structures may be steeped in colonial pasts but they are not insurmountable. We envisage a future where we can steer the direction of our own health, underpinned by investment in culturally sensitive healthcare services within our Indigenous communities.

To tackle these challenges, we turn to our roots, leveraging the power of our Indigenous Knowledge and land-based solutions. We see a future where infrastructure is developed, focused on addressing social issues and fostering healing within our communities. We believe in the power of our lands, our traditions, and our wisdom to guide us towards wellness.

Addressing generational trauma requires understanding and action. By focusing on Indigenous Knowledge and land-based healing, we can begin to break the cycle, paving the way for a healthier future. This is not just our challenge but our opportunity - to shape our narrative, take control of our health and wellness, and foster a collective well-being that is rooted in our Indigenous identity.

Michael Bro

Cultural assimilation of the Arctic Indigenous Peoples by foreign cultures has hindered Arctic Indigenous Youth from learning and developing their cultures and this has contributed to the loss of our unique Indigenous cultures, languages and identities. We have the right to maintain our cultural heritage and adapt to the future in a way that is culturally relevant to our Arctic way of life, inclusive of traditional live-

lihoods, food practices, craftsmanship, art, songs, dance, and spiritual practices and this right should be respected by all means possible.

We therefore need to create incentives to speak, learn and use our Indigenous languages in everyday life.

Just as Indigenous Peoples face genocide and regional inequality inside and outside our homelands, we also face this more generally, in health care – and also in education. We are all aware of the cyclical development whereby an Indigenous person needs to leave their home territories to seek a higher education but returns home only to realize there is no place for them to live.

Mary Angmarlik

I stand before you to address an issue of critical importance – the disproportionate inequity in educational resources within Indigenous communities. This educational imbalance directly impedes the richness of our curriculum, thwarting the educational progress of our Indigenous children and youth. As a consequence, we are witnessing a diminished quality of basic education, leaving our young people inadequately prepared and under-resourced to pursue higher education.

However, we are gathered here not merely to point out problems but to envisage, strategize, and implement solutions. The Arctic, our shared ancestral home, is teeming with Indigenous teaching methods that are yet to find representation in conventional educational systems. These unique ways of imparting knowledge, passed down from our ancestors, are intrinsically unique to our identity and survival. Regrettably, they are conspicuously absent from Western institutions.

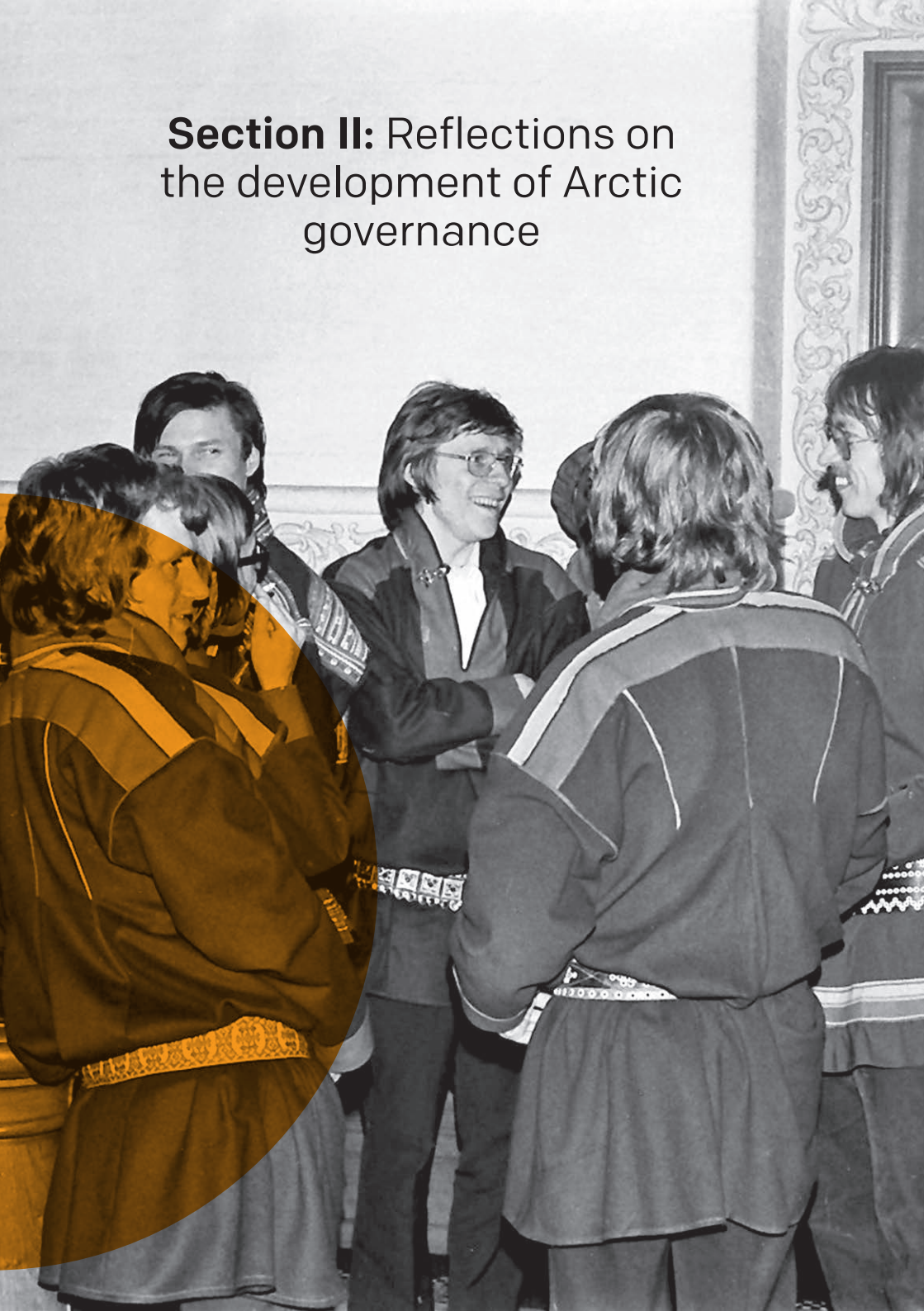
We aim to change this narrative. Our Indigenous teaching methods must not merely survive: they need to thrive, shaping our young minds and ensuring the perpetuation of our Indigenous Knowledge. The path forward demands resources that will enable us to integrate our ancestral wisdom into our children's education. As we do this, we fortify our distinct identities as Indigenous Peoples of the Arctic. Our goal is to build a framework that embraces our Indigenous heritage and instils a sense of pride in who we are as distinct peoples. It is time for our children not just to learn but to truly understand and take forward the legacy of our ancestors.

Ellen-Sara Sparrok

As Youth, we strongly feel that there needs to be more safe spaces for Indigenous Arctic Youth to gather where we can discuss important matters that are relevant for us, such as how to uphold our rich cultures and the spirituality of our peoples. We are therefore calling for more official Arctic Indigenous Youth gatherings where we can build connections and educate ourselves.

Giitu, Thank you.

Section II: Reflections on the development of Arctic governance



Arctic Indigenous Peoples and International Diplomacy: Celebrating 50 Years of Diplomatic Leadership on the International Stage[1]

Sara Olsvig
Chair, Inuit Circumpolar Council

Miriam Cullen
Associate Professor, University of Copenhagen, Faculty of Law

International diplomacy has not only been transformative *for* Indigenous Peoples, it has also been transformed *by* Indigenous Peoples. Last year marked the 50th commemoration of the first Arctic Peoples' Conference, which was an apt moment to reflect on the contributions of Arctic Indigenous Peoples to international diplomacy and the legacy of that moment for generations past, present, and future. The 1973 Conference took place at the height of various resistance movements. As national governments decried apartheid and racial oppression in other parts of the world, the hypocrisy of ignoring Indigenous Peoples' claims within their own borders was starkly on display. The 1960s and 70s saw many Indigenous Peoples reject the assimilationist policies of their respective colonial governments and challenge the rapidly expanding development projects that were encroaching upon their lands, Peoples, and way of life. In Greenland, Sumé became the first rock band to clearly address inequities in power structures and the need for revolution amidst a resurgent energy for anti-colonial resistance; across Sápmi political revolutionary events were taking place; and, in North America, assimilation-focused boarding school systems were being dismantled. It was in this spirit that Arctic Indigenous Peoples recognized the benefits to be gained from international diplomacy and sought greater regional coordination to that end.

1. This contribution is a revised and abridged version of the co-authors' article "Arctic Indigenous Peoples and International Law" (2024) 93(1) *Nordic Journal of International Law* 152-169.

The 1973 Arctic Peoples' Conference was the first time Arctic Indigenous Peoples had come together to discuss their collective interests as a matter of strategic diplomacy. The need for such an arrangement was partly a reaction to the divisions imposed through the structures of the state-based system of international relations itself. European conceptions of sovereignty and territory created binary divisions of land and ocean in ways that were arbitrary to the history, heritage, languages and families of the people already there. In this context, it is important to recall that the issue of who is excluded from discussions is as much an aspect of international diplomacy as who is central within them. Indigenous Peoples participate in and influence international diplomacy but theirs has been a particularly effortful involvement in an international system in which their sovereignties have mostly been systemically denied, and their perspectives continue to be misrepresented, misunderstood, sidelined, and trivialized. It is therefore imperative to showcase Arctic Indigenous Peoples' strong history of engagement in the formal structures of diplomacy and how they continue to contribute to its evolution and development. Key contributions in that endeavour will be showcased here.

Arctic Indigenous Peoples on the Global Stage

There can be little doubt that the adoption of the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (the Declaration) by the UN General Assembly in 2007 was a landmark achievement. It was the result of decades-long diplomatic engagement, in which the Saami Council and the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC) each played pivotal roles. The ICC was one of five Indigenous Peoples' Organizations to propose text that affirmed Indigenous Peoples' recognition as equal to all other peoples with the right to self-determination[2] and insisted that the rights con-

2. Eventually affirmed in article 2 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, GA Res 6/295, UN Doc a/res/61/295 (2 October 2007, adopted 13 September 2007) (hereafter 'Declaration'). Dalee Sambo Dorough represented the Inuit Circumpolar Council at the UN in 1985 and was one of five Indigenous authors to draft the World Council of Indigenous Peoples' Declaration of Principles of Indigenous Rights (1 September 1984, reprinted in U.N. Doc. E/CN.4/1985/22, Annex 2).

tained in the Declaration were recognized as being *inherent* to Indigenous Peoples, and not merely bestowed at the discretion of states.[3]

The Declaration was a significant achievement in that it provided an authoritative interpretation of binding human rights obligations, and recognition of Indigenous Peoples' interconnected, interrelated, interdependent, and indivisible rights, in a document endorsed by the vast majority of the world's states. The negotiations themselves opened a series of conversations that led to systemic change within the UN, even before the final text of the Declaration was agreed. The UN established the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in 2000, and the first UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in 2001, and the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in 2007, the same year as the Declaration was adopted.

The adoption of the Declaration put Indigenous Peoples' rights and interests into a legal and political spotlight and led to other multilateral initiatives in which Arctic Indigenous Peoples played leading and important roles. Processes to ensure the Declaration's global implementation were initiated almost immediately, with the first global stocktake taking place in 2014 at the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples. In 2013, Arctic Indigenous Peoples hosted a preparatory meeting in Alta, Sápmi (Norway). The resultant Alta Outcome Document was instrumental in discussions at the World Conference and was directly referred to in the UN General Assembly resolution adopted thereafter.[4]

As much as these developments signalled renewed political support for Indigenous Peoples' rights, they also showcased the necessity of Indigenous Peoples' own agency in international diplomacy to promote and safeguard those rights. Despite numerous setbacks, the perseverance of Indigenous Peoples, and strategic synergies between their existing diplomatic engagement and the content of the Declaration, have been leveraged to demand the proper realization and development of other legally binding commitments.

3. Declaration, preamble para. 7. Inuit and Sámi representatives were among the leaders in the development of the Declaration: M. Davis, 'A Personal Reflection on the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples' 7(11) *Indigenous Law Bulletin* (2009) p.11.

4. *Outcome document of the high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly known as the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples*, GA Res 69/2, UN Doc A/RES/69/2 (25 September 2014, adopted 22 September 2014) para. 2.

Arctic Indigenous Peoples have influenced the content of a number of international agreements through strategic diplomacy. For instance, in the Agreement to Prevent Unregulated High Seas Fisheries in the Central Arctic Ocean, Indigenous Knowledge is referred to in several preambular and operative paragraphs, providing a legal impetus for Inuit participation in the Conferences of the Parties to the agreement, as well as the joint scientific meetings.[5] Article 8(j) of the Convention on Biological Diversity was another diplomatic achievement. It demands that each contracting Party respect, preserve and maintain Traditional Knowledge, innovations and practices, thus ensuring Indigenous Peoples' participation and inclusion in its implementation. With the establishment of an International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity, Indigenous Peoples have continuously pushed for full participation and implementation of their rights under the framework of the convention.[6] At the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, Arctic Indigenous Peoples were among the core Indigenous leaders in the process that led to the establishment of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, under the auspices of which the Local Communities' and Indigenous Peoples' Platform was later launched following the Paris Agreement of 2015.

This focus on climate, nature and biodiversity is no coincidence. Since the establishment of the ICC, and early in other Arctic Indigenous movements, safeguarding the environment and Indigenous-led conservation efforts were top priorities. For example, the ICC pushed for an Indigenous-led bilateral conservation strategy through an Inuit Regional Conservation Strategy as early as its 1986 General Assembly.

Ongoing Challenges for Arctic Indigenous Peoples

In some respects, the overarching goals of the 1973 Arctic Peoples' Conference have been achieved: most Arctic Indigenous Peoples are now recognized as Peoples under domestic and international law, and a

5. *Agreement to Prevent Unregulated High Seas Fisheries in the Central Arctic Ocean*, opened for signature 3 October 2018 (entered into force June 2021) Preamble paras 9,10, 11 and Arts 4(4), 5(1)(b) and (2),

6. *Convention on Biodiversity*, opened for signature 5 June 1992 (entered into force 29 December 1993). See further, International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, *Indigenous World 2023: Convention on Biodiversity.* https://www.iwgia.org/en/convention-on-biological-diversity-cbd/5147-iw-2023-cbd.html (accessed 9 February 2024)

circumpolar body for collaboration to advance shared and collective interests has been established through the Arctic Council.[7] But other important aspects of those resolutions continue to languish. In particular, equity and the full implementation of the fundamental rights of Arctic Indigenous Peoples are yet to materialize, with standards and recognition differing substantively from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. In the face of new and ongoing colonialities, the following passage from the 1973 outcome document rings as true today as it did then, in which participants called for each Arctic state to "recognize our rights as peoples entitled to the dignity of self-fulfilment and realization… that there must not be any displacement or interference with our rights by governments and/or industry, nor can there be any disturbance of our lands".[8]

Arctic Indigenous Peoples are active participants in various fora of international law-making and implementation. The ICC, for instance, contributes substantively to the Conference of the Parties to the Central Arctic Ocean Fisheries Agreement negotiations, and holds distinct status in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), as well as the International Maritime Organization. Both ICC and the Saami Council are UN-accredited NGOs. The Sámi Parliaments of Norway, Sweden, and Finland and their collaborative body, the Sámi Parliamentary Council, are actively involved in the UN as part of their respective states' delegations.

Arctic Indigenous Peoples also influence regional legal arrangements. The Saami Council, for example, has been consciously engaged with the EU since at least 1992, with a dedicated EU Unit since 2019,[9] and the ICC has initiated processes to establish Inuit-led marine governance regimes between Greenland and Canada in *Pikialasorsuaq*,[10] the North Water Polynya. That governance arrangement was formalized in a Letter of Intent signed by the governments of Greenland and Canada in October 2023.[11]

7. I. Kleivan. "The Arctic Peoples' Conference in Copenhagen, November 22–25, 1973." 16 (1/2) Études Inuit Studies (1992) p.227.

8. Ibid.

9. See further: Sami Council, "EU Unit." https://www.saamicouncil.net/en/euunit (accessed 7 September 2023)

10. Through the work of the Inuit Circumpolar Council Pikialasorsuaq Commission: http://pikialasorsuaq.org/en/ (accessed 7 September 2023)

11. *Letter of Intent on Cooperation for the Pikialasorsuaq between the Department of Fisheries and Oceans of Canada and the Ministry of Agriculture, Self-Sufficiency, Energy and Environment of the Government of Greenland*, 19 October 2023. https://demaribus.files.wordpress.com/2023/10/pikialasorsuaq-letter-of-intent.pdf (accessed 9 February 2024)

At the same time, the international legal system in which the Declaration and other multilateral initiatives are negotiated and agreed is not one in which Indigenous Peoples participate by right. Indeed, the state-based system of international law remains beholden to the very colonial vestiges that disavowed Indigenous Peoples' existence in the first place, the consequences of which reverberate to this day. The participation of Arctic Indigenous Peoples in international forums must be lobbied for each time, including for renewal. Indigenous Peoples have long sought improved participation within the UN system pursuant to Indigenous Peoples' rights to self-determination,[12] to autonomy,[13] and to participate in decisions that affect their rights.[14]

As part of those efforts, Indigenous Peoples are now lobbying to secure, at minimum, "permanent observer status within the UN system" for their representative institutions such as parliaments, government assemblies, or traditional councils, to facilitate their direct rather than indirect participation in international negotiations.[15] Such status would afford participation in all UN meetings on matters that affect them, whether or not specifically dealing with Indigenous Peoples' rights, and would include procedural matters such as speaking time and allocation on speakers lists, inclusion within informal consultations on draft resolutions, and the chance to speak on country visit reports. There have been positive musings from the UN General Assembly to this end,[16] including

12. Declaration supra note 2, Preamble and Art 3; *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, opened for signature 16 December 1996, 999 UNTS 171 (entered into force 23 March 1976) Art 1; *International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights*, opened for signature 16 December 1996, 993 UNTS 3 (entered into force 3 January 1976) Art 1; and is also in line with the principle of public participation (see *United Nations General Assembly Rules of Procedure*, rule 60).

13. Declaration, ibid, Art 4.

14. Ibid Arts 10, 18; ILO 169 Arts 6(1)(a), 7(1).

15. *Alta Outcome Document* (Global Indigenous Preparatory Conference for the United Nations High Level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly to be known as the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples, 10-12 June 2013) para. 10. https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/wc/AdoptedAlta_outcomedoc_EN.pdf (accessed 7 September 2023); Quito Outcome Document.

16. See, for example, *Enhancing the participation of indigenous peoples' representatives and institutions in meetings of relevant United Nations bodies on issues affecting them* GA Res 71/321, UN Doc A/RES/71/321 (21 September 2017, adopted 8 September 2017).

in the 2014 World Conference on Indigenous Peoples Outcome Document,[17] resulting in reform efforts related to participation venues, modalities of participation, accreditation criteria and the establishment of a body to undertake accreditation within the UN Human Rights Council.

Some of the challenges that persist arise in part from an apparent and concerning broader confusion about what constitutes an Indigenous People and the rights to which they are entitled. For example, instruments and forums of international law continue to conflate "local communities" with "Indigenous Peoples".[18] The UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues has described this as an "alarming trend in the behaviour of States to devalue indigenous peoples' status, rights and participation".[19] The phrase "local communities" has no legal meaning, and can neither take into account the Indigenous Peoples who have been dispossessed of their land as a result of the colonial encounter[20] nor account for Indigenous Peoples who exist across vast territories, such as the Inuit and Sámi. Unlike local communities, Indigenous Peoples enjoy specific rights and status under international law. Indigenous Peoples share a collective identity steeped in centuries of history, culture, science, ways of living and knowing, and have suffered historic injustices, including colonization and various forms of dispossession.

Even aspects of international law designed to protect the rights of Indigenous Peoples can have the paradoxical consequence of facilitat-

17. *Outcome document of the high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly known as the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples*, ga Res 69/2, UN Doc a/res/69/2 (25 September 2014, adopted 22 September 2014), para. 33.

18. See, for example, the *Rio Declaration on Environment and Development,* UN Doc A/CONF/.151/26 (vol I), 31 ILM 874 (1992) Principle 22; Convention on Biodiversity, opened for signature 5 June 1992, 1760 UNTS 79 (entered into force 29 December 1993) (hereafter CBD) Preamble, and Art 8(j)); or even the United Nations Framework Climate Change Convention (hereafter UNFCCC), "Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples' Platform." https://lcipp.unfccc.int/ (accessed 7 September 2023).

19. Referring to UNFCCC, ibid; CBD ibid; as well as mechanisms of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the World Bank: United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, *Study on how States exploit weak procedural rules in international organizations to devalue the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and other international human rights law*, UN Doc E/C.19/2016/4 (19 February 2016) para. 2.

20. Declaration *supra* note 2, Preamble, para. 5.

ing greater exclusion. For instance, the fact that states have an obligation to obtain Indigenous Peoples' free, prior and informed consent in decisions that affect them is not meaningfully implemented in Greenland.[21] The position of the governments of both Greenland and Denmark has been that, for the purposes of ensuring adherence to the principle of obtaining Indigenous Peoples' free, prior and informed consent, the consent of the Greenlandic government alone is sufficient.[22] This interpretation is not in keeping with obligations under the Declaration or the International Labour Organization's Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention (hereafter ILO 169), nor the broader suite of human rights obligations under both the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). The consultation and participation of Indigenous Peoples in decisions that affect them is not inevitably satisfied merely because the government is made up of people who identify as Inuit, nor can *consultation* alone replace the right of *self-determination*, or automatically satisfy the right to participate in decision-making.

Arctic Indigenous Peoples are now experiencing new encroachments on their rights in the name of environmental protection, reminiscent of historical dispossessions. Máret Sara describes in her two articles [Arctic Peoples' Women's Marginal Position on page 65 and The Sense of Unity and Co-operation among the Arctic Family: The Sámi Perspective on page 97] how wind energy infrastructure, for instance, has compromised Sámi rights to sovereignty over their lands, territories, and resources, and has threatened to disconnect Sámi from their culture, identity and, potentially, existence. Inuit are also increasingly being approached to endorse projects that would fundamentally alter their way of life in the name of the climate response, although, unlike the Sámi, the Inuit have not (yet) resorted to litigation to address it. Sci-

21. United Nations Special Rapporteur on the rights of Indigenous Peoples, *Visit to Denmark and Greenland - Report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of Indigenous Peoples* (11 September 2023); M. Cullen, B. Holm, C. Brassart-Olsen, 'A Human Rights-Based Approach to Disaster-Risk Management in Greenland: Displacement, Relocation and the Legacies of Colonialism' (2024) 5(1) *Yearbook of International Disaster Law* 77. https://doi.org/10.1163/26662531_00501_006.

22. Cullen, Holm, and Olsen, ibid 96; Rachael Lorna Johnstone, 'The Impact of International Law on Natural Resource Governance in Greenland' (2020) 56/21 *Polar Record*, 5. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0032247419000287.

entists are rushing to engineer mechanisms to slow the melting of the sea ice and ice cap but often do so with little or no input from the Peoples on whose territories such inventions will be placed. Many such innovations are profoundly invasive. Accordingly, the Statement adopted at the conclusion of the 2023 Arctic Peoples' Conference identifies an "urgent need to overcome the land encroachment, resource extraction, renewable energy production, and protectionist conservation that is undertaken at the expense of Indigenous Peoples' reality".[23]

While climate change continues to constitute an existential threat to Arctic Indigenous Peoples and their livelihoods, unjust green transition and climate mitigation initiatives only add to existing pressures. This is not aided by geopolitical developments in and around the Arctic. The Arctic has been the object of great-power military competition for centuries, and Arctic Indigenous Peoples have long navigated tense political waters across state boundaries, not least during the militarization of Inuit territories during and between the First and Second World Wars. A 1977 ICC resolution concerning peaceful and safe uses of the Arctic Circumpolar Zone exemplifies the longstanding Inuit insistence on maintaining peace.[24] Recent military threats have triggered renewed recognition of the strategic advantage of the Arctic. Here, too, actions based on real or perceived military imperatives add to other forms of new colonialism already experienced by Arctic Indigenous Peoples, in which neo-colonial arguments insistent on "greater good" imperatives often ignore Indigenous Peoples' knowledge, interests, and sovereignty and, more fundamentally, their rights, under international law entirely.

And yet the diplomatic authority of Arctic Indigenous Peoples is significant. Since its establishment in 1996, the Arctic Council has provided a means for promoting cooperation, coordination and interaction among Arctic states, and does so with the full participation of Arctic Indigenous Peoples.[25] Six Arctic Indigenous Peoples' Organizations are

23. Inuit Circumpolar Council, *Statement of the Arctic Peoples' Conference 2023 - Inuiaat Issittormiut Ataatsimeersuarnerat 2023* (21 July 2023) p.3.

24. Inuit Circumpolar Council, *Resolution 77-11 Concerning peaceful and safe uses of the Arctic Circumpolar Zone* (1977) was adopted at the founding meeting of the Inuit Circumpolar Conference in 1977, and was reaffirmed in: *Inuit Circumpolar Council, Inuit Circumpolar Council Declaration 2022*, preamble para. 9.

25. *Declaration on the Establishment of the Arctic Council* (19 September 1996) Art 1(a).

Permanent Participants within the Council, through which they are fully integrated into its decision-making, given that the Council operates on a consensus basis and includes the Permanent Participants in all deliberations. Indigenous Peoples also serve as the Arctic Council's de facto institutional memory given the regularly changing state political regimes.

Conclusion

Despite various failures of international law to recognize or address centuries of structural violence, dispossession, and disenfranchisement, Arctic Indigenous Peoples have, through their own perseverance, mastered and contributed to the evolution of the system of legal norms that once facilitated their colonization. Within the forums of international diplomacy, Arctic Indigenous Peoples continue to work to address inequalities in representation and recognition embedded power structures, and to insist that the rules-based international legal order ought to uphold the rights, interests, and sovereignties of those it has systematically excluded. The 50th anniversary of the Arctic Peoples' Conference was a moment to reflect on these and other achievements of Arctic Indigenous Peoples, building upon the 1973 resolutions and addressing contemporary challenges. The 2023 Joint Statement addressed the need for enhanced engagement in the forums of international law, intergenerational justice, intersecting rights to wellbeing, land, water and natural resources, and to address the risks posed by climate change and colonialism. It highlighted Arctic Indigenous Peoples' "contributions to various national and international governing bodies and how our way forward was paved by the people, now elders, who first came together to envision a better future." Although Arctic Indigenous Peoples "have survived, and thrived, through hundreds of years of colonization (…) many challenges and colonial systems remain to be dismantled."[26]

26. Inuit Circumpolar Council, *supra* note 24, para. 3.

Credit: *Angu Motzfeldt*

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From the Arctic Peoples' Conference 1973 to the UN Permanent Forum 2002

By Ole Henrik Magga

1. Introduction

The Arctic Peoples' Conference in 1973 marked the beginning of a new era of work on the cause of Indigenous Peoples around the world. The conference led to increased organizational efforts among Indigenous Peoples which, in turn, meant that neither national nor international authorities could continue to neglect Indigenous Peoples. It was a new start in the work on recognizing the rights of Indigenous Peoples. Fifty years before, the Haudenosaunee chief Deskaheh, as leader of the Iroquois Confederacy, had already traveled to the League of Nations in Geneva to obtain protection of the rights of the Iroquois peoples. It did not go well and, according to some sources, Deskaheh was never allowed to return home. When the Maori religious leader Ratana, in 1925, tried to protest the breaking of the Treaty of Waitangi, he was rejected both in London and Geneva. When some Sámi in Norway in the 1950s established contact with Sámi people in Finland and Sweden with the intention of discussing common problems, they were strongly warned by the Norwegian authorities against discussing such matters with "citizens from foreign countries". Indigenous Peoples took new initiatives in the 1970s and this time things went much better.

I will here briefly describe my experience of the development of the Indigenous Peoples' cause from the Copenhagen meeting in 1973 to the time of the establishment of the *UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues* (UNPFII) in 2002. My own experience of the work with Indigenous Peoples' rights before the Permanent Forum consisted of my being leader of *Norgga Sámiid Riikasearvi* (the National Association of Sámi in Norway) from 1980-85. We did not succeed in preventing the damming of the *Guovdageaidnu-Áltá* (Kautokeino-Alta) river but we did get the Norwegian government to establish the *Sámi Rights Committee*, which led to the establishment of the *Sámediggi* (Sámi Parliament) in 1989. I was leader of the Sámi Parliament in Norway for the first eight years.

2. Arctic Peoples' Conference 1973

From 22-25 November 1973, 40 delegates from 21 Indigenous organizations in Canada, *Kalaallit Nunaat* (Greenland), Finland, Norway and Sweden gathered in the Danish Parliament building in Copenhagen for the first *Arctic Peoples' Conference*. The meeting's most important demand was "collective ownership to the lands and waters traditionally used and occupied by each Indigenous group". The participants had a deep insight into the living conditions of the Indigenous Peoples and discussed and launched the idea of a joint international Indigenous Peoples' organization. The Sámi delegates, of which I was one, represented *Sámeráđđi* (the Sámi Council), which was established in 1956 by the Sámi organizations in Sweden, Finland and Norway with the aim of strengthening Sámi cooperation across borders. The conference was the Sámi's first organized meeting with representatives of other Indigenous Peoples. Naturally, the Greenlanders were also represented and, from Canada, there were representatives of the Inuit, First Nations, Métis and Non-status Indians. The conference was an enormous inspiration for further work and many Indigenous initiatives both in national and international forums can be seen as a further development of the ideas that emerged from the Copenhagen meeting.

3. Arctic cooperation: The Arctic Council and the Barents Cooperation

The *Arctic Council* was formally established in 1996 by eight states after several international cooperation initiatives had been underway since 1991 with the aim of protecting the environment in the Arctic. The acceptance of the Indigenous Peoples in the Arctic Council as *Permanent Participants* was in line with the objectives of the Copenhagen Conference, and was something new and revolutionary. A separate Indigenous Peoples' Secretariat had already been established in 1994. Former president of the *Inuit Circumpolar Conference* and previously leader of the Inuit organization *Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami*, Mary Simon played a crucial role in making this happen. She had extensive experience in working for the interests of Indigenous Peoples in Indigenous organizations and as

a participant and leader of many reforms both internally in Canada and internationally. She has also been Canada's ambassador to Denmark and, since 26 July 2021, she has been Canada's Governor-General.[1] Her efforts and their results are some of the most impressive achievements of any Arctic Indigenous leader.

The Barents cooperation was already launched in 1993 and included 13 administrative areas in Norway, Russia, Finland and Sweden comprising around 5.2 million people. Unfortunately, Russia's War against Ukraine has created uncertainty for the cooperation between the countries and between the peoples in the Arctic area, including in the Barents region.

4. World Council of Indigenous Peoples (WCIP)

The participants at the Copenhagen meeting were limited to the Arctic area but Indigenous Peoples can be found all over the globe. The chief of the Shuswap people in Canada, George Manuel, who was the leader of the *National Indian Brotherhood of Canada* (NIB, now: Assembly of First Nations), invited representatives from Indigenous organizations to a worldwide conference in Port Alberni, Canada from 27-31 October 1975 after consulting with many Indigenous Peoples. There were a total of 260 representatives of Inuit, First Nations, Maori and Sámi peoples who together represented 37 million people from 19 countries. At this meeting, the *World Council of Indigenous Peoples* was founded on 31 October 1975. The Sámi representatives came from Finland, Norway and Sweden. The Sámi in Russia were not members of the Sámi Council yet. We learned about the terrible conditions and abuse in many countries, especially in South America. An elderly man from Ecuador said that if his life had been as good as the lives of the white people's dogs, he would not have complained. His everyday life was so much worse. From Brazil we heard that for a long time the white people used to shoot Indigenous people for sport in the same way as they hunted wild animals.

1. Wikipedia. "Mary Simon." https://no.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary_Simon (accessed 13 May 2024).

George Manuel chaired the WCIP[2] for many years. Sam Deloria was elected general secretary. He described a beautiful vision that we would one day be welcomed into the UN, something that at the time seemed like a dream.

In 1975, the *National Indian Brotherhood of Canada* had NGO status in the United Nations, which they decided to hand over to the WCIP. The conference also decided to have a report drawn up on the problems that discrimination against Indigenous Peoples creates. This was a rather ambitious project for an organization with very limited resources. It shows that, very early on. the Indigenous Peoples saw the need to document their situation, the need for legal regulations and the need to cooperate with international bodies, especially with the UN. The WCIP eventually made the UN take the Indigenous Peoples' cause ever more seriously. However, we experienced and long felt that the UN was created by the nation states for the nation states.

Later, the WCIP held meetings in Europe, South America and other countries. I remember a WCIP meeting in South America where some of the audience at the meeting were highly critical of the WCIP's way of working. In the evening, they showed their weapons with the comment: "Conferences don't help. This is what's needed!"

Two human rights conventions had been adopted by the UN in 1966, the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*. However, neither of them was considered by the WCIP or other Indigenous organizations to be sufficient to secure the fundamental rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The WCIP's vision was later summarized as follows: 1. the International community recognizes Indigenous sovereignty and entitlement to traditional lands; 2. the UN recognizes the treaties that Indigenous Nations around the world have signed as binding under International Law; 3. the International community and the UN honor its responsibility to the Indigenous Nations of the world by establishing the necessary mechanisms and instruments to protect their rights to self-determination with

2. The acronym WCIP is also used for the 2014 UN World Conference on Indigenous Peoples.

their lands and resources.[3] Although the WCIP was disbanded in 1996, presumably due to internal conflicts, it had enormous significance for the further development of international work on Indigenous affairs. The Indigenous Peoples in the northern regions got off to a good start with developing their organizations as a direct result of the Copenhagen conference, and the WCIP raised the Indigenous Peoples' cause to a worldwide level. Many others have contributed to supporting the Indigenous Peoples' cause. One of them has been and remains IWGIA (International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs) which, since 1968, has contributed documentation on the situation of Indigenous Peoples around the world.

5. United Nations

5.1. ILO Convention 169

Despite great commitment and activity on the part of the Indigenous Peoples, the UN's activity was long characterized by uncertainty, almost by trial and error. The *International Labor Organization* (ILO) had already adopted *ILO Convention 107* on the rights of Indigenous and tribal populations in 1957 but it was considered weak and unclear. Only in the 1980s did the work of the UN and other international bodies become more targeted and concrete in this field, of which the ILO's important *Convention No. 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples* (ILO169) is the best example. It was adopted in 1989 and was more concrete, particularly as regards land rights, with its article 14.1 stating:

> *The rights of ownership and possession of the peoples concerned over the lands which they traditionally occupy shall be recognized. In addition, measures shall be taken in appropriate cases to safeguard the right of the peoples concerned to use lands not exclusively occupied by them, but to which they have traditionally had access for their subsistence and traditional activities. Particular attention shall be paid to the situation of nomadic peoples and shifting cultivators in this respect.*

3. Wikipedia. "World Council of Indigenous Peoples." https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Council_of_Indigenous_Peoples (accessed on 13 May 2024)

Sámi organizations and the Sámi Parliament in Norway called on Norway to ratify the convention and, in fact, Norway became the first country to do so in 1990. Article 14.1 has frequently been quoted not only by Indigenous Peoples' organizations but also by individuals because it was for a long time the only legal norm that applied to Indigenous Peoples. Denmark has also ratified ILO 169, but neither Sweden nor Finland have, which is quite surprising. We have had good reason to believe that the Nordic countries would stand together on legal developments in important areas of society. The Sámi Parliaments in Finland, Norway and Sweden have therefore tried for many years to get a Nordic Sámi convention adopted as a common legal platform since only Norway has ratified ILO 169. A draft was prepared by an expert group led by Professor Carsten Smith at the University of Oslo. He also chaired the commission that prepared the legal basis for the establishment of the Sámi Parliament in Norway in 1989. He has been justice in Norway's Supreme Court and was also a member of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues from 2008-2011. The first draft text was from 2005 and the second draft negotiated in 2017 but the convention has still not been adopted.

5.2. Working Group on Indigenous Populations (WGIP)

The next big step in the development of arenas for the Indigenous Peoples' cause was the *Working Group on Indigenous Populations* (WGIP), a subsidiary body of the UN *Commission on Human Rights*. From 1982 on, the WGIP held regular meetings in Geneva and was open to all Indigenous Peoples. The purpose of the working group was "To review national developments pertaining to the promotion and protection of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of Indigenous Peoples" and "to develop international standards concerning the rights of Indigenous Peoples". For many Indigenous Peoples, the WGIP was the only channel to the UN and to the governments. It also functioned in practice as a "development forum" for political work on Indigenous issues at the international level. In practice, it was a mini UN for the Indigenous Peoples and it became a "home" for Indigenous affairs for many years. Back in 1993, the WGIP had already drawn up a draft of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, which was finally adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2007. The Greek professor and diplomat

Erica-Irene Daes chaired the WGIP for almost 20 years. Her work will never be forgotten by the many Indigenous representatives who learned from her knowledge of Indigenous Peoples and the UN system. She also wrote many UN reports on the rights of Indigenous Peoples and was also a driving force behind the final adoption, in 2007, of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. Wilton Littlechild (Cree chief from Canada), who was elected rapporteur for the Permanent Forum's first session, introduced me to Professor Daes during our first session in 2002. She was a rich source of knowledge on Indigenous Peoples and the UN system, which she kindly shared with us along with good advice for how we should set up the Forum's work. I benefited greatly from that meeting, and she made an indelible impression.

5.3. Permanent Forum

The creation of a working group such as the WGIP was a measure appreciated by the representatives of the Indigenous Peoples but many of them had long wanted the channels to the UN to become more permanent. The idea of a permanent arrangement was more concretely discussed at the *World Conference on Human Rights* in 1993, when the idea of an Indigenous declaration and an Indigenous decade was also discussed. The expectation from the Indigenous Peoples' side was that the forum would provide a previously lacking holistic approach towards Indigenous issues in the UN system and would be a driving force guaranteeing that all UN bodies, in all their activities, take the needs and concerns of Indigenous Peoples into account. Even though the situation of Indigenous Peoples had attracted more attention for many years, all available statistics showed that Indigenous Peoples were still among the most marginalized populations in the world. The UN system had increasingly come to recognize that it was necessary to consider the specific situation of Indigenous Peoples in all its activities and that it was necessary to include Indigenous Peoples themselves in this work. The hope from the Indigenous side was that Indigenous Peoples and governments would be able to meet within this forum, for the first time on a more equal basis.

The *Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues* (PFII) was established as an advisory body to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) with the mandate to:

- Provide expert advice and recommendations on Indigenous issues to the Council, as well as to programs, funds and agencies of the United Nations, through the Council
- Raise awareness and promote the integration and coordination of activities related to Indigenous issues within the UN system
- Prepare and disseminate information on Indigenous issues.[4]

The forum has 16 members, eight nominated by the member states and eight directly nominated by Indigenous organizations from eight regions. The members nominated by UN member states are elected by ECOSOC based on the regional groupings of states normally used at the United Nations. The members nominated by Indigenous organizations are appointed by the President of ECOSOC and represent seven socio-cultural regions. The regions are Africa; Asia; Central and South America and the Caribbean; the Arctic; Central and Eastern Europe, Russian Federation, Central Asia and Transcaucasia; North America; and the Pacific – with one additional rotating seat among the three first groups.[5]

The first session was held from 12-24 May 2002 at the UN headquarters in New York. The session was opened with words of welcome and a prayer of thanksgiving by *Tododaho*, ''spiritual leader of the ancient confederacy known as the Haudenosaunee''. He linked the thread back to Chief Deskaheh's journey to the League of Nations almost 80 years earlier and concluded with these words: ''Peace and Progress for us means our right to determine our belief systems, to determine our languages, to determine our relationships with each other and with our lands and territories. It means our right to self-determination''.[6] It was a solemn moment that will be remembered for a long time.

The work of the Forum was very well prepared by the UN bodies. An *Inter-Agency Support Group* (IASG) had been established to support and promote the Forum's work. The preparations had already begun

4. Docip. ''United Nation Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.'' https://www.docip.org/en/indigenous-peoples-at-the-un/permanent-forum/ (accessed 13 May 2024)
5. Ibid.
6. From the author's notes.

many years earlier, led by the *International Labor Organization* (ILO) and the administration of the *Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights* (OHCHR). The High Commissioner for Human Rights had selected people from her staff to take care of the secretariat functions for the meeting. They had experience from the WGIP meetings and other meetings and were very well qualified. Other UN agencies also contributed with assistance. I remembered Sam Deloria's vision from the WCIP meeting 25 years earlier and felt that we were very well received by the UN. The Forum expressed its gratitude to IASG at its 2nd session. I understand that the IASG is still active with its support function.

The Forum's annual sessions are a dialogue between representatives of the Indigenous Peoples, representatives of the nation states and representatives of the UN bodies. I was elected to chair the first session with Njuma Ekundanayo (Democratic Republic of Congo), Antonio Jacanamijoy (Colombia) and Parshuram Tamang (Nepal) and Mililani Trask (USA) as vice-chairpersons. Wilton Littlechild (Canada) was elected as rapporteur. I was elected to chair the next two sessions as well, and I also represented the Forum between sessions.

As soon as the session was over, I started thinking about the next session. After all, we did not yet have a secretariat that could prepare the next session. The *High Commissioner for Human Rights* had a permanent representative in New York, Elsa Stamatopoulou, and I asked her for advice on the matter. She arranged a meeting for me with the High Commissioner, Mary Robinson, in Geneva in connection with my participation in the WGIP's meeting there. The High Commissioner told me that she and her staff would not be able to help us anymore. Although it was still one year until the next meeting of the Permanent Forum, I almost panicked. Back in New York, I contacted the few people I knew in the UN system, including some of the Nordic countries' embassies. Finally, I had the problem presented to Secretary-General Kofi Annan himself. Then Deputy Secretary-General Louise Fréchette was put on the case. The forum's secretariat was established by the UN *General Assembly* as part of the *UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs* (DESA) from January 2003.

In a new conversation with Elsa Stamatopoulou, I understood that she might be interested in the job as secretariat manager for PFII and I encouraged her to apply. She was hired and started working for the Forum just in time to be able to prepare the forum's 2003 session. It was

a stroke of luck. She and her staff did a fantastic job. At short notice, they were able to present the most important facts in very complicated cases to the Forum's own meetings and to our meetings with other UN bodies. Moreover, they were very pleasant to work with.

In Geneva, I attended WGIP's session and was surprised by the somewhat skeptical attitude some of the participants had towards the Permanent Forum. I was told several times that it was not at all clear whether it was the WGIP or the Permanent Forum that was to become the permanent Indigenous body in the UN. Even some of our most experienced Indigenous representatives expressed such a view and argued that the Forum's secretariat should be located in Geneva. Geneva had become a "home" for the Indigenous cause for many of those who had attended WGIP sessions and other meetings for many years. Representatives from the Swiss government argued that it was easier for Indigenous representatives to get a visa to Switzerland than it was to get a visa to the United States. For me and many others, the weightiest argument that the secretariat should be located in New York was that it would strengthen the work of the Indigenous Peoples because, there, the Forum would have closer links to the UN's main administration and several UN bodies. I also felt that it was a matter of status.

The Forum initiated contact and cooperation with a number of UN bodies whose activities had an impact on the lives and development opportunities of Indigenous Peoples such as the *International Fund for Agricultural Development* IFAD, the *International Labor Organization* ILO, the *World Health Organization* WHO, the *World Intellectual Property Organization* WIPO, the *United Nations Development Programme* UNDP, *United Nations Institute for Training and Research* UNITAR, the *Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations* FAO and many others. I visited several of the UN bodies either alone or together with some of the forum members. Several of the UN branches had already collaborated with Indigenous organizations and many of the employees in the UN bodies had good knowledge and significant experience of Indigenous affairs. Although their work was naturally governed and limited by the politics of the member states, in many cases they were still able to accomplish many positive things for vulnerable groups around the world. I gained great respect for their knowledge and the attitudes of most of the staff of these institutions. In December 2002, the UN General Assembly called on the UN bodies "to assist the Forum in carrying out its mandate as enumerated in paragraph 2 of ECOSOC resolution 2000/22."

Cooperation with the UN bodies was naturally completely in line with what the Indigenous organizations wanted and some of them already had contact with organizations such as the ILO, WHO and WIPO. We also had contact with the *World Bank* because one of its tasks is to support the economic development of Indigenous Peoples. Some of the Indigenous representatives were very skeptical because banks support projects that destroy Indigenous lands. The World Bank is part of the UN system and our strategy was to influence all UN organizations' understanding of the term "development" so that it would encompass the development of Indigenous Peoples with their own culture as a basis and not "development" in the narrow sense that most often entails copying of Euro-American models. In addition, most Indigenous Peoples needed support for their own organizations. For the year 2004, the World Bank launched a "Grant Facility for Indigenous Peoples" with the aim of helping to fulfill a vital development need of Indigenous communities.

During the three years I chaired the Permanent Forum, we dealt with many cases. Some of them have stuck in my memory and I will never forget them. The Pygmy[7] people in the Congo and the Kuna people in Panama had been subjected to massacres and, according to reports, the Pygmy people had also been subjected to cannibalism in the Congo. I took part in a meeting in Bolivia and I got to meet relatives of some of the 29 Indigenous persons who had been shot in the district of La Paz. They showed me the blood-stained clothes from those killed, with bullet holes. It was horrible. We urged the UN system to take "appropriate action" and, together with my colleague from Congo and other members of the Forum, I had a meeting with the president of the Security Council about these incidents. The answer was that the UN could deal with these kinds of incidents only if a country asked for help from the UN. The forum addressed the events in its report for 2003:

> *Based on information received at its second session, the Forum expresses its deep concern about the reported atrocities committed against the Pygmy people in the Democratic Republic*

7. The term Pygmy is sometimes considered derogatory but in other cases accepted. The concept covers a number of Indigenous Groups such as Mbuti, Bakas and Batwa, and sometimes the general term Twa.

of the Congo and the Kuna people of Panama, and atrocities committed against indigenous peoples in other regions of the world. It urges the entire United Nations system as well as the appropriate bodies to take appropriate action.

On a later trip to East Africa, I met a man who had personal experience of what had happened in the Congo. He only dared to talk to me without anyone else present and I was not allowed to use a tape recorder. It was heart-rending to see the horror on his face when he talked about what he had seen.

A wide range of issues were dealt with during the three-year period.[8] Not all recommendations from the Forum have been followed up, at least not yet, but a good deal of what has happened since the establishment of the Permanent Forum can be understood as a response to at least part of the Forum's and other Indigenous bodies' recommendations. One concrete example of expeditious follow-up of the Forum's recommendations is the UN publication *State of the World's Indigenous Peoples* (SOWIP), in response to the Forum's initiative already taken at the first session in 2002. Another example is the Forum's call to the UN to declare a second Indigenous Peoples' decade after it first decade 1995-2004.

5.4. The Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP)

In 2007, one more important UN body was established, *the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.* It has five members and it provides the Human Rights Council with expertise and advice on the rights of Indigenous Peoples. Part of its mandate is that it also "assists Member States in achieving the goals of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples."[9]

8. The UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues annual reports are available online on their home page on the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs Social Inclusion website: https://social.desa.un.org/issues/indigenous-peoples/unpfii
9. UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner. "Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples." https://www.ohchr.org/en/hrc-subsidiaries/expert-mechanism-on-indigenous-peoples (accessed 13 May 2024)

5.5. United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)

The single most important event in the UN's work with Indigenous Peoples was, of course, the meeting in the UN General Assembly on 13 September 2007 when the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UNDRIP) was adopted. Articles 2 and 3 of the declaration were particularly important:

> *Article 2 Indigenous Peoples and individuals are free and equal to all other peoples and individuals and have the right to be free from any kind of discrimination, in the exercise of their rights, in particular that based on their Indigenous origin or identity.*
>
> *Article 3 Indigenous Peoples have the right to self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.*[10]

The wording in article 3 on self-determination was the most surprising because it has been the most difficult principle to accept for many nation states. The declaration is a milestone in the development of the international rules for the protection of the Indigenous Peoples of the world, even though four countries (USA, Canada, Australia and Canada) voted against in the UN General Assembly but later endorsed it. Russia abstained from voting and is today the only Arctic country that has not voted in favor of the Declaration.

6. From Copenhagen 1973 to New York 2002 and after

The Copenhagen meeting and the WCIP's work later inspired Indigenous Peoples in other parts of the world to organize both locally and internationally. Together, they gradually made many people of the world understand that, even in democratic countries, the needs of the Indigenous people were not being taken care of in the same way as the needs

10. UN. "UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples." New York, March 2008. https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf

of the majority population. After 1973, the grassroots organizing of Indigenous Peoples improved in many countries. The international organizing work, of which World Council of Indigenous Peoples was the best example, has not, however, developed further. This can probably partly be explained, unexpectedly enough, by the creation of the UN *Working Group on Indigenous Populations and the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues*, which have taken over the role as international cooperation forums. Nonetheless, the regional organizations within each country or region do seem to have persisted and developed further. All in all, the opportunities for cooperation between Indigenous Peoples have been strengthened and produced results. There are, however, still countries that clutch at the idea of "one state-one people". Some countries refuse to accept that there are Indigenous Peoples at all within their country's borders. The UN has made many efforts to change such attitudes by both recognizing minorities and Indigenous Peoples and by developing a system with the explicit objective of securing the living conditions of Indigenous Peoples.

The UN's system for the protection of Indigenous Peoples now consists of five parts: 1. International declarations and legal regulations (e.g. ILO 169, the UNDRIP) 2. Analysis of the problem of discrimination against Indigenous Peoples (e.g. Martínez Cobo report 1982-83) 3. Investigation and documentation of abuses (e.g. the Special Rapporteur on the rights of Indigenous Peoples, since 2001) 4. Contact with Indigenous Peoples (e.g. PFII since 2002). 5. Guidance and advice for Indigenous Peoples, states and the UN system (e.g. EMRIP since 2007). The UN has made the cause of Indigenous Peoples visible to the whole world by proclaiming decades, years and days to remind the world of the existence and needs of Indigenous Peoples.

I will summarize this short text by quoting the words of Victoria Tauli-Corpuz from the Kankana-ey Igorot people of the Cordillera Region in the Philippines when she spoke in the UN General Assembly on the occasion of the UN's adoption of the UNDRIP. She was the chair of the Permanent Forum in 2007 and later the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the rights of Indigenous Peoples during the years 2014-2020. She has served her own people and the Indigenous Peoples in rest of the world in an impressive way. She was involved in the drafting, negotiation and adoption of the UNDRIP from 1985 to 2007. I am proud to be a friend of hers. These were her words on 13 September 2007 on the day when the UN General Assembly adopted the UNDRIP:

This Declaration has the distinction of being the only Declaration in the UN which was drafted with the rights-holders, themselves, the Indigenous Peoples. We see this is as a strong Declaration which embodies the most important rights we and our ancestors have long fought for; our right of self-determination, our right to own and control our lands, territories and resources, our right to free, prior and informed consent, among others. Each and every article of this Declaration is a response to the cries and complaints brought by Indigenous Peoples before the UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations (WGIP). This is a Declaration which makes the opening phrase of the UN Charter, "We the Peoples..." meaningful for the more than 370 million Indigenous persons all over the world.[11]

About the author

Mr. Ole Henrik Magga, born in 1947, is a Saami linguist and politician from Guovdageaidnu/Kautokeino, Norway. He has worked i.a. with sentence structure in Northern Saami and with the orthographies of several of the Saami languages. He has been a professor of Saami languages at the University of Oslo and at the Saami University in Guovdageaidnu/Kautokeino. He became a member of the Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters in 1993. He led the Norwegian Sami Association from 1980 to 1985 and was the first president of the Sami Parliament of Norway from 1989 to 1997. Magga was a delegate to the World Council of Indigenous Peoples (WCIP) when it was founded in Canada in 1975. From 1992 to 1995, he was a member of the World Commission on Culture and Development. He was the first chair of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues from 2001-2003.

11. UN. "Statement of Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, Chair of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues on the Occasion of the Adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples."New York, 13 September 2007. https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/2016/Docs-updates/STATEMENT-VICTORIA-TAULI-CORPUZ-IDWIP-2007.pdf

Arctic Peoples' Women's Marginal Position

By Álet-Ristina Máret/Máret Sárá

One issue that was observed during the Arctic Peoples' Conference and afterwards was the marginal position of Indigenous women. There were only three official women delegates, Maria Meyer and Gudrun Chemnitz from Arnat Peqatigiit Kattuffiat, a women's association in Kalaallit Nunaat (Greenland), and Rosalee Tizya from the Committee for Original Peoples' Entitlement in Canada. To this should be added Máret Sárá (Member of Oslo Sámiid Searvi), a female reindeer herder, sitting at the round table.

I recall that the position of women was taken up by Gudrun Chemnitz when she raised the issue of the participation of Inuit and First Nations' women in politics. Rosalee Tizya responded that women were playing a very active role in Native organizations in Canada. They were aware of the political and social issues, and involved in actual policing, as men were. As far as Canadian politics was concerned, women had the same position as any other Native, and they were advocating for the rights of Indigenous Peoples collectively.

Photo: *Arctic Peoples' Conference, Copenhagen, 21 November 1973. A participant from Kalaallit Nunaat (Greenland) and Máret Sárá from Oslo Sámi Association.* ***Credit:*** *Máret Sárá.*

Marie Meyer's answer to this was as follows: "If you really want to influence the government as being a minority there has to be an absolute certainty of the purposes to be accomplished. Young politicians, Greenlanders in Denmark who are being educated and who have opinions quite apart and quite different from those of the elderly politicians in Greenland, are forming a minority of their own within our minority. We must be careful to ensure that we are absolutely certain that we agree within our own minority. Each of us of course fights for our own rights and should be aware all of us that to obtain rights we must work together."

These positions were not shared by all and revealed diverging points of view between the young and older generations. A young Greenlander, Henriette Rasmussen, who was there as an interpreter made a name for herself when she took to the floor and addressed the unequal representation of women. "The only response she got was laughter and silence and remarks like 'Let's get on', which completely ignored what she had just said. The three other women present did not support her." (Kleivan 1992:230).[1]

In the Young Greenlanders' Council in Denmark, which was a hotbed of political and national awareness, ethnic and class struggle were on the agenda. Henriette Rasmussen was treasurer and a member of the Board. In connection with the first women's festival in *Fælledparken*, Copenhagen in 1974 and in later articles and interviews, she pointed out in strong terms the oppressive conditions under which both Danish and Greenlandic women lived.

Henriette Rasmussen (1950-2017) has been the main exponent of the new ethnic consciousness of women in modern Kalaallit Nunaat (Greenland). Her own hard work and undeniable political influence is in itself a testament to her insistence on the inclusion of women's resources. She was much admired as a politician. Through her work on the rights of women and Indigenous Peoples, she achieved a distinguished international career.

As a Sámi feminist, the discussion above is quite familiar in the Sámi context. The question of separate Sámi women's organizations was under discussion from 1975 and illustrates a specific challenge facing minority women when dealing with a dual political foundation: we stood with one foot in the global women's movement and one foot

1. Kleivan, Inge. "The Arctic Peoples' Conference in Copenhagen, 22-25 November 1973." Études/Inuit/Studies 16,1-2, 1992:227-36.

in various ethno-political groupings.[2] Surveys also indicate that Sámi feminists have a dual rooting in both the women's struggle and the Indigenous struggle. This also applies to other Indigenous Nations, as in the case of Kalaallit Nunaat.

Sámi women were important in all aspects of the fight against damming and regulating the *Álta-Guovdageaidnu* (Alta-Kautokeino) watercourse. They were in the front row of the "chain gang" in Áltá; they took part in a hunger strike in front of Parliament; they edited the journal Charta 79; they travelled to The Hague when the song "Sámiid Ædnan" reached the final of the Eurovision Song Contest. The task of that delegation was to inform world opinion about the position of the Sámi in Scandinavia. For the trip to The Hague, a special English language newspaper, "Sámiid Ædnan", was published and a *lávvu*, Sámi traditional tent, was erected outside the concert venue. The envoys took with them two exhibitions – a photo exhibition depicting the daily lives of the Sámi and photos of the demonstrations at Stilla and outside the *Storting* (Norwegian Parliament), plus a *duodji* exhibition (Sámi handicrafts). The delegation consisted of Liv Østmo, Máret Sárá and Ánde Somby.

Photo: *Boarding the flight from Oslo to The Hague where the Melody Grand Prix was arranged in 1980, with the aim of informing people about the Alta case, about Sámi rights and supporting Mattis Hætta and Sverre Skjeldsberg who sang "Sámiid Ædnan song/yoik", Norway's (and Sápmi's) entry into the competition. Bjarne Store Jakobsen, a Sámi journalist, also participated.* ***Credit:*** *Leif Gabrielsen.*

2. Østmo and Stordahl 1979. "The Sámi woman's situation then and now." Report. Alta. 1979.

It is widely believed that the Sámi political struggle started with the Áltá case in the 1970s but in fact the modern Sámi political movement started long before that. A few dates reveal the truth: in 1948, *Norgga Boazosámiid riikkasearvi* (the Sámi Reindeer Herder's Association of Norway) was founded; in 1956, the Nordic Saami Council was established; in 1957, the ILO adopted Convention No. 107 on the Protection of Indigenous and tribal populations (although it was not ratified by Norway at the time); and, in 1968, *Norgga Sámiid riikkasearvi* (the National Association of Sámi in Norway) was established.

Importantly, the Áltá case opened up the possibility of women's identity and women's solidarity: 14 Sámi women travelled to Oslo in the hope of meeting the newly-appointed prime minister, Gro Harlem Brundtland, in the middle of the dramatic hunger strike. They had a meeting but it was short-lived and without the hoped for results. When Gro Harlem Brundtland left them to address Parliament, the women refused to leave her offices. They remained there until 4 a.m. when the police forcibly carried them out. The media coverage was enormous.[3]

Photo: *On 3 February 1981, Gro Harlem Brundtland was appointed Prime Minister of Norway. Fourteen Sámi women from Finnmárku (Finnmark), Máze (Masi), Áltá (Alta) and Guovdageaidnu (Kautokeino), mostly relatives of the hunger-strikers, pleaded with her to stop the construction work but she gave no answer. They occupied her office in the Government Building but were removed forcibly by police during the early hours of the morning.* ***Credit:*** *Niillas A. Somby*

3. Lindi, Gudrun Eriksen. "When our own voice was forthcoming." Gába vol. 43, no.1-2, 2004.

Through seminars, participation at UN women's conferences, etc., a Sámi feminist identity gradually emerged. The need for a separate organization was discussed but did not materialize until 1988. Other Sámi political issues were deemed more pressing: the Áltá case and the Sámi struggling against the damming of the water course.[4] It was existential for the Sámi as a people and all efforts were focussed on that. It was definitely not the time for internal conflicts over gender equality. And yet gender was far from irrelevant because the independent position of Sámi women was highlighted and used as a symbol that the Sámi people were different from the Norwegian majority population: not better or worse but equal.[5]

Photo: *Elsa Laula Renberg (1877-1931).*
Credit: *Kristofer Lundberg "Samisk historia och kultur".*

4. Kuokkanen. "Myths and Realities of Sami Women: A Post-Colonial Feminist Analysis for the Decolonization and Transformation of Sami Society." 2007.
5. Halsaa, Beatrice. "Flerstemt feminisme eller søsterskap til besvær?"

Photo: *Standing back left: Lisa Barrock, Brita Brantfjord, Sofie Mathiasen, Malla Vesterfjeld, Kristine Stinnerbom. Sitting from left: Elsa Laula Renberg, Ellen Lie, Ellen Olsen, Gunhild Granefjeld. Front from left: Anna Andersen, Maria Pedersen.*

The first Sámi women's association, *Brurskankens Lappekvinde Forening* (Brurskanken Sámi Women's Association), was founded in 1910 under the leadership of Elsa Laula Renberg and continued only while she was at the helm. It was not until 1987 that Sámi women again prepared to organize themselves – thanks to the International Women's Year in 1975, which helped giving birth to the Sámi women's movement.

However, as far as the establishment of the Sámi women's own organization was concerned, we had to wait until 1988 for a new organization, *Sárahkká – Sámi Nissonorganisašuvdna* (Sámi Women's Organization) to be formed, closely followed by the Sámi women's lists in the municipal elections in 1989 and the Sámi parliamentary elections in 1991. Then came the interim board of the World Council of Indigenous Women in 1990 followed by the *Sámi Nissonforum* (Sámi Women's Forum) in 1993 and, most recently, *Boazoealáhusa Nissonfierpmádat* (the Network of Reindeer Herding Women) in 2001.

In Sápmi, reindeer herding women began organizing themselves in 1999 as they had relatively low "visibility" in the reindeer husbandry industry at the time, and wanted to highlight the role and importance

of women in reindeer herding and husbandry. Subsequently, 11 women's network groups were set up throughout Norway. Then, in 2009, the International Centre for Reindeer Husbandry and the Reindeer Herding Woman's Network in Guovdageaidnu/Kautokeino initiated a joint project called "Traditional Knowledge and Education in Reindeer Husbandry". The aim of the project was to highlight traditional knowledge and education as one of the central means that can be used to ensure the sustainable development of the Sámi reindeer husbandry industry. Reindeer husbandry has been, and is, a family business based on household economy in which the overall income and labour of the family determines the success of operations. Women's participation in reindeer herding and husbandry has a positive effect on the economy and is important both culturally and socially.

Photo: *The Reindeer Herding Women's Network 2001. Reindeer husbandry is a family business based on a household economy in which the overall income and labour of the family determines the success of operations. The Women's and Family Consultant in the Reindeer Herding Administration was Máret Sárá.*

This growing consciousness among Indigenous Peoples, together with disappointment over the World Council of Indigenous Peoples (WCIP) not actively working for women's equality, led women to start to organize and promote Indigenous women's issues. The 1982 WCIP conference in Canberra accepted a statement to work on issues concerning Indigenous women. However, the WCIP ignored it in Canberra and again in 1987 at the Lima Conference. Against this backdrop, the Nordic Sámi women made contact with other women around the world, leading to the First International Indigenous Women's Conference in Adelaide, Australia (1989) and the Second International Indigenous Women's Conference in Kárášjohka (Sápmi/Norway) in 1990.

Sáráhkká – Sámi Women's Organization was formed on 20 March 1988 in Giron (Kiruna, Sweden) by some 50 women who were attending a Sámi women's seminar. An interim board was elected with Máret Sárá as leader. The first ordinary annual meeting was held on 14 May 1989 in Kárášjohka (Norway).

Photo: *From left: Johanne Gaup Sommersæter, Marit Stueng, Eva Aira, Anastasia Hvorostuhina, Marja Terttu, Kaarina Jomppanen, Jorunn Eikjok, Elle-Máijá Tailfeathers, Nina Afanasieva, Máret Sárá, Rimma Kurutz, Laila Somby Sandvik.*
Credit: *Kari Wattne, 14 May 1989.*

Sámi women from Russia were invited but the Norwegian authorities did not allow the three women to cross the border from Finland into Norway. We had to move the first ordinary annual meeting's 50 delegates 18 km to the bridge between Finland and Norway, to "no- women's land". The border and road was closed for two hours while we held the meeting. It was the first time we had met our sisters and relatives from the Kola peninsula because the Russian border had been closed for 50 years.

Finding Common Ground: First Indigenous Women's Conference, 7 – 18 July 1989, Adelaide Australia

Part of Conference Report

Greetings To our Sisters from The Aboriginal Women's Working Party.

On 7 July 1989 commenced a unique chapter in the history of indigenous women's lives. Through the efforts of local Aboriginal women and others residing in South Australia at the time and spearheaded by Jo Willmot, we were proud to host the First International Indigenous Women's Conference in Adelaide.

We were excited because the project we had been working on for three years was about to materialise, yet we were not fully prepared for what lay ahead. To sum up we were completely "overwhelmed" at the response by international and national participants. Not only by their relevant social and political agendas but by their goodwill and generosity in their acceptance of the mammoth task that awaited us.

Of course there were some slight disagreements which proved minor in the totality of the conference and despite (to quote one of our working party members) "that there had been a lot of anguish, envy, jealousy and competition during this time," we overcame them by sticking together firmly. Some of you came to the conference with different agendas, intent on being heard,

saying you wanted to be listened to - it's not surprising or easy when 300 women register and 1500 actually turn up! We feel sure that our conflicts of opinion have only lasted for the duration of the conference. Our time to talk was precious and intense and our desire to find common ground has dominated and outshone any egotistical or individual desire. For that reason we remain loyal and cemented in our bonds of friendship as the Aboriginal Women's Working Party.

Six days was such a short and a long time for us. None of us had ever worked together before. It has made us stronger, we have learnt from past mistakes and are determined to carry our experiences on in our everyday and professional lives. Our bodies ached for weeks later with exhaustion and joy in the accomplishment of our feat.

It is hard to convey, on paper, what an emotional experience it was for all of us - how exhilarating the march was, how this bringing together of women was like a dream come true, the singing and dancing at the festival, the way the children joined in, wandered around, and were looked after and perfectly safe and happy, the way the men supported us by looking after the kids that weren't there, the realisation that our issues were common and important to everyone there, and the knowledge that the conference was SUCCESSFUL and the start of something strong that needs to go on.

In many ways we felt humble to be the organisers of the conference, honoured to have shared, laughed and cried with you and will cherish those bonds until we die. Perhaps we will look back in another ten years and reminisce about those days and think how brave we were. There is an old saying that it is "people who make conferences" and we thank you for your participation and contribution in making what we believe has been the greatest show on earth.

Yours in sisterhood, Jo Willmot, Dot Davey, Jackie Huggins, Marg Crosbie, Sandra Saunders, Heather Brown, Jane Branford, Muriel Van Der Byl, Eva Johnson.

Why the Conference Happened

The following is an interview with Jo Willmot, the Convenor of the First International Indigenous Women's Conference:

In 1985 I went to Nairobi to the International Women's Conference. It was an experience in which the Aboriginal women of Australia formed a kinship, a reliance on other Indigenous women around the world, and felt that for the first time in our lives we had come across a group of people who understood. We didn't have to explain the situation to anyone else as to how we felt. The understanding, the support, the solidarity, the unity was a link, and it was from several weeks in Nairobi that the Indigenous women came to formulate the idea that we should have our own International Indigenous Women's Conference.

I came back to Australia with the idea that it was going to be a reality, it wasn't just going to be a tall dream, it was going to be a dream that was going to come true for us as Indigenous women. And talking to several other Indigenous women in South Australia and forming a link with the United Nations Status of Women's Committee, who supported the ideas overall in 1987, who of course didn't have any money but were very much behind the ideas of supporting the International Indigenous Women's Conference in Adelaide, we put several proposals to the state and federal government in regards to getting funding. Some funding came through and that gave us a little bit of money that we could put into the venture. The Aboriginal women worked weekends and evenings and met on a regular basis and didn't lose sight of the reality of what occurred in Nairobi, and I feel very proud that that reality has occurred.

Photo: *From left: Dorothy Davey, Jane Branford, Muriel Van der Byl, Jackie Huggins, Eva Johnson, Sandra Saunders and Jo Willmot.* ***Credit:*** *Jo Willmot's archives.*

Photo: *From left: Joan Lamont, Eva Johnson, Gary Foley and Jo Willmot.*
Credit: *Jo Willmot's archives.*

Sáráhkká's main board has been involved in international work since 1989. Representatives of the organization attended the first International Indigenous Women's Conference in Adeleide, Australia (1989) among 1,500 Indigenous women. There, an interim board with Máret Sárá as leader was appointed to prepare the second such conference as well the establishment of a World Council of Indigenous Women. The board consisted of representatives from regions such as the Arctic, North America, the Pacific, Asia, Central and South America and Europe (Sápmi/Sáráhkká). *Sáráhkká* coordinated this work.

Photo: *The first International Indigenous Women's Conference, 7-12 July 1989, Adelaide, South Australia. From left: Mary Yarmirr - Croker Island (of Northern Territory); Lena Passi, Torre Strait Islander; Natasha Mc Namara - Co-ordinator, Aboriginal Cultural Institute, Sydney; Hanan Awwad - Palestine; Máret Sárá, Sápmi/Samiland.* ***Credit:*** *Advertiser 10 July 1989.*

In 1990, *Sáráhkká* hosted the second International Indigenous Women's Conference, held in Kárášjohka (Sápmi/Norway), with more than 100 women from 22 countries participating. The conference elected a working group of 14 women from various parts of the world to prepare the third International Conference and the formation of the International Council of Indigenous Women (ICIW). The purpose of this council would be to provide a forum for the exchange of common ex-

periences, to make decisions and take action on behalf of the world's Indigenous women.

Our young Sámi generation has taken charge of defending and promoting Sámi rights, culture, languages and human rights and protecting our nation. I'm so proud of our strong youth! Their strong political messages are managing to break through into headline news at the international level about the situation in Norway.

Ella Marie Hætta Isaksen, a Sámi spokeswoman and activist, in an interview with the Guardian newspaper (11 October 2023):

> *In the case of the Fosen wind farm project there really isn't an acceptable compromise. It's really an absurd situation. Today on the second anniversary of the verdict, we have to drop everything and put our everyday lives on hold because we need to make sure that our own government is following its law. The government's reluctance to remove the turbines is 'completely devastating'. It truly is a painful case. It feels like the government is really strategically removing the reindeer rearing culture. And it really scares a lot of young people because for us, our culture is everything. It really feels like we are nothing without our lands, culture, language and pastures for reindeer.*

The Sámi youth/young women activists who were leading the demonstrations in Oslo, Norway, were incredibly smart and strategic. They were fighting for their basic human rights, a struggle that has been ongoing for centuries, and contemporaneously as the colonization of Sápmi is still happening. There has been an historic protest in Oslo.

The dispute revolved around Europe's largest onshore wind farm, described as a "violation of human rights". On 11 October 2021, Norway's Supreme Court found that two wind farms in the Fosen region of western Norway – on land used by Sámi reindeer herders – were violating the rights of the Indigenous people, as guaranteed by the UN, to practise their culture of reindeer husbandry. The court ruled that the turbines' expropriation and operating permits were invalid. Nevertheless, two years later, the 151 turbines continue to operate, forming part of Europe's largest onshore windfarm, even as Sámi activists and environmental campaigners repeatedly call for their removal. The protestors themselves want to see the wind turbines pulled down. The activists proclaim that a transition to green energy should not come at the expense of the rights of Indigenous people, or their traditional reindeer herding way of life.

The activists blocked the entrance to the headquarters of the state-owned company Statkraft, which operates 80 of the 151 turbines at Fosen.

Fifteen Indigenous Sámi youth activists occuppied the Ministry of Petroleum and Energy on 23 February 2024. Protestors also blocked access to multiple ministries, with the support of the Norwegian branch of young Friends of the Earth and human rights defenders. Eight days later, over 2,000 people met in person in front of the Royal Palace in Oslo, with many more thousands supported the protest from home. The Norwegian Ministry went from being quite arrogant to humbly accepting that the violations had occurred and were still ongoing. Prime Minister Store met the protestors in the end.

The protestors did not get what they wanted, since the government did not say they would take down the wind turbines, but they have achieved a great deal, and the lessons learned from this historic protest are numerous.

The outcome of the conflict is being watched closely across Norway as it could signal the fate of other projects under development, from mines to power lines, in the vast lands traditionally used by the Sámi.

On 17 October 2023, King Harald and Crown Prince Haakon invited the seven activist leaders (six women and one man) to the Kings palace to talk about Sámi human rights and the situation of the Sámi population.

Photo: *Outside the Norwegian Parliament building, Oslo, 11.10.2023* ***Credit:*** *Ánde Somby.*

About the author

Máret Sárá (1947) is a Cand. Mag and author of 46 books in the Sámi language, including textbooks and non-fiction books. She pursued Sámi language studies in 1974 and 1980 at the Ural Altaisk Institutt, University in Oslo, and Teacher Training School in 1977 in Alta. She has received the following awards: Finnmark County Parliament Equal Position Prize (1989), Karasjok Municipality Culture Prize (2010), and Gollegiella - Nordic Sámi Language Prize (2010).

Photo: *1973 Arctic Indigenous Peoples' delegation members sitting at the main conference table with their signatures below representing where they sat.*
Credit: *Jens Brøsted*

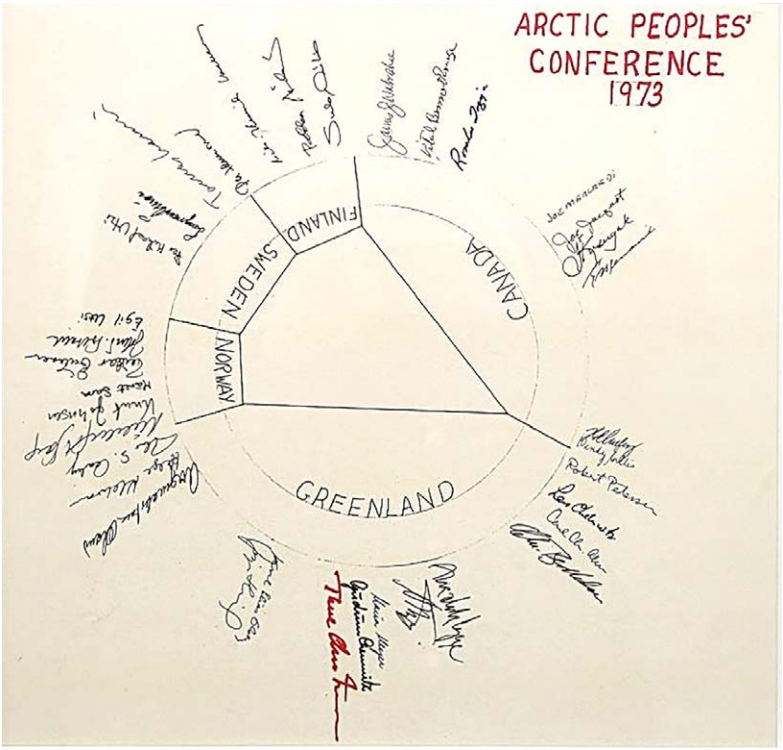

Photo: *Saami delegation at the 1973 Arctic Peoples' Conference.* ***Credit:*** *Jens Brøsted*

Photo: *Inuit delegation at the 1973 Arctic Peoples' Conference.* ***Credit:*** *Jens Brøsted*

Photo: *The presidents of the Inuit Circumpolar Conference (since 2006 Inuit Circumpolar Council ICC), Mary Simon, the Soviet Association, (since 1993 the Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North RAIPON), Vladimir Sangi, and the Nordic Saami Council (since 1992 the Saami Council), Leif Halonen, signing the Declaration of the First Arctic Leaders' Summit, 20 June 1991. In the second-row delegates of the three organizations.* ***Credit:*** *Mads Fægteborg*

Photo: *Delegates assembled for the signing of the Arctic Council Ottawa Declaration on 19 September 1996.* ***Credit:*** *Markku Heikkilä*

Photo: *Arctic Council Ministerial Meeting 2011, Nuuk, Kalaallit Nunaat (Greenland).* ***Credit:*** *Alona Yefimenko / Arctic Council Indigenous Peoples' Secretariat*

Photo: *Delegates and observers at the 2013 Arctic Peoples' Conference: A Celebration of 40 Years of Indigenous Cooperation. Christiansborg Castle, Copenhagen, Denmark, 22 November 2013.* ***Credit:*** *Mads Fægteborg*

Photo: *Arctic Council Senior Arctic Officials Meeting, 2015, Anchorage, Alaska, USA.* ***Credit:*** *Linnea Nordström / Arctic Council Indigenous Peoples' Secretariat*

Photo: *Arctic Youth Leaders' Summit, Rovaniemi, Finland, 2019.* ***Credit:*** *Linnea Nordström / Arctic Council Indigenous Peoples' Secretariat*

Photo: *Arctic Indigenous Peoples at the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, New York, 2018.* ***Credit:*** *Photograph courtesy of the ICC Canada Archives*

Photo: *Arctic Indigenous Peoples at the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) COP15, Copenhagen, Denmark, on Arctic Indigenous Peoples Day, 2009.* ***Credit:*** *Photograph courtesy of the ICC Canada Archives*

Photo: *Panel on Arctic Indigenous Peoples' issues at the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) COP25, Madrid, Spain, 2019.* ***Credit:*** *Photograph courtesy of the ICC Canada Archives*

Photo: *Arctic Indigenous Peoples at the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) COP 26, Glasgow, Scotland, 2021.* ***Credit:*** *Photograph courtesy of the ICC Canada Archives*

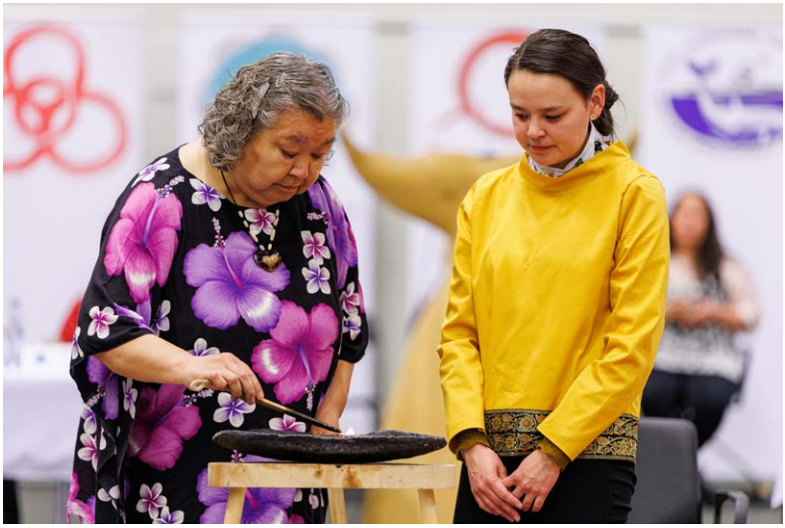

Photo: *Traditional opening ceremony performed at the 2023 Arctic Peoples' Conference held on 20-21 July in Illulisat, Kalaalit Nunaat (Greenland).* ***Credit:*** *Carson Tagoona © ICC Canada*

Photo: *Reflections on the Arctic Peoples' Conference at the 2023 Arctic Peoples' Conference. From left: Gunn-Britt Retter, Máret Sárá, Aqqaluk Lynge (front), Carl Christian "Puju" Olsen (back), and Per Mikael Utsi.* ***Credit:*** *Carson Tagoona © ICC Canada*

Photo: *Áslat Holmberg, President, Saami Council, speaking at the 2023 Arctic Peoples' Conference.* ***Credit:*** *Carson Tagoona © ICC Canada*

Photo: *Natan Obed, President of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, speaking at the 2023 Arctic Peoples' Conference.* ***Credit:*** *Carson Tagoona © ICC Canada*

Photo: *Sam Alexander, Board Member, Gwich'in Council International, speaking at the 2023 Arctic Peoples' Conference.* ***Credit:*** *Carson Tagoona © ICC Canada*

Photo: *The Arctic Indigenous Youth delegates presenting their statement at the 2023 Arctic Peoples' Conference.* ***Credit:*** *Carson Tagoona © ICC Canada*

Photo: *Sara Olsvig, Chair, Inuit Circumpolar Council, speaking at the 2023 Arctic Peoples' Conference.* ***Credit:*** *Carson Tagoona © ICC Canada*

Photo: *Chief Gary Harrison, International Chair, Arctic Athabaskan Council, speaking at the 2023 Arctic Peoples' Conference.* ***Credit:*** *Carson Tagoona © ICC Canada*

Photos: *2023 Arctic Indigenous Peoples' delegation members each signing the commemorative round table chart as was done in 1973.*
Credit: *Carson Tagoona © ICC Canada*

Photos: *2023 Arctic Indigenous Peoples' delegation members each signing the commemorative round table chart as was done in 1973.* ***Credit:*** *Carson Tagoona © ICC Canada*

Photo: *2023 Arctic Indigenous Peoples' delegation members sitting at the main conference table with their signatures below.* ***Credit:*** *Carson Tagoona © ICC Canada*

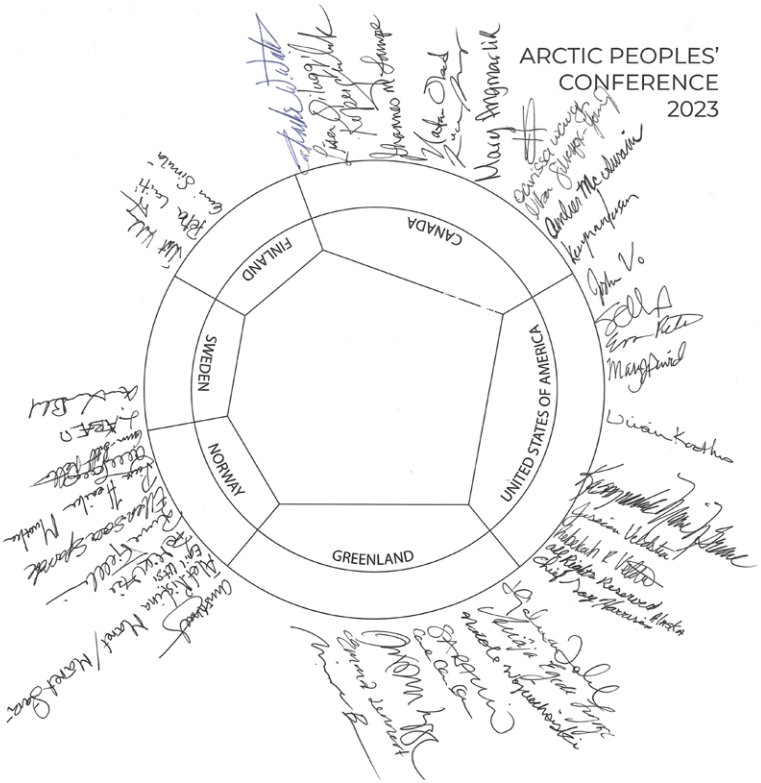

Photo: *Participants, staff and invited guests of the 2023 Arctic Peoples' Conference.*
Credit: *Carson Tagoona © ICC Canada*

Photo: *Meeting of the Norwegian Chairship of the Arctic Council and the six Indigenous Peoples' Organizations serving as Permanent Participants to the Arctic Council in Girkonjárga/Kirkenes, Norway, October 2023.* ***Credit:*** *Arctic Council Indigenous Peoples' Secretariat*

Photo: *Indigenous Coordinating Body at the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues' (UNPFII) meeting during the 23rd session of the UNPFII about the process of enhancing the participation of Indigenous Peoples in the UN, April 23, 2024. From left: UNPFII members Mr. Keith M. Harper, Mr. Suleiman Mamutov, Ms. Aluki Kotierk and Ms. Valentina Vyacheslavovna Sovkina, and members of the Indigenous Coordinating Body Ms. Pirita Näkkäläjärvi, Mr. Kenneth Deer, Ms. Sara Olsvig and Executive Secretary Ghazali Ohorella.* ***Credit:*** *Sara Olsvig / ICC*

The Sense of Unity and Co-operation among the Arctic Family: The Sámi Perspective

By Álet-Ristina Máret / Máret Sárá

Photo: *Máret Sárá wearing her Sámi fur coat of reindeer skin, winter galter and winter shoes of reindeer leg-skin and the Foremothers' hat of Pride.* ***Credit:*** *Paula Rauhala 2023.*

The thoughts and ideas the participants had when they decided to participate in the Conference in 1973

This was the early beginnings of organizing the Indigenous Peoples of the Arctic. When we gathered in Copenhagen in 1973 for the Round Table conversations, we knew that there was a need to start organizing the Indigenous Peoples at international level, to be able to find solutions to our common challenges and problems. It all started in the *Landstingssalen* (the Danish Parliament) at Christiansborg in Copenhagen, 21 November 1973. We were gathered for four days, and I have kept the documents and the newspaper articles from this Round Table meeting.

Indigenous representatives from the Arctic, Canada, Alaska, Kalaallit Nunaat (Greenland) and Sámi from the Norwegian, Swedish and Finnish side of Sápmi (no representatives from the Soviet Union/Russia participated) were gathered, and it was such a big achievement and historical moment. Indigenous Peoples from far and wide in the Arctic came together – to embark on political conversations about land rights and how we can secure and protect our territories and our rich resources. There were topics about our:

- unique property rights to our regions,
- the protection of natural resources and,
- during these days we achieved conversations about our Indigenous collective perspective.

Two years later, in 1975, the World Council of Indigenous Peoples (WCIP) was established. Chief George Manuel from Canada was a key person in the founding of WCIP. At the opening of the First International Arctic Peoples' Conference in Copenhagen on 22 November 1973, Angmalortok Olsen read a letter from George Manuel, President of the National Indian Brotherhood in Canada, who extended his heartfelt wishes for a fruitful conference of Native Arctic Peoples.

I want to highlight the Solemn Declaration from the WCIP conference, held in Port Alberni, British Columbia from 27 to 31 October 1975.

We the Indigenous Peoples of the world united in this corner of our Mother the Earth in a great assembly of men of wisdom, declare to all nations:

We glory in our proud past:
when the earth was our nurturing mother,
when the night sky formed our common roof,
when Sun and Moon were our parents,
when all were brothers and sisters,
when our great civilizations grew under the sun,
when our chiefs and elders were great leaders,
when justice ruled the Law and its execution.
Then other peoples arrived:
thirsting for blood, for gold, for land and all its wealth,
carrying the cross and the sword, one in each hand,
without knowing or waiting to learn the ways of our worlds,
they considered us to be lower than the animals,
they stole our lands from us and took us from our lands
they made slaves of the Sons of the sun.
However, they have never been able to eliminate us,
nor to erase our memories of what we were,
because we are the culture of the earth and the sky,
we are of ancient descent and we are millions,
and although our whole universe may be ravaged,
our people will live on
for longer than even the kingdom of death.
Now, we come from the four corners of the earth,
we protest before the concert of nations
that, "we are the Indigenous Peoples, we who
have a consciousness of the culture and peoplehood.
on the edge of each country's citizenship".
And rising up after centuries of oppression,
evoking the greatness of our ancestors,
in the memory of our Indigenous martyrs,
and in homage to the counsel of our wise elders:
We vow to control again our own destiny and
recover our complete humanity and
pride in being Indigenous People.

During the 1970s in Sápmi, we faced a political turning point. At *Fovsen Njaarke* (the Fosen Peninsula), the Norwegian authorities were planning to superimpose the biggest military shooting field in the Nordics over a traditional Sámi reindeer area. In *Finnmárku* (Finnmark County), the Battle of Áltá commenced to oppose the planned construction of a hydroelectric power plant on the *Áltá-Guovdageaidnu* (Alta-Kautokeino) river. It is one of the most far-reaching conflicts in Norway's history. Both Sámi and non-Sámi started to mobilize against the Norwegian Parliament and Government.

Photo: *Niillas A. Somby.*

A Sámi action group published their own newspaper, Charta 79, originally to deliver a manifesto. Its purpose was to spread information about the situation of Sámi in Northern Europe and also other Indigenous groups throughout the world and their problems, sometimes very similar, sometimes different. Head editor was Máret Sárá, and the staff were Egil Utsi, Rune Stormo, Ánde Somby and Lásse Idivuoma. Chief photographer was Niillas A. Somby.

Photo: *From left: Synnøve Persen, Jorunn Eikjok, Nils Aslaksen Somby, Máret Sárá, Mikkel Hætta, Mikkel Eira, Mikkel Anders Eira. In front: Nils A. Gaup.* ***Credit:*** *Bernt Eide/ Samfoto.*

Photo: *The hunger strikes of 1979. Jorunn Eikjok reads the Sámi Action Group's demands to Prime Minister Nordli and his Secretary of State. From left: Jorunn Eikjok, Nils Aslaksen Somby, Mikkel Eira.* ***Credit:*** *Máret Sárá, 08.10.1979.*

For the authorities, the damming and regulation of the *Áltá-Guovdageaidnu* watercourse became a watershed moment that led to a change in consciousness in politics. The field of Sámi politics expanded from having related largely to language and school, and to some extent commercial, policies to also include territorial rights and, eventually, Sámi self-government. The concept of Indigenous Peoples acquired significance under the new conditions for the Sámi policy.

During the dramatic events in Áltá, as a result of the Norwegian Parliament's decision to build a hydro-power plant on the watercourse, the Norwegian government appointed two committees to investigate Sámi policy: the Sámi Culture Committee and the Sámi Rights Committee. The first recommendations from the Sámi Rights Committee were published in a report in 1984, which formed the basis for the Sámi Act of 1987 and a separate paragraph in the Norwegian Constitution in 1988, requiring the authorities to ensure that provisions were made for the Sámi people as an ethnic group in order to safeguard and develop their language, culture and society. Through the establishment of the *Sámediggi* (Sámi parliament) (1989), the Sámi people gained an elected representative body. Questions relating to the Sámi people's right to self-determination and rights to land and water received more attention. The following year, Norway became the first country in the world to ratify ILO Convention 169, thereby undertaking further obligations towards the Sámi people under international law. The Sámi Culture Committee made several recommendations, the most important outcome being that Sámi language rights were incorporated into the Sámi Act in 1990. The Sámi have been recognized as an Indigenous people in Norway (1990 according to ILO Convention 169 as described below), and therefore, according to international law, the Sámi people in Norway are entitled to special protection and rights. The legal foundation of the Sámi policy is Article 110a of the Norwegian Constitution.

Illustration: *The Fosen situation: Illustration by reindeer herders Mattis Danielsen and Leif Arne Jåma (2023).*

Visions and expectations – Sharing of memories of personal and political outcomes of the 1973 conference

We were all quite young then and many of us were following our education in the South and we started to ask questions about our rights and how to secure a better future for our people.

I remember that it was such an important gathering at international level. Many of us, the Sámi, had never before participated in this kind of round table assembly meeting and, for the first time, we had the possibility of participating in discussions with other Indigenous Peoples.

For me, personally, it was a period of political awakening, and I decided to fight for our rights. I became an activist and also a strong Sámi politician with a clear voice. I knew how to use the media to reach out with our perspective. I started to organize political groups in Sápmi and, later, I continued at international level.

As James J. Wah-Shee, President of the Indian Brotherhood of Northwest Territories said in his opening speech and greeting to the 1973 Arctic Peoples' Conference, we are as "brothers and sisters in the Arctic family." He went on to say that "when the weak come together and speak with one voice, it is hoped that they can be heard."

These four days were such a learning curve for us, the young activists. We knew that it was our responsibility both to organize and to keep in touch with other Indigenous Tribes or Peoples. We left this meeting with new hope, and we knew that this was the beginning of the organization of the hunters and nomads of the Arctic.

After 50 years, I can say that this was such an important gathering, and the first milestone in organizing the Indigenous Peoples in the Arctic region. We must remember and tell Sámi society about the history of Sámi political organizing, about the resolutions and decisions we made so that we could achieve our basic rights, and that we have had such a good focus and willingness to protect our territory and our people.

The value of cooperation between the Arctic Indigenous Peoples

The first "Arctic Peoples' Conference" ended with two resolutions and a goal that the 35 representatives would continue their cooperation by

forming a Circumpolar Organization. There was a need to form a governing body and, the following year, there was a new conference so that the Arctic peoples could work towards establishing that body.

The second resolution from the conference also had a strong message: The delegates from Canada, Kalaallit Nunaat (Greenland), Sápmi (Norway, Sweden and Finland) have, through the discussions at the conference, been strengthened in their own identity.

- We represent the original population in the areas we live in, and we are therefore an integrated part of the country and the waters that we, according to our traditions, have made use of.
- Our identity and culture is firmly rooted in these countries. It is this relationship with the land that has created our cultural identity in contrast to the people who have come to our countries more recently.
- We included a sentence about equality, and that hunters and nomads in the Arctic should be treated as equal parties in negotiations with the different States. We also included the fact that States should respect our property rights (land and waters) and concede to us our rights as peoples with rights to decide on our own affairs.

Feelings when looking back today

I am proud of what we achieved but there are still many difficult processes ongoing. There has not been the expected progress in many of the issues and topics we talked about, such as land rights and better living conditions. The traditional areas are not experiencing the development we hoped for. The traditional areas are facing a "race to the Arctic", in which so many big international companies are willing to pay us money to allow them to expropriate our traditional areas. We are still dealing with many difficult issues. Young people are suffering with mental health problems and suicides are high in many regions in the Arctic.

Daily racism is difficult for many Sámi children in suburban areas and in cities. A new Amnesty International Norway report (2023) reveals that the Sámi are systematically being stigmatized on social media. One in four Facebook posts on Sámi themes is negative. Comments reveal negative attitudes and perpetuate old-fashioned stereotyping of the Sámi as an ethnic group. The report shows that hate-speech and

demeaning attitudes still mark the relationship between the Sámi population and society at large today. Online harassment has major consequences and creates insecurity. Many Sámi say they do not want to participate in public debate because they simply find it too uncomfortable. Such a development is a threat to the freedom of expression of minorities and is a threat to our democracy.

What has been achieved?

This is a difficult question, because the Indigenous Peoples in the Arctic do live in huge areas, but we have many common issues and challenges. We have managed to organize ourselves, by having permanent participant status at the Arctic Council, and ICC (Inuit Circumpolar Council) and Sámi Council are strong organizations. At the community level, in the traditional areas, there might be an unawareness about what the people expect from us, and how we can manage to strengthen the community-based livelihoods, traditions and traditional knowledge.

Thoughts on the future

Indigenous Peoples worldwide have annual meetings at the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. This is such a big achievement, with the mandate to deal with Indigenous issues related to economic and social development, culture, the environment, education, health and human rights.

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2007, by a majority of 144 States. These are the minimum standards for the survival, dignity and well-being of the Indigenous Peoples of the world. Yet, in reality, the situation is still quite difficult and dangerous for many Indigenous Peoples.

Truth and reconciliations commissions, both in Canada, Kalaallit Nunaat (Greenland), and now in Norway, have identified the historical and current discrimination, the consequences of assimilation and colonization, and these commissions are documenting the dark history of the Indigenous Peoples. In Finland and Sweden, the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions have just started their work, but this is our history, our battle and I am not sure if the authorities and politicians in the Nordic countries are willing to give us better possibilities in the future.

At a time when the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Norway is delivering its report to the Norwegian Parliament, we are facing the consequences of ongoing human rights violation in *Fovse* (Fosen) – the industrial landscape of wind farms. Norway's Supreme Court has ruled that the Fovse wind farms violate human rights because they undermine the Sámi reindeer herders' right to practice their culture. So it is now up to the Norwegian Parliament, the Government and various institutions, as to how they will follow up on this important work done by the Commission.

Anyhow, there is hope, and I am proud of our strong Sámi youth!

The Fosen Wind Power case has threatened the Sámi community's traditional reindeer herding and the lack of consultation and participation in the decision-making processes further diminishes Sámi control over their lands and resources. This has led to strong protests from, among others, Sámi youth.

I am proud of the strong political message from Sámi youth, and how they have managed to make the headlines at international level with the Sámi situation in Norway, and the Fovse industrial landscape of wind farms. Of how they managed to occupy and shut down the Ministry of Petroleum and Energy and other Ministries. Norwegian politicians will remember these protests as historic. Our youth are incredibly smart and strategic!

About the author

Máret Sárá (1947) is a Cand. Mag and author of 46 books in the Sámi language, including textbooks and non-fiction books. She pursued Sámi language studies in 1974 and 1980 at the Ural Altaisk Institutt, University in Oslo, and Teacher Training School in 1977 in Alta. She has received the following awards: Finnmark County Parliament Equal Position Prize (1989), Karasjok Municipality Culture Prize (2010), and Gollegiella - Nordic Sámi Language Prize (2010).

The Gwich'in Story

By Sam Alexander

> *We request the obvious: that the governments of each state from which we come recognize our rights as peoples entitled to the dignity of self-fulfillment and realization. This further means that there must not be any displacement or interference with our rights by governments and/or industry, nor can there be any disturbance of our lands. In any negotiations of the crucial issues we expect participation in a position of full equality. – 1973 Arctic Peoples' Conference resolution.*

Much has occurred with the Gwich'in Nation since the 1973 Arctic Peoples' Conference. While the conference served as a catalyst towards greater Circumpolar Indigenous cooperation, there was still a lot of internal organizational development on the horizon for the Gwich'in Nation. Before we, as Gwich'in, could be full participants of any Circumpolar Body of Indigenous Peoples, we had to organize ourselves. The easiest way to think about this period of time is to consider the various stages of governance development that occurred over this time. The Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) was only signed into law in 1971, and with it came a sea of change in Alaskan Native participation in state and local affairs.

While ANCSA served to weaken tribal authority and eliminate our subsistence rights, tribes fought back and began to develop instruments that would bring tribal governance into the modern era. In Alaska, the tribes of the Yukon Flats (Gwich'in and Koyukon) banded together in 1985 to establish the Council of Athabascan Tribal Governments (CATG). Whereas individual tribes struggled to meet the ever-increasing demands put on tribal governments, the collective under the CATG banner has taken on more of the roles of governance that modern societies require, such as healthcare and natural resource management. But our Nation's territory extends beyond the United States; a majority of our people live in Canada. And the prime resource of our people, the Porcupine Caribou herd, also recognizes no border or state.

With increasing interest in drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Reserve in the 1980s, Gwich'in Elders called for the Gwich'in Niintysaa: the

Gwich'in Gathering. The 1988 Gwich'in Gathering was the first gathering of our nation in over 100 years, bringing together the Gwich'in from the US and Canada, who had grown distant since the forced separation brought upon us by the US and Canadian border. This gathering kickstarted the era of Gwich'in international cooperation and governance.

From the 1988 gathering, a host of organizations sprang forth. Amongst them, the Gwich'in Steering Committee, which continues to work on behalf of the Gwich'in Nation to protect the critical calving grounds of the Porcupine Caribou herd. Shortly following the 1988 Gwich'in Gathering, the Canadian side of the Gwich'in Nation completed their land claim agreements, which gave further voice to the Gwich'in Nation in respect of land development and the protection and management of natural resources. The Gwich'in of the Northwest Territory in Canada created the Gwich'in Tribal Council in 1992 to enact their land claims and to work towards self-governance. In 1993, the Vuntat Gwich'in in Yukon Territory Canada signed their final land claims agreement; this agreement has further propelled the Vuntat Gwich'in toward greater self-determination.

With this greater capacity for governance, the Gwich'in people continued to expand our presence in the international arena. In 2000, the Gwich'in Nation gained status as a Permanent Participant in the Arctic Council through the Gwich'in Council International. Our early involvement in the Arctic Council was focused on establishing ourselves as players in the international arena but our capacity limited our involvement. It was not until 2014-2015 that our involvement began to grow into our current level of commitment.

This work takes place despite the physical and governmental barriers that prevent us from achieving our full potential as a Nation. The clearest example of this is the US-Canadian border, which separates our people and has led to inequality in the treatment of our people. This is manifested in how each of our settler/colonial nations interacts and treats us, and how we are treated as we cross the border. As a Gwich'in coming from Canada, you can enter the US and quickly establish yourself as a resident. The same is not true for Gwich'in from the US entering Canada. We as the Gwich'in Council International have been working to address this discrepancy in policy between the US and Canada and we are seeking a resolution that will strengthen the ties of our Gwich'in Nation.

So, where are we now as Gwich'in, 50 years on from the 1973 Arctic Peoples' Conference? We have taken a leading voice in issues that im-

pact the Circumpolar North, such as our work in renewable energy and wildland fires. We have supported and pushed for greater financial support for all Permanent Participants in the Arctic Council.

What has become clear through our participation in the Arctic Council is that the challenges that impact our various nations in the Arctic are felt right across the north, and cannot be individually solved, nor can or should these problems be solved without Indigenous input. So what are these Arctic policy challenges that we as Gwich'in currently face?

While we have made great strides in our self-determination and internal governance structures, much remains to be done in ensuring our voice is heard and reflected in Arctic policies today. The Gwich'in Nation is facing tremendous pressure on the food security front; the collapse of the Yukon River Salmon is just one example of where we need greater say on how this international natural resource is managed. Because we are still so connected to our food sources, any impact on those sources has a direct effect on our way of life and our ability to maintain it. What we do at the international level needs to reinforce and support our traditional Gwich'in values.

Another area of great concern is the recent pause in Arctic Council activities. This pause occurred without the consultation of the Permanent Participants. This clearly demonstrates that there are those who believe our voice as Permanent Participants is not vital to the legitimacy of the Arctic Council. If this behavior is tolerated at the premier forum on Arctic affairs where else might it be tolerated? But we believe there is a way forward and we know we have support in the international arena to rebuild these necessary relationships in the Arctic. This is where forums such as the Arctic Peoples' Conference come into play. The importance of the 2023 Arctic Peoples' Conference could not have come at a more important time for the Gwich'in and for our relationship with our relatives across the north. The long pause in the Arctic Council had weakened the growing collaboration between Permanent Participants and left us without a space to work together.

It is perhaps a personal opinion but I believe that the 2023 Arctic Peoples' Conference was very much what the 1973 Arctic Peoples' Conference had in mind when they passed the resolution stating:

> *The conference proposes to form a Circumpolar Body of Indigenous Peoples to pursue and advance our shared and collective interests. – 1973 Arctic Peoples' Conference*

The Arctic Peoples' Conference was unlike any event that the Arctic Council has ever had. We as Indigenous Peoples were able to discuss the issues as we saw them and were not limited by the priorities of the Arctic States. The mood and manner in which the conference ran reflected our Indigenous heritage; it was one where our elders spoke and shared their 50-year plus perspective on the Arctic. What other forum can boast such an informed history and outlook?

It is my opinion that perhaps we as Indigenous Peoples need to recognize the missed opportunities and limitations that arise from outsourcing our interactions to the Arctic Council and take the steps outlined in the 1973 Arctic Peoples' Conference to build a true Circumpolar Body of Indigenous Peoples and chart our own course for the Arctic.

Mahsi' choo Shalak Naii

Sam Alexander
Gwich'in Council International

About the author

Sam Alexander is a board member of Gwich'in Council International. He was born and raised in Alaska and currently resides in Fairbanks with his family.

Arctic Peoples' Cooperation: The Greenlandic Story

By Aqqaluk Lynge

The co-chair of the first Arctic Peoples' Conference in November 1973 in Copenhagen tells his side of the story to the events leading up to the meeting and what followed.

The background

The historic Arctic Peoples' Conference in Copenhagen in 1973 was preceded by another meeting in May 1973 in Le Havre, France. It was a meeting about Oil and Gas development in the Arctic. There, we were lucky to meet Inuit and First Nations leaders from Canada and we went back to Copenhagen with these leaders. Here, the idea of convening the first Arctic Peoples' Conference was born.[1]

The 1973 conference took place in an era of political development in Greenland and beyond. New political winds had begun blowing when Denmark voted to become a member of what is now called the European Union in October 1972. Greenland voted against membership and a new Greenlandic political movement was born demanding greater political influence over our own affairs. It took us another referendum 10 years later for us to end up with a special trade relationship with the EU, which still regulates our connection today.

In the rest of the world, companies were moving fast to set foot on the vast oil, gas and other resources in the Arctic wilderness. We could see what was going on in North America where the Indigenous Peoples were beginning to organize for their land rights. In the Nordic Countries the Sámi people were already cooperating across state borders and we in Greenland were inspired by this.

Since the 1950s, many young Greenlanders had been sent to Denmark for their education. Because of a lack of educational facilities in

1. This is an excerpt from Aqqaluk Lynge's upcoming book "Inuit Tumisiorlugit - On the Trails of Inuit" due out in 2024.

Greenland in the 1970s, hundreds of young people were sent to Danish educational institutions each year and were supposed to return home after finishing their education. Many gained good jobs in Greenland but others never returned home.

The Greenlandic students in Denmark organized themselves into the Greenlandic Youth Council (later named *Kalaalllit Inuusuttut Ataqatigiit*). During the early seventies Copenhagen was the center for Greenlandic political activism. We had a close relationship with *Peqatigiit Kalaallit*, an association for Greenlanders living permanently in Denmark.

As chair of the Youth Council, in May 1973 I was invited to attend an international gathering under the auspices of the *Centre d'etudes Arctiques* (Center for Arctic Studies) together with the famous French anthropologist Jean Malaurie, who organized the first Arctic Oil and Gas conference in Le Havre, France, 2-5 May 1973. The Greenlandic delegation was: Moses Olsen, member of the Danish Parliament, and Professor Robert Petersen, and the head of our delegation was Angmalortoq Olsen, the charismatic leader of *Peqatigiit Kalaallit* and me as Chair of the Greenlandic Youth Council. Early Sunday, the four of us drove from Copenhagen down European motorways all the way to the French channel coast city of Le Havre. I had some knowledge of French and was appointed navigator because I could say: "Où et la route pour?" Which way for?"

I was, of course, very excited to attend my first international conference but the language barriers were problematic to begin with. This was my first international conference and I had to switch between French and English to better understand the academic expressions.

The biggest surprise was meeting Inuit and Indigenous Peoples from North America. It was there I first met Jose Kusugak and Tagak Curly from the newly-founded Inuit Tapirisat of Canada (now ITK - Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami), which organized all Inuit in Canada. Tagak Curley was the ITK president and would later enjoy an excellent political career. Jose and I were born in the same year, 1947, and we bonded right away, became close and worked together in various capacities until he passed away in 2015. Jose had a formidable presence in the Inuit movement both at home and internationally.

The Canadian delegation also included the National Indian Brotherhood Chair of the Northwest Territories, James Washee, and Métis

and Non-status Indians Association Chair, Joe Mercredi. We all understood the need for international cooperation in response to the growing economic interests and the growing expansion of extractive industries in our homelands and the fight for resources and land rights. In Le Havre, we Indigenous participants clearly had our own agenda and we decided that we had to connect closely and start thinking about how we organize in the future.

By the end of the conference in Le Havre, our head of delegation, Angmalortoq Olsen, had invited James Washee and Joe Mercredi to Copenhagen for further discussions. Because of the urgency of the issues, we decided that the date for the Copenhagen meeting should be November of that same year, 1973. Angmalortoq Olsen, who was an inspirational leader, invited the newly-formed IWGIA (International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs) along with its head, the Norwegian professor, Helge Kleivan, and we were also joined by Professor Robert Petersen from the University of Copenhagen's Institute of "Eskimology". The organizing committee was established and the planning was fast moving forward.

We were met with interest and support from many sides. The Danish government, however, did not know how to deal with the issues of Indigenous Peoples since it had decided that there were no Indigenous Peoples within the Danish Kingdom, and the Provincial Council of Greenland was only an advisory board with no political powers that did not want to challenge the Danish authorities. However, we managed to get funding from various sources such as the Norwegian government. The venue of the meeting, *Landstingssalen* at the Danish Parliament, was a reminder to the Danish political system that we were here, and that we wanted to be heard.

So we became involved in international issues at a time when we were occupied with analyzing our own political situation as part of Denmark. I recall that, at that time, as young Greenlanders living in Denmark, we were starting to look at our own colonial relations from an international perspective and becoming engaged in Indigenous issues. Organizing the Arctic Peoples' Conference with the participation of Indigenous Peoples from Greenland, Canada, Alaska and Northern Europe was part of this process.

We young Greenlanders were, not least, inspired by the Sámi Peoples' engagement. Although we considered ourselves very rebellious, our worldview was much more restricted than those of North America.

In 1973 most of the Indigenous non-governmental organizations that met in Copenhagen were in their infancy. We invited the existing organizations in the Arctic that we knew. Delegates from countries participating were Canada's Inuit and what we now know as First Nations. The Sámi People's delegates came from the Nordic countries of Norway, Sweden and Finland. Greenland was represented by the Provincial Council, the Association of Greenlandic Municipalities, the Women's National Association, and a representative of the non-vocational school *Knud Rasmussens Højskole*, the Greenlandic NGOs in Denmark, the Greenlandic Youth Council and *Peqatigiit Kalaallit* were joined by the Institute of "Eskimology" and IWGIA. The Alaska Federation of Natives was invited but did not show up, so we missed the Inuit of Alaska. It is also noteworthy that we did not discuss any participation from the Soviet Union. The political division between West and East did not leave room for that kind of human contact. Our work to connect with Indigenous Peoples in Russia nonetheless continued until it succeeded in 1986 when Chukotka Inuit (Yuit) joined the Inuit Circumpolar Council.

The conference discussed various issues of great importance to us all: the environmental degradation and the sustainable development that was being challenged by resource development. We discussed our identity and the educational system, which did not have room for our languages and cultures. We were beginning to talk about our rights as Indigenous Peoples and how to make the rest of the world understand.

Many Indigenous Peoples had no governmental institutions of their own, which is why we were organized as non-governmental organizations. This was how the world of Indigenous Peoples looked like in the 1970s.

The first International Arctic Peoples' Conference in November 1973 passed a few resolutions and decided that we needed an international forum for Arctic Peoples to be established in the near future. The speed of the development was fast and many of the participants in the Copenhagen meeting were to become important individual players both at home and internationally in the Indigenous movement.

What came after that?

The Copenhagen meeting resulted in much bigger ideas. The working committee ended up connecting with Chief George Manuel, chair of the National Indian Brotherhood in Canada, who wanted to arrange an international Indigenous conference in Port Alberni, British Colombia, Canada. This first international Indigenous conference thus took place there, in October 1975. Around 14 countries participated. Meeting other Indigenous Peoples from Latin America was a journey into a completely new world we did not know existed. The result of this meeting was the establishment of the World Council of Indigenous Peoples (WCIP), first chaired by George Manuel.

In Port Alberni, it was difficult to gain a mutual understanding between the Arctic Peoples and the Indigenous representatives from Latin America and, for the first time, we heard about the violence and threats against Indigenous Peoples. A representative from Guatemala was taken prisoner and unable to travel. This was an enormous eye-opener for us.

We had never before heard that people could be treated in this way and we were highly affected. You must understand that we lived in a small bubble in Danish society. We learned never to take anything for granted and, although there are similarities between Indigenous Peoples, some Indigenous people live a hard life. In Greenland, we lived on an island and adopted Christianity, which became part of our culture. We were shocked by what we learned and came to look at our own colonial history with new eyes. Our world became larger.

In Port Alberni, we also met an Alaskan representative, namely Billy Neakok, who was assistant to Mayor Eben Hopson of North Slope Borough in Utqiaġvik, Barrow, Alaska. Carl Christian "Puju" Olsen and I met with Billy Neakok to discuss how to organize Inuit internationally. The Greenlandic delegation took the discussion home and decided that it was time for a special meeting of Inuit in the Arctic. Until then, the Greenlanders had only met with neighboring Inuit from Canada with whom we could communicate in our own Inuit language.

In the 1970s, there were bureaucratic and political obstacles to Inuit cooperation, including language policy, but when Greenland obtained Home Rule, and later Self-Rule, language and education came under

Greenlandic control. Today, the Greenlandic Inuit language has become the official language although Danish largely remains the administrative language, similar to English in Canada and Alaska.

Two years after the first WCIP meeting in 1975, the Inuit held their first international gathering in Utqiaġvik, Barrow, Alaska. In 1980, at the second meeting in Nuuk, the Inuit Circumpolar Conference (now Inuit Circumpolar Council) was formally established. The ICC became a Category II member of the UN Economic and Social Council in 1983. It began its direct involvement in the UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations at that time.

The WCIP continued to exist for a time and slowly started to attend the yearly meetings of the Working Group on Indigenous Populations under the UN Humans Rights Council in Geneva, which started to meet each summer from 1982 onwards.

Even though we were organized differently, the international Indigenous cooperation was smooth and we learned to talk to our former colonizers in a different way. A dialogue between governments and Indigenous Peoples developed quite positively.

In short, our UN work and contacts with the UN specialized agencies such as the International Labor Organization (ILO) resulted in ILO Convention 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples being adopted by the International Labor Conference in Geneva in June 1989. We had little to say on the outcome in this regard but the Indigenous Peoples' organizations worked alongside governments to establish the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in 2001. After 25 years of negotiations in Geneva, the UN adopted the Declaration on the Rights of the Indigenous Peoples in 2007 – a compilation of various human rights issues in one declaration.

Indigenous Peoples now have our own UN forum and the international instruments needed to address our concerns to the rest of the world. We thank our Indigenous colleagues who worked tirelessly and as true diplomats to achieve our goals.

Since 1973, I have learned how important it is for an NGO like the Inuit Circumpolar Council to work for the common good and against all kinds of suppression. We have the freedom to be ourselves despite our colonial heritage and, in Greenland, we have been able to elevate our political institutions to a high level. Because of the Inuit cooperation and working with Indigenous Peoples, we have also been able to posi-

tion Greenland in a larger world. The Arctic Peoples' peaceful approach is a powerful tool.

Indigenous cooperation in the Arctic continues

By the time ICC was established, we were working closely with the Sámi Council and, later, with RAIPON (Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North) in order to cooperate with the Arctic governments to protect the Arctic environment. The process of Arctic cooperation started in 1991 with the Rovaniemi Declaration. That summer, the ICC invited Arctic Indigenous Peoples to the Arctic Leaders' Summit in Hørsholm, Denmark where the ICC leadership also invited elected representatives from various Arctic governments, including Russia. The Arctic Leaders' Summit was a forum where non-governmental Indigenous organizations were able to meet with government representatives both local and national, on an equal footing. It was highly successful and the idea was born to establish an Arctic Council with Indigenous participation.

At the ICC, we had successfully connected with the Inuit of Chukotka, Russia in 1986 and the leadership, under Mary Simon, visited the Inuit of Russia in 1988. The full circle was thus reached. This resulted in contacts with other Indigenous Peoples of Russia who, in 1990, formed their own national organization, RAIPON. Together with the Sámi Council, the three organizations asked the governments to include us directly in the talks on the Arctic Environment Protection Strategy, as many of those meetings were taking place in the Arctic. Finland, taking the first steps, had included Sámi language and cultural rights in their Constitution in 1995. After several years, we were able to negotiate the formation of the Arctic Council, comprising eight Arctic States, and the Indigenous Peoples' organizations became Permanent Participants. This means that we have direct contact with our governments so we can discuss issues concerning Indigenous Peoples' political priorities.

This special formation of the Arctic Council took place right after the end of the Cold War. However, the excellent scientific and political cooperation is now falling victim to the same forces that have prevented the Indigenous Peoples from enjoying their rights to and the possibility of forming their own future. Now that we no longer have normal relations with Russia, we Inuit and Sámi are prevented from continuing

cooperation with our relatives from Russia's Arctic and the many Arctic Indigenous Peoples of Russia. What took us 50 years to achieve took only one day, 24 February 2022, to destroy.

The struggle we started 50 years ago has reached another era. It is important that we keep our personal contacts but how contacts between organizations will continue is impossible to foresee. We cannot accept that the Arctic Peoples today are standing where we were 50 years ago. Our fight for survival will not only be decided by political events but may well be decided by nature's own force – with climate and environmental degradation – if the world does not listen to the Arctic Peoples' voice.

About the author

Aqqaluk Lynge is the former President (1997-2002) and Chair of the Inuit Circumpolar Council (2010-2014) and UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (2006-2007), and former member of the Greenland Parliament and Government (1983-1996, 2003-2005). He is a graduate of the Copenhagen School of Social Works (1976).

Arctic Athabaskan Council: Circumpolar Relations and Advocacy

By Bridget Larocque

The Arctic Athabaskan Council (AAC) was established as an international treaty organization in 2000, while the Athabaskan Peoples were socially, culturally, and politically organized prior to this in their respective territories. The Athabaskan Peoples are rightsholders and Knowledge Holders of their respective homelands and have used diplomacy and international relations to establish relationships and to negotiate treaties. A prime example of conducting peaceful international relations is evident in the documents from the Arctic Peoples' Conference 1973 recognizing that the conference was initiated by James Wah-Shee, who is Tłı̨chǫ (Athabaskan/Dene First Nation) from the Dehcho of the Northwest Territories. In an interview with Holly Dobbins, Wah-Shee remembers the context of the conference:

> *Well it was basically to exchange ideas on circumpolar issues like environment, land claims, economic development and try to exchange ideas because everybody was developing at a different pace, but we had common areas. It was at that beginning I guess where we all got to know each other. I'd never been to Finland, Norway or Sweden in my life and I didn't really know there were Aboriginal people there. Greenland, I'd heard about them a long time ago, but that was the first time that I had met them.*[1]

International Organization, Collaboration, and Advocacy

The first Arctic Peoples' Conference was held in Copenhagen in 1973. According to Inge Kleivan in her paper *The Arctic Peoples' Conference in Copenhagen, November 22-25, 1973* written in 1992, she states:

1. Dobbins, Holly. "Oral History of the Nunavut Negotiations." https://oralhistory.tunngavik.com/interview/james-wah-shee/ (Accessed 6 April 2024)

> *The 1973 conference took place in an era of political development in Greenland and beyond. New political winds had begun blowing when Denmark voted to become a member of what is now called the European Union in October 1972. Greenland voted against membership and a new Greenlandic political movement was born demanding greater political influence over our own affairs. It took us another referendum 10 years later for us to end up with a special trade relationship with the EU, which still regulates our connection today.*[2]

As Arctic Indigenous Peoples, in their respective lands, continue to assert their rights and protect their lands from state interests and extractive developers, it is imperative that they maintain circumpolar relationships. It is of little wonder that the rights holders within Canadian borders took up the initiative to organize a circumpolar conference for Arctic Indigenous Peoples to discuss common interests. In Canada, the First Peoples were displeased with how the state was supporting the exploitation of the land and extraction of resources without consultation with the Treaty Peoples, Métis, and non-status Indians. The Inuit were also advancing their self-determination efforts and sought the advice and support of their Indigenous friends and Indigenous organizations that were politically formed at that time.

In the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA) newsletter of 1973, it was reported that a five-point resolution was submitted to the governments of Canada, Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden. The participating Arctic Indigenous organizations also formed a working group to consider a permanent collaborative structure.[3] Statements called for the states to respect and recognize their distinct identities, traditional territories, and full equality in negotiations that would impact their lands.[4] It is not clear if a "permanent fo-

2. Kleivan, Inge. "The Arctic Peoples' Conference in Copenhagen, November 22-25, 1973." Études/Inuit/Studies, vol. 16, no. 1/2, 1992, pp. 227–36. JSTOR. http://www.jstor.org/stable/42869742 (Accessed 6 April 2024)

3. International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA). "IWGIA Newsletter no. 10." December 1973. https://www.iwgia.org/es/documents-and-publications/documents/publications-pdfs/english-publications/290-nl-no-10-dec-1973/file.html (Accessed 6 April 2024)

4. Ibid.

rum'' was established immediately after 1973 but, over the years, Arctic Indigenous Peoples have continued to maintain relationships and, where crucial, have collaborated and supported efforts at national and international fora.

As Arctic Indigenous Peoples continued to assert their rights and protect their lands, they found a venue where they could gather and work closely with Arctic states and scientists, first with the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy, and then at the Arctic Council. The AAC was established in 2000 and gained status as a Permanent Participant (PP) in the Arctic Council that same year. AAC's vision is to sustain community-based relationships, build upon its multilevel networks, and promote international partnerships to further advance the rights of Athabaskan Peoples. AAC is devoted to the work of the Arctic Council and the United Nations, including the Conferences of the Parties (COP) of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). AAC has direct linkages to universities and non-governmental organizations that support Arctic Indigenous Peoples' rights.

The Athabaskan Peoples, residing in Arctic and sub-Arctic Alaska, U.S.A., and the Yukon Territory and Northwest Territories of Canada, have traditionally occupied a vast geographic area of approximately 3 million square kilometres. This vast region, for at least 10,000 years, is and has been used and occupied by Athabaskan Peoples. The Athabaskan territory includes three of North America's largest river systems (Mackenzie, Yukon, and Churchill rivers). Athabaskan Peoples are predominately inland taiga and tundra inhabitants. Collectively, the Arctic Athabaskan Peoples share 23 distinct languages and live in communities that range from Tanana, Alaska, and Tadoule Lake, northern Manitoba, nearly 5,400 kilometres apart.[5]

The ancestors of contemporary Athabaskan Peoples were semi-nomadic hunters. The food sources of the Athabaskan Peoples' diet range from caribou, moose and beaver to rabbits, birds and fish.[6] Athabaskan Peoples continue to enjoy their ways of doing, ceremonial practices, use of land-based medicines, and land-based diet, all of which contribute to their sustainability and self-determining efforts.

5. Arctic Athabaskan Council. https://arcticathabaskancouncil.com/ (Accessed 6 April 2024)

6. Ibid

Forms of political and cultural organization vary depending upon the place of residence of a particular Athabaskan people. In Alaska, Athabaskan Peoples have organized themselves with federal and state statutes that provide funding for government operations, including the Indian Reorganization Act for tribal governments, the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act for incorporated Villages, and a variety of state-legislated and traditional political entities. In Canada, Athabaskan Peoples have organized themselves into political bodies under federal legislation, including bands created under the Indian Act, self-governing First Nations as mandated through negotiated self-government and land claim agreements, and regional umbrella organizations.[7] Athabaskan Peoples also organize themselves in their respective territories through community and familial ties, and land-based lifeways.

Challenges for Circumpolar Advocacy

AAC has been challenged by the COVID-19 pandemic, the ongoing challenge of climate change and the ongoing Russian war on Ukraine. Concerns about future pandemics, wars, and the impacts of climate change, impede the work of Athabaskan Peoples on the international stage. COVID-19 has resulted in delays and cancelled projects as community-based research could not be conducted.

The war on Ukraine led to the pause of the Arctic Council and has hindered the completion of projects as some of the deliverables required Russian scientific knowledge and the Indigenous Peoples of Russia's meaningful engagement. The delays have caused unrest in the Arctic Council as major projects have been put on hold and the expert knowledge within Russia's administration is not easy to obtain during times of conflict. Since the fall of 2023, AAC and the other Indigenous Peoples' Organizations holding status as Permanent Participants to the Arctic Council have met in-person with the Arctic Council's Senior Arctic Official Chair, pushing for the resumption of work in the Working Groups and advancing their interests in the many important projects.

7. Ibid.

Like many of the other Permanent Participants, the AAC balances support and advocacy to safeguard cooperation in the Arctic Council while being responsive to the events taking place outside of the Arctic.

"Though Crimean Tatars are not members of the Arctic Council, AAC is obligated to raise awareness and support Indigenous Peoples' rights in Ukraine," an AAC statement issued while the Russian Federation chaired the Arctic Council reads. "Also, as the Russian Federation currently chairs the Arctic Council, AAC fears the current crisis surrounding Ukraine will have a negative impact on diplomatic ties that now exist."[8]

The AAC as a treaty organization representing the Athabaskan Peoples continues to add its voice to human rights violations at national and international levels. AAC is concerned with the global implications of pandemics, climate change, and wars on human rights violations.

Athabaskan Peoples are witnessing climate change on a daily basis. AAC is not complacent in its efforts to mitigate climate change. In 2013, a petition filed by Earthjustice on behalf of the AAC alleged that Canada's fragmentary and lax regulation of black carbon emissions was threatening the Athabaskan Peoples' human rights.[9] The AAC stands with the Permanent Participants and Indigenous Peoples of the Circumpolar Arctic in all their efforts to combat the impacts of climate change on food insecurity, permafrost thaw, melting marine ice, human and land health, human rights and security, and Arctic exploitation.

8. Down, Ian. "Group representing Athabaskan peoples makes appeal for Indigenous rights amid Russia-Ukraine tensions." NNSL Media, 15 February 2022. https://www.nnsl.com/news/group-representing-athabaskan-peoples-makes-appeal-to-indigenous-rights-amid-russia-ukraine-tensions-7270892 (Accessed 6 April 2024)

9. Climate Change Litigation Database. "Petition to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights Seeking Relief from Violations of the Rights of Arctic Athabaskan Peoples Resulting from Rapid Arctic Warming and Melting Caused by Emissions of Black Carbon by Canada." Climate Chase Chart, 23 April 2013. https://climatecasechart.com/non-us-case/petition-inter-american-commission-human-rights-seeking-relief-violations-rights-arctic-athabaskan-peoples-resulting-rapid-arctic-warming-melting-caused-emissions/ (Accessed 6 April 2024)

The Next 50 Years

The AAC was created to advance self-determining efforts for Athabaskan communities at the international level.[10] AAC aims to be internationally recognized as a distinct Arctic Indigenous Peoples and the need for allies to assist with the continued enhancement of their human rights concerns continues to be of major importance. AAC will continue to develop networks and partnerships through participation in the Arctic Council and on the international stage more broadly as a way of stabilizing and promoting the well-being of the Athabaskan Peoples. The AAC is an international organization where Athabaskan Peoples can have their concerns heard on the global stage.

The Arctic Council is the main forum where AAC contributes to scientific research and shares its Indigenous Knowledge and Arctic expertise on the projects it leads or co-leads. This co-production and co-creation of knowledge advances Indigenous Knowledge equity and Athabaskan Peoples equality. With the support of state and partnership funding, the AAC can meaningfully participate in Arctic Council projects and other Arctic projects that may contribute to improved lifeways, security and well-being.

For example, during an Arctic Council Ministerial meeting in Reykjavik, Iceland, Chief Bill Erasmus stated: "We are especially concerned about the climate crisis that affects us globally. It is obvious with the forest fires, flooding, melting permafrost and ice, and the low number of caribou to rely on for sustenance."[11]

The Arctic Council, concerned with "Healthy Communities Need Healthy Oceans - An Athabaskan Perspective On A Sustainable Arctic Ocean", interviewed Chief Gary Harrison and asked, "Why is a healthy marine environment important for Athabaskan communities?" "While my community is located between the coast and the inland, we used to hunt beluga whales, and salmon is still one of our main foods. Thus, we have a strong connection to the ocean, and some Athabaskan commu-

10. Arctic Athabaskan Council. https://arcticathabaskancouncil.com/ (Accessed 6 April 2024)

11. Arctic Council. "Shifting Food Stocks." https://arctic-council.org/explore/topics/arctic-peoples/our-changing-home/shifting-food-stocks/ (Accessed 6 April 2024)

nities live right by the sea. So, if we don't have a healthy ocean, we don't have healthy fish and consequently we don't have healthy communities. However, a clean ocean does not only require clean water, it also needs clean lands through which the water flows."[12]

The AAC continues to be a peace-making organization with interests in broadening international cooperation and peaceful cooperation with the Arctic Council family. AAC, along with its partner Permanent Participants (PPs), is well positioned to promote peace through cross-border Arctic Indigenous collaboration and scientific research. The Permanent Participants with kinship ties could consider researching what it is their membership and kinship within Russian borders will need when the war comes to an end. This may prepare them for future conflicts that present themselves with Arctic states or from foreign near-Arctic states.

Through AAC's commitment and responsibility to protect and preserve the Arctic homeland, it is timely to collect relevant information, scientific knowledge, and lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic and secure this data for future generations. This collection of data and knowledge from Arctic Council projects, Arctic institutions' research, AAC's internal research and scientific data, combined with Indigenous Knowledge, Arctic monitoring projects and Arctic assessments, provides AAC with the information needed to make informed recommendations to Athabaskan communities. The AAC can provide reliable and credible scientific information for Athabaskan Peoples. This can help them make the best decisions on issues impacting their communities. AAC achieves this through direct partnerships and working relationships with Arctic institutions and research groups. These include the Icelandic Arctic Cooperation Network (IACN), International Arctic Science Committee (IASC), University of the Arctic Institute, International Conference on Arctic Research Planning, and national groups that conduct Arctic research with and for Arctic Indigenous Peoples. The focus is on Arctic issues important to rightsholders, using strengths-based, land-based, and community-based research with Indigenous researchers and Indigenous academics.

12. Arctic Council. "Healthy Communities Need Healthy Oceans – An Athabaskan Perspective on a Sustainable Arctic Ocean." 19 October 2020. https://arctic-council.org/news/healthy-communities-need-healthy-oceans-an-athabaskan-perspective-on-a-sustainable-arctic-ocean/ (Accessed 6 April 2024)

Besides pandemics, wars, and climate change, Arctic Athabaskan Peoples are concerned with their ability to thrive and to protect their entire ecosystem from global impacts. As land-based peoples and rightsholders, it is imperative that international research continues to be inclusive of Arctic Indigenous Peoples. Partnerships need to be maintained and strengthened in order to build upon collective approaches that address Arctic homeland interests.

The reason that AAC continues to commit to this work is because of the ancestral responsibility that Athabaskan Peoples have to future generations. The Athabaskan Peoples have an obligation to leave the land in the same pristine and natural condition that their ancestors left it to them. With the support of their international organization and the smoother path left by their Athabaskan trailblazers, this obligation is a little less daunting while still facing huge global impacts on the Athabaskan homeland and global interests in resources on Athabaskan ancestral territories.

About the author

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RAIPON and its Early Role in International Cooperation

By Alona Yefimenko, former IPS Technical Advisor (1996-2021)

This article examines the collaboration between the six Arctic Indigenous organizations, focusing on the establishment of the Indigenous Peoples' Secretariat (IPS) and their cooperation with Russian Indigenous Peoples. It traces the history of their involvement in the formation of the Arctic Council and examines how their cooperation has evolved over time in response to political, environmental, economic and social issues in the Arctic region.

Initially, collaboration among key Arctic Indigenous organizations such as the Saami Council and the Inuit Circumpolar Council was established at the sub-regional level and, later, at the regional level during events such as the Arctic Leaders' Summit, the forum for Arctic Indigenous Peoples where present and future matters of common concern are discussed. The background to this cooperation was rapid northern development and resource extraction, issues of climate change, food security and the well-being of Arctic communities, which could not be considered separately[1] but holistically. The first part of the article will provide a brief overview of a Russian Indigenous leadership who were pioneers in venturing outside of Russia to connect with Indigenous Peoples in the West, who shared similar issues affecting the Arctic and their communities and learnt how to come together to advocate for Inuit and Saami interests in the international fora. It was a relatively new phenomenon for the Russian Indigenous Peoples, who grew up surrounded by Soviet paradigms regarding information on environmental pollution and disasters, the economic interests of industrial companies and the military-strategic objectives of the Russian Arctic, which were very often considered classified.

1. Young, O. R., Kim, J. D., Kim, Y. H., Han'guk Haeyang Susan Kaebarwŏn., & East-West Center. (2014). *The Arctic in world affairs: a North Pacific dialogue on international cooperation in a changing Arctic:2014 North Pacific Arctic Conference proceedings*. Korea Maritime Institute; East-West Center. p.348.

The second part will explore the Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North's (RAIPON) involvement in initiating the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy (AEPS) and creating the Arctic Council, together with the role the Indigenous Peoples' Secretariat has played in providing services and capacity for its full participation in Arctic Council initiatives. Work has been done on establishing links with the network of Indigenous Peoples and agencies who could offer knowledge, skills and experience of land claims and institution-building. Through IPS training programmes and capacity-building seminars, RAIPON chapters in Russia have been empowered to engage effectively in Arctic Council activities. Several documents, reports and books on the situation of Indigenous Peoples now exist in Russian. Some of these have been produced on the basis of IPS' financial and expert contributions.

When IPS was established, the needs of the Indigenous organizations were different and emphasis was more on the political processes related to establishing the Arctic Council, Permanent Participant (PP) status and the formation of the AEPS Working Groups. The IPS has been involved in providing logistical and technical support to the three Indigenous Peoples' organizations; however, much of its focus has been on assisting RAIPON. With the coordination of the Indigenous Peoples' Secretariat, RAIPON has transitioned from a project participant to a project owner, taking on initiatives such as the Sacred Sites project and partnering in Arctic Council Working Group assessments.

RAIPON's participation in initiatives within the Arctic Council and at the global level, where Arctic Council states and Indigenous leaders meet to discuss their interests and priorities, has been supported by formal agreements on cooperation with some of the Arctic countries and their entities.

RAIPON's emerging diplomacy

RAIPON was founded on 30 March 1990 at their first Congress in Moscow's Kremlin Palace by the 26 Indigenous Small-numbered Peoples of the North of the Soviet Union: Aleut, Dolgan, Ket, Koryak, Mansi, Nanai, Nganasan, Nelida, Nenets, Nivkhi, Orok, Oroch, Sami, Selkup, Tofalar, Udege, Ulchi, Khanty, Chuvans, Chukchi, Evenk, Even, Ents, Yupik, and Yukagir. Soon after, an additional 19 Indigenous groups joined the asso-

ciation. Vladimir Sangi was the first president of RAIPON (1990-1994) and the first Indigenous representative from Russia to attend the Working Group of Indigenous Populations (WGIP) in 1990 where he met influential Indigenous lobbying groups - the same "people" as Sangi - from Alaska and Scandinavia, Asia and Africa. Among Arctic peoples, the idea of owning land was traditionally a collective concept. Regardless of where they are, they know that they belong to their land and only on this land do they have a real sense of freedom and from which they see the world.[2] On the basis of ethnicity and collective Indigenous narratives, the Indigenous leaders pushed for recognition as nations and for equal participation in the development for their homelands.

The association was initiated by a group of enthusiasts: Mikhail Mongo (Krasnoyarsk Territory), Yeremey Aipin (Ugra), Semyon Palchin (Taimyr), Vladimir Kosygin (Kamchatka), Evdokia Gaer (Primorsky Krai), Vladimir Etylen (Chukotka) and many others. Among the Russian Indigenous leaders there were writers: the founders of the literature and alphabets of their Indigenous group languages and the custodians of the spiritual and cultural traditions of their people. Concepts such as decolonization and other Indigenous Peoples' perspectives related to their rights, in combination with their worldviews, traditional way of life and historical cultural changes, found their reflection in the works of writers of the Russian Far North. With the lifting of the Iron Curtain, the opportunity to travel abroad arose for former Soviet citizens as well as foreigners, among whom there were many activist researchers. Many anthropologists became advocates in defending the rights of Indigenous Peoples. In 1990, for the first time, the president of the newly-established association, Vladimir Sangi, participated in the WGIP thanks to the efforts of the International Working Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA). In October 1990, the Council of the Association of Northern Peoples gathered in Yakutsk, Sakha Republic of Russia, to adopt "Convention 26". In this, priority measures were formulated, measures necessary to improve the situation of the 26 small-numbered peoples of the North.[3]

2. Rytkheu, Yuri (1983 February). People of the long spring. *National Geographic*, Vol. 163. No 2. P. 223.

3. Пика, Александр, Санги, Владимир (1991 Сентябрь). Земля и мы на ее обочине. Конвенция-26. *Северные просторы*, стр. 7-9. Pika, A. &Sangi, V. (1991) Earth and us on its sidelines. *Severnye Prostory*, 45 (September), 7-9.

Indigenous network

The years from 1990 to 1995 were "learning universities" for many newly-established Russian Indigenous Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). They worked side by side with other Indigenous Peoples at the United Nations and in other international fora, bringing heir Arctic identity and the spirit of Indigenous collaboration. In January 1991, in Kiruna, Sweden, three Indigenous organizations' representatives: Aqqaluk Lynge, ICC Vice-President, Leif Halonen, Saami Council President and Vladimir Sangi, RAIPON President tabled a declaration to the AEPS preparatory meeting – a collective action that helped to obtain special observer status at the time and, subsequently, secured Permanent Participant status through the Ottawa Declaration of the Arctic Council.[4]

The shift from the Soviet regime to the "post-socialist era" in the country has resulted in low living standards nationwide. This, combined with a lack of financial support from the government, has caused a decline in public interest in ecological and environmental issues.[5]

In November of 1993, RAIPON held its second congress at which Yeremey Aipin, Khanty leader and writer, was elected President. He was among the three Arctic Indigenous organizations that negotiated for the formation of the Arctic Council and Indigenous Peoples' Secretariat, and he also played a key role in the Second Summit of Arctic Indigenous Leaders that was held in Tromsø, Norway in 1995. The agenda of this Summit was focused on Russian issues. The Russian Indigenous representatives told of land and other rights lost during the Soviet era. Yeremey Aipin spoke of the need for spiritual leadership. He told Summit participants that, when Indigenous poets, storytellers and singers are strong, so are the peoples.

4. Ulkoasiainministeriö. Pohjoisen ulottuvuuden yksikkö & Vanamo, S. (2001).10 years of arctic environmental cooperation: A compilation of speeches : 11 June 2001, Rovaniemi, Finland. Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, Unit for the Northern Dimension, 39-42.
5. Krupnik, I., & Vakhtin, N. (2002). In the 'house of dismay': Knowledge, culture, and post-Soviet politics in Chukotka, 1995–96. In E. Kasten (Ed.), People and the land: Pathways to reform in post-Soviet Siberia (pp. 7–43). Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag.

Humanitarian assistance to Indigenous Peoples of Russia

In a country with limited civil society structures, Indigenous communities and their members have demonstrated remarkable resilience by organizing themselves politically and advocating for self-determination and cultural revival. However, despite the growing political freedom, the situation remained quite desperate in terms of socioeconomic aspects such as inconsistent and declining supplies of food and goods, increased unemployment, degradation of natural resources, as well as the disastrous public health situation.

To combat these concerning trends, various Arctic countries, including Canada, Denmark/Greenland and Norway, have implemented support programmes with diverse objectives and funding mechanisms. These pioneering initiatives focused primarily on crucial goals such as information sharing, building institutions, environmental conservation, sustainable development and restoration, health protection, fostering entrepreneurship for the Indigenous Peoples of Russia and more.

On 19 August 1996, the Greenland Home Rule convened a number of NGOs for a meeting to discuss help for RAIPON. This meeting became the early foundations of what later became the "Danish-Greenlandic project to support Russia's Indigenous people".[6]

In May 1997, the Danish Environmental Protection Agency's Office for Environmental Aid to Eastern Europe provided DKK 1.6 million to the Danish/Greenlandic initiative to support the Indigenous Peoples of Russia. Behind the initiative were: Greenland Home Rule, AEPS-IPS, Inuit Circumpolar Conference (later Inuit Circumpolar Council, ICC), IWGIA, the Danish Centre for Human Rights, the Foreign Policy Society, the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), the Human Rights Commissioner for the Baltic States, the Committee for Nature and People in the North and Hans-Pavia Rosing, MP. International projects, particularly the Canadian initiative and the first phase of the Danish-Greenlandic project, the leading role of Yeremey Aipin, RAIPON President at that time, addressed existing challenges, made urgent decisions and established

6. Report...1998. *The Danish-Greenlandic Programme for Assistance to the Indigenous Peoples of Russia- DGI Project No. 1, Phase 1*. Mads Fægteborg Archive, Denmark.

partnerships with environmental and Indigenous NGOs, both in Russia and internationally. The III Congress of RAIPON, in March 1997, elected a new president. Being a state official, Deputy Chairman of the Duma of the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug, Sergei Haruchi had a clear understanding that he would not be able to cover all areas of the association's development alone. Unlike previous leaders of RAIPON, Haruchi focused on creating an efficient team that in the future would not depend on foreign NGOs and consulting firms. It was necessary to connect its regional organizations and hundreds of communities through an information network. And here, the Indigenous Peoples' Secretariat provided significant assistance in the form of various grants, seminars in RAIPON regions and training meetings for staff, facilitated the drawing up of project proposals and helped find sponsors.

Engagement in global environmental assessments

The very successful seminars: "Environmental problems affecting the traditional lifestyles of Indigenous Peoples in the Russian North" and its follow-up on developing and evaluating specific project proposals were held in Moscow in 1998 and 1999. In conjunction with the environmental seminar, RAIPON organized the Indigenous youth conference at which an Indigenous youth organization was established.[7]

In 1998, an additional Indigenous organization, the Aleut International Association (AIA), joined the three Arctic Council Permanent Participants. The group of Russian Aleut was already active in RAIPON's activities and when RAIPON, ICC and the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (AMAP) decided to assess the possible impacts of Persistent Toxic Substances (PTS) on the health of Indigenous Peoples, particularly through contamination of traditional foods, AIA – together with the Saami Council – fully supported the initiative. The project "Persistent Toxic Substances, Food Security and Indigenous Peoples of the Russian North" received strong endorsement from the UNEP Global

7. Newsletter for Arctic Council Permanent Participants and the Indigenous Peoples' Secretariat, No 3/1999.

Environment Facility (GEF), the Arctic Council, Russian governmental bodies and local authorities of the pilot regions.[8]

The equal partnership and effective coordination of Indigenous Peoples' experts within the research teams of the PTS project was a milestone for RAIPON and its regional branches. The continuous engagement of Indigenous communities, particularly during the dietary and lifestyle surveys and human sampling stages, was crucial for the success of the project. Furthermore, the IPS' efforts secured contributions to the project and its technical work, such as drafting reports and translations of communications materials. In collaboration with RAIPON, the Secretariat advised and assisted in planning how to present the results of the project at the First Conference of the Parties to the Stockholm POPs Convention, which took place from 2-6 May 2005 in Uruguay.

IPS' role in RAIPON's successful narrative

According to RAIPON's President, Sergei Haruchi, the Secretariat has played a very important role in the development of RAIPON's relations with the Permanent Participants and other international organizations. IPS took the role of catalyst tying together contacts between RAIPON and international organizations, and this eventually resulted in concrete projects/initiatives, e.g. a "Norwegian Network for the Support of Indigenous Peoples of the Russian Arctic" and the Norwegian government's contribution to capacity-building projects.

At that time, among Indigenous organizations, ICC was the champion of Indigenous advocacy and, indeed, the Inuit strategy of defending their harvesting of wildlife in response to activism in the Arctic was innovative and completely different from RAIPON's methods, which inspired the association to a new stage of diplomacy. At the AEPS ministerial meeting in Alta, Norway on 13 June 1997, the RAIPON delegation had a long list of scheduled meetings with state representatives and observers. Following this, Pavel Sulyandziga, Vice-President of RAIPON,

8. AMAP, 2004. Persistent Toxic Substances, Food Security and Indigenous Peoples of the Russian North. Final Report. Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (AMAP), Oslo, 2004. 192 p. AMAP Report 2004:2.

was consistently observed in negotiations during coffee breaks and lunches.

RAIPON did not stop there. Throughout 1998, RAIPON held a series of activities highlighting the achievements of its successful partnerships with Permanent Participants and stakeholders within the Arctic Council.

Alexander Evai, a RAIPON representative from the Yamal-Nenets Okrug and the IPS representative, participated in the INSROP (International Northern Sea Route Programme) research on the feasibility of international commercial shipping on the Northern Sea Route to identify obstacles such as the physical, cultural and social impacts on the Indigenous Peoples of the Russian North that need to be taken into consideration when analysing the possible opening of the Northern Sea Route.[9]

Another meeting was held between Vladimir Goman, Chair of GosKomSever (State Committee of the North), and RAIPON on a new policy of the Russian government when dealing with the Indigenous Peoples of the Russian North. As a result, a working group to formulate a new policy was established, with the involvement of Russian and foreign experts.

From 15-18 March 1999, RAIPON and the "Committee on Problems of the North and Far East" of the State Duma (GosKomSever, existed 1990-2000) organized a roundtable discussion on "State and Indigenous Parliaments. Experiences of the Governments and State Parliaments of Sweden, Norway and Finland with respective Saami Parliaments".

Besides members of the Nordic Governments, Parliaments and Saami Parliaments, the discussion was attended by representatives from the State Duma, the European Parliament, the World Bank, the UN Human Rights Commission, the Greenland Home Rule Government and several ministries within the Russian Federation.[10]

The third Arctic Leaders' Summit was held in Moscow, from 14-16 September 1999. Arctic Indigenous leaders from the ICC, Saami Council, AIA and RAIPON met to discuss the health and anthropogenic effects of environmental pollution.

9. Evai, A.V. (2000). The Northern Sea Route and Its Impact on the Indigenous Peoples of the Russian North. In: Ragner, C.L. (eds) The 21st Century — Turning Point for the Northern Sea Route?. Springer, Dordrecht. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-017-3228-4_51.

10. Newsletter for Arctic Council Permanent Participants and the Indigenous Peoples' Secretariat, No 3/1999.

In June 1999, Sergei Haruchi, President of RAIPON and Vice-President Pavel Sulyandziga travelled to Japan to receive the environmental UN Global 500 Award for their efforts to involve Indigenous Peoples of the Russian North, Siberia and Far East in the protection of their environment. The organization's popularity grew. None of the presidents managed to achieve such successful international cooperation as during Haruchi's presidency. On 9 June 2001, RAIPON President, Mr. Sergei Haruchi, received the Order of Friendship. The award was given in recognition of his significant contribution to legislation on the Indigenous Peoples of Russia and for the strengthening of cooperation and friendship between the peoples. To a certain degree, this recognition was inspired by the first RAIPON presidents, Vladimir Sangi and Yeremey Aipin, who had gained access to global fora for Russian Indigenous Peoples through the United Nations, WGIP and the AEPS by making RAIPON's issues international.

IPS' legal framework

Despite different cultural aspirations, priorities and processes, three Indigenous organizations had thus successfully worked together "to convince Arctic governments of the value and importance of involving the Indigenous Peoples in the AEPS".[11] The real challenge was to develop a common strategy among the six Permanent Participants. AIA was admitted in 1998, the Gwich'in Council International (GCI) and Arctic Athabaskan Council (AAC) in 2000.

From the beginning, the IPS' legal status was always a challenge. Some Arctic countries argued that it could not be an Arctic Council subsidiary body like other Working groups because it had been established to support the PPs and not to pursue the objectives of the Arctic Council. Clarification of IPS status in the Arctic Council was a political issue to be dealt with by the Arctic Council member states and clarification was critical to the ambition of turning IPS into an effective operational unit.

11. Ulkoasiainministeriö. Pohjoisen ulottuvuuden yksikkö & Vanamo, S. (2001).10 years of arctic environmental cooperation: A compilation of speeches: 11 June 2001, Rovaniemi, Finland. Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, Unit for the Northern Dimension, 29-30.

The mandate of IPS covered both environmental and non-environmental issues but the funding had been almost exclusively destined for environmental activities. There had thus been an imbalance between IPS' mandate to assist the PPs' activities in all the Arctic Council Working Groups and funding that was targeted at environmental activities. This situation provoked a number of discussions in the Board on the types of activity that IPS could undertake. The composition of the IPS Board – mix of government and PP representatives – had the potential to promote communication and understanding between the parties. In particular, it provided the PPs with a chance to lobby for the inclusion of an Indigenous perspective in the Arctic Council processes. However, this has rarely materialized because the Board's time and energy has largely been taken up by discussing administration and formalities instead of dealing with the real issue – the plight of the Indigenous Peoples of the Arctic.[12]

The issue of IPS' engagement in the various UN organizations and other bodies outside the Arctic Council was positive as regards the idea of letting IPS be able to provide technical assistance to the IPOs on global issues and participation in global fora. However, the mandate was later adjusted to encompass all activities and programmes under the Arctic Council, following the paper by the Presidents of ICC, the Saami Council and RAIPON in 1999.

One of the key factors for the success of the IPS was that it expended a great deal of energy on raising awareness of Indigenous Peoples and their perspectives and this has been a great achievement when the marginal position of Indigenous Peoples generally is considered. As part of this awareness building, IPS recommended and lobbied for RAIPON's nomination to the prestigious UNEP Global 500 Award. IPS was of the opinion that RAIPON deserved it and judged that such an award would be instrumental in enhancing RAIPON's reputation and prestige, attracting more attention to its work. When RAIPON received the award, the organization gained more attention from the Russian federal government, the media and international NGOs. The increasing interest shown by Russian federal agencies resulted in an additional

12. COWI (2000). Evaluation of Indigenous Peoples' Secretariat. Danish Environmental Protection Agency.

awareness of the work of the Arctic Council and environmental protection in general. IPS furnished government agencies with information on the AC and helped cooperation between RAIPON and Russian agencies. IPS has created a good spirit that has bridged a good partnership between governments and Indigenous Peoples' organizations.

At a time of challenge, we can look back at RAIPON's achievements during the evolution of the Arctic Council and its structures: by providing political leadership in designing the Arctic Council work and participating in formal negotiations, and finding solutions guided by comprehensive knowledge and a fair approach to diplomacy.

About the author

Alona Yefimenko was born and raised in a family of Chukchi and Even reindeer herders in Ayanka, Kamchatka, Russia. From 1988 to 1996, she worked as the Director of the Koryak Ethnography Museum in Palana, Kamchatka. Her experience includes fieldwork and archaeological excavations in the Koryak region of Kamchatka, training and research in Canada (DIAND/Quebec Province) and at the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford University. With the establishment of the Arctic Council in 1996, she joined the Indigenous Peoples' Secretariat, a support organization for the Arctic Indigenous Peoples' Organizations that are Permanent Participants to the Arctic Council, and worked there for 25 years. She holds a Master's Degree in Linguistics and Anthropology from the Herzen State Pedagogical University of Russia and the Far Eastern State University and is currently on a Master's programme of Indigenous Studies at the Arctic University of Norway.

Section III: Annexes

Annex 1: First 1973 Resolution

1. The first circumpolar conference of indigenous people[1] has taken place at Christiansborg, Copenhagen, on November 22nd to 25th 1973. Attending the meeting were representatives of [21 organizations].

2. The representatives have recognized through these discussions their respective identity. We are autochthonous peoples, that is we are an integral part of the very lands and waters we have traditionally used and occupied. Our identity and culture is firmly rooted in these lands and waters. It is this relationship which constitutes the very unique features of our cultural identity in contrast to the cultures of other peoples within each of the countries from which we come. We, the participants, strongly support the continuing need to exchange, share and respect each others cultures, values and traditions of our identity. We agreed to cooperate in formulating present and future means to preserve and develop our specific cultures for our people through all available sources of communication.

3. The states from which we come should recognize and respect the unique features of our identity. It is only thereby that we will gain a place of equality with the dominant culture in each country. Also, it is only thereby that each country can fully benefit from the contribution which our culture can make to the greater well being of the whole society.

4. The states we come from should recognize with honesty and clarity the collective ownership to the lands and waters traditionally used and occupied by each indigenous group.

5. We request the obvious: that the governments of each state from which we come recognize our rights as peoples entitled to the dignity of self-fulfilment and realization. This further means that there must not be any displacement or interference with our rights by governments and/or industry, nor can there be any disturbance of our lands.

In any negotiations of the crucial issues we expect participation in a position of full equality.

1. At the time of the first resolution the terms Indigenous and Indigenous Peoples were not capitalized.

Annex 2: Second 1973 Resolution

The conference proposes to form a Circumpolar Body of Indigenous Peoples to pursue and advance our shared and collective interests. We emphasize that we are profoundly concerned about protecting now the interests of succeeding generations of our peoples. As a consequence this conference has resolved to form a Working Committee consisting of representatives of each group.

The committee be given responsibilities to explore most practical ways and means of formulating a permanent body:

- To explore continuing financial support from all sources
- To report and make recommendations to its members and to advise its members of all actions
- carried out by the Working Committee
- To distribute all information to its members
- To advertise and receive suggestions for permanent title to the proposed body
- The deadline for this part of the work is July 1st, 1974.

Annex 3:
Outcome of the Arctic Peoples' Conference 2013

Gathered at the Arctic Peoples' Conference – A celebration of 40 years of Indigenous Cooperation, at Christiansborg 21st and 22nd November 2013, Saami Council and Inuit Circumpolar Council share a vision of continuous cooperation into the future and *recommend* that:

- The Arctic Council and other Arctic (International) forums start up processes whereby the full and effective inclusion of Arctic indigenous governments will be considered.
- An Arctic Leaders' Summit to be held in May in 2014.
- Establish a joint independent Arctic Indigenous extractive Industries monitoring mechanism.
- Work towards full implementation of the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
- In strengthening the Arctic Council, establish an Arctic Council co-chair/vice-chair nominated by the Permanent Participants.
- Work towards Indigenous political representation in the European Parliament by establishing seats for Indigenous representatives.
- Establish visa free region for Arctic Indigenous Peoples.
- Establish custom freedom for indigenous produced products in the Arctic.

Annex 4:
Statement of the Arctic Peoples' Conference 2023 Inuiaat Issittormiut Ataatsimeersuarnerat 2023

50th anniversary of the first circumpolar meeting of Arctic Indigenous Peoples.
Ilulissat, Kalaallit Nunaat, July 20-21, 2023.
Convened by the Inuit Circumpolar Council, Saami Council, Gwich'in Council International, Arctic Athabaskan Council, and Aleut International Association.

We, the Indigenous Peoples of the Arctic have gathered to celebrate and pay respect to the first Arctic Peoples' Conference convened fifty years ago wherein we met, discussed, and determined to safeguard our identity, our rights, our values, and our future, consistent with our long-held responsibilities.

The Arctic is our homeland. Our traditional territories cover the entire Arctic region. Over thousands of years, we have nurtured reciprocal, symbiotic, and respectful relationships between our Peoples and the Arctic environment, and we have transferred our knowledge through countless generations. Our cultural identities, our languages, our values, our spirituality, and our overall mental and physical wellness are tied to our environment, of which we are an intimate part.

We celebrate our original foresight, unity, and above all, our inherent right to self-determination as distinct Peoples. We have survived, and thrived, through hundreds of years of colonization, and emphasize that many challenges and colonial systems remain to be dismantled. We emphasize the rights of Arctic Indigenous Peoples, our unique relationship

to the Arctic, and our commitments to cross-border and people-to-people cooperation in the region. Over the past five decades, originating from our traditional territories, we have consistently raised our voices within diverse national and international arenas due to the urgent need to inform and influence the challenges facing our Peoples and the Arctic.

We reaffirm our interdependent, interrelated, interconnected, and indivisible rights as affirmed by the United Nations (UN) in the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UNDRIP), including our right to self-determination, which is the pre-requisite for the exercise and enjoyment of all of our human rights as Arctic Indigenous Peoples.

Enhanced Engagement, Partnerships, and Allies

As Arctic Indigenous Peoples, we reflect on our contributions to various national and international governing bodies and how our way forward was paved by the people, now elders, who first came together to envision a better future.

> *"The conference proposes to form a Circumpolar Body of Indigenous Peoples to pursue and advance our shared and collective interests. We emphasize that we are profoundly concerned about protecting now the interests of succeeding generations of our peoples. As a consequence, this conference has resolved to form a Working Committee consisting of representatives of each group..." (Arctic Peoples' Conference 1973)*

We, as founding members of the Arctic Council, remind the co-founders that our consensus must be a prerequisite for any decision on all levels of the organization and that making decisions without consensus undermines its purpose and integrity.

We reaffirm the necessity of our engagement through the Enhanced Participation Process in the United Nations, which aims to ensure the full and effective participation of Indigenous Peoples in UN processes and in particular, within the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council. We additionally commit to exploring opportunities to reconvene the Arctic Peoples' Conference and reaffirm our interests in arenas such as the Arctic Leaders' Summit.

Rights to Wellbeing

As Arctic Indigenous Peoples, we emphasize the strength of our identities, cultures, languages, and values in securing our own wellbeing. We call upon States and governmental authorities to acknowledge the deterioration of our social conditions under colonization, and to proactively address the challenges faced by our Peoples. We recognize the need for enhanced support and resources in the areas of education, training, employment, housing, health, including mental health and suicide prevention, and safety and social wellbeing.

We reiterate Indigenous women's right to bodily autonomy and that violations against the reproductive health of Indigenous women are intrinsically tied to our collective rights as Peoples. This is also a uniquely critical issue to LGBTQIA2S+ and gender non-conforming persons.

Rights to Lands, Waters, and Natural Resources

We urge States and governmental authorities to recognize our right to cultural security and integrity, and to take positive actions to recognize, enhance, and facilitate formal action to recognize and demarcate Indigenous lands and territories in order for us to maintain our own activities as well as our right to determine our own priorities for development, which should be understood as not confined to economic development. We assert that the environmental degradation of our homelands through outside pollution, contamination, erosion, resource depletion, and biodiversity loss will not be tolerated.

> *"... We request the obvious: that the governments of each state from which we come recognize our rights as peoples entitled to the dignity of self-fulfillment and realization. This further means that there must not be any displacement or interference with our rights by governments and/or industry, nor can there be any disturbance to our lands. In any negotiations of the crucial issues, we expect participation in a position of full equality." (Arctic Peoples' Conference 1973)*

Connection to Marine Environment

We emphasize that the Arctic is connected to the global marine ecosystem through migrations of marine and freshwater birds, mammals,

and fish, ocean currents and global ocean circulation patterns. The Arctic marine ecosystem feeds the global marine ecosystem through short but incredibly productive seasons. The unique polynyas and their importance to our Arctic species are also vital to global species, and in turn, the health of all oceans.

We bear witness to the collapse of critical marine species, including the salmon crash in rivers such as the Yukon, Kuskokwim, and Deatnu, and call on government authorities to institute equitable management to ensure healthy ecosystems, restoration of these species and our food security. As Arctic Indigenous Peoples, we have a direct, spiritual relationship with oceans, coastal seas, and the marine environment. We retain inherent rights to these territories and resources as affirmed in the UNDRIP, among other international covenants.

Impacts of Climate Change

We urge continuing work and commit to contributing within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Arctic Council, and related intergovernmental fora to address Arctic Indigenous Peoples concerns and the cumulative effects of climate change. We call upon States and governmental authorities to recognize our contributions, including Indigenous Knowledge, as well as our innovations and solutions, which must be shared, communicated, and manifested to prevent, mitigate, and adapt to climate change impacts across the Arctic. In addition, we are heavily affected by the accelerating biodiversity loss, well documented through the work within the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

We unequivocally call for climate justice, recognizing that we, as Arctic Indigenous Peoples, have not been the main contributors to human-induced climate change, yet our livelihoods and ways of life are directly and dramatically impacted by its effects. We urge States, governmental authorities, corporations, research institutions and civil society to empower Arctic Indigenous Peoples to lead efforts to address climate change that are in line with our rights, Indigenous Knowledge, and ways of life.

Colonialism and Climate Change Response

In unity, we acknowledge the varied, cumulative impacts of colonialism and climate change on our Peoples. Climate change cannot be an ex-

cuse to infringe on our distinct rights as Indigenous Peoples. We assert the urgent need to overcome the land encroachment, resource extraction, renewable energy production, and protectionist conservation that is undertaken at the expense of Indigenous Peoples' reality, which is a process known in some contexts as green colonialism. This includes the development of renewable energies and rare earth mineral mining on our lands *without our consent*, and the proliferation of marine protected areas *that are not Indigenous led*.

Our Future

As Indigenous Peoples organizations, we support our youth and their right to a positive future. We reaffirm the role of Arctic Indigenous youth in the future of our homelands, our peoples, and our ways of life. We reflect on our right to an equitable, ethical, fair, just, and meaningful future in which our youth are empowered to lead our people to thrive in sovereignty.

We affirm that the green transition cannot be bought with Indigenous lands, resources, or lives, as it challenges the personal decisions of our Indigenous youth and their possibilities to take on our ways of life. In unity, we aspire to equal participation for Indigenous youth in any and all processes relating to Indigenous futures.

As Arctic Indigenous Peoples, we honor those who are now our elders, who first came together in unity, and had the vision and foresight to pave the way for our Peoples at the first Arctic Peoples' Conference. Likewise, we celebrate our Arctic Indigenous youth in shaping the world that we will leave for future generations. We welcome increased dialogue between the generations to grow the capacity of our youth. Additionally, it is urgent that our hope is not stifled by the ongoing suicide and mental health crisis amongst past and current generations. We commit to addressing the issues raised in this statement, as empowering, supporting and including Indigenous youth in decision-making processes saves lives and will strengthen us all.

Our youth are a massive force for hope in the Arctic, and now is the time for States, governmental authorities, corporations, research institutions and civil society to heavily weigh the messages, priorities, and perspectives of our youth and to empower them to leadership and success.

Not least of all, we stand in unity for a future in which we will continue to thrive.

Annex 5:
Chronology

By Per Mikael Utsi, Jens Dahl, Áslat Holmberg, Sara Olsvig and Kathrin Wessendorf

The following is a concise overview of important steps in the organizational and legislative advancements of the Arctic Indigenous Peoples as they strive towards self-determination. Looking back, we can note positive developments in the situation of the Arctic and Indigenous Peoples over the past 50 years.

The Saami Council

Even before the Arctic Peoples' Conference in 1973, *Davviriikkalaš Sámiráđđi* (The Nordic Saami Council) was established in 1956 as a non-governmental organization for cooperation between Sámi in Norway, Sweden and Finland. In 1992, Sámi from the Russian side joined, unifying the Sámi throughout Sápmi under *Sámiráđđi* (The Saami Council).

Sámi Delegation and the Sámi Parliament of Finland

In Finland, a Sámi Delegation was established in 1973 as a precursor to the later *Sámediggi* (Sámi Parliament), which was legislated in 1995. The Sámi Parliament serves as the representative body of the Sámi people, advocating for their rights and preserving their culture and livelihoods.

Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act and North Slope Borough

In 1971, the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act came into law. This gave Alaska Indigenous Peoples fee simple title to 44 million acres of land and financial compensation, vested in local and regional corporations. All other rights to lands based on aboriginal rights were extinguished. In 1972, the North Slope Borough (Alaska), a regional political unit with a public government, was established with an Inuit majority.

1975 World Council of Indigenous Peoples

The 1973 Arctic Peoples' Conference (APC) was important for involving Arctic Peoples in the meeting in Port Alberni, Canada, which estab-

lished the World Council of Indigenous Peoples (WCIP) as an international body uniting Indigenous Peoples worldwide in their efforts to get aboriginal rights accepted. The WCIP obtained observer status with the United Nations and established a secretariat in Canada. For some years, the WCIP was a powerful force in the United Nations in terms of getting Indigenous social, cultural and human rights respected, and it gave Indigenous Peoples important international experience until it was dissolved in 1996.

Another important event in 1975 was the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement, which had a strong impact on the future development of Indigenous rights and autonomy in Northern Canada. As a result of this agreement, the Kativik Regional Government was established in 1978 representing the 14 northernmost villages in the province of Quebec.

1977 Inuit Circumpolar Conference (later: Council)

One of the recommendations of the Arctic Peoples' Conference was the wish for an Arctic-wide organization and, in 1977, Inuit from Alaska, Canada and Kalaallit Nunaat met in Barrow, Alaska, and established the Inuit Circumpolar Conference.

1979 Home Rule in Kalaallit Nunaat (Greenland)

The conflicting viewpoints in the Greenlandic delegation to the APC in 1973 (see Máret Sárá on "Arctic Peoples' Women's Marginal Position" on page 65) were also present in the Home Rule Committee established by Greenlandic politicians to look into options for establishing Home Rule. Although not solved, the committee's recommendation became the foundation for negotiations with the Danish state and, four years later – when an agreement had been made between Kalaallit Nunaat and Denmark – 70% of the votes in Kalaallit Nunaat were in favour of establishing Home Rule in 1979. Since then, a public parliament and government has ruled on a large number of matters internal to Kalaallit Nunaat.

European Common Market referenda of 1972

The referenda in Norway and Denmark (1972) for joining the European Common Market (later: European Union) had long-ranging impacts in Norway as well as in Kalaallit Nunaat (Greenland). The majority in Norway voted against but the majority in Denmark was in favour, except in

Kalaallit Nunaat where an overwhelming majority voted against. Kalaallit Nunaat was nevertheless incorporated.

1981 Alta controversy

In Sápmi (Sámiland) the first serious political upheaval since the debate on Norwegian European Union membership in 1972 came when the Norwegian state called for the construction of a hydroelectric power plant and the damming of the Alta River, which would flood the Sámi village of Máze. Despite protests, the Norwegian Parliament confirmed its decision to dam the river.

The Alta case put the rights of the Sámi as an Indigenous people onto the national political agenda in Norway and a Sámi Rights Commission and a Sámi Cultural Commission were appointed by the Norwegian government.

1984 Inuvialuit Final Agreement

The steps towards Indigenous self-determination in North America were quite different from those in Kalaallit Nunaat (Greenland) and in the Nordic countries. Modelled to a large degree on the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, the Inuvialuit Inuit of the Canadian Northwest Territories were the first Indigenous people in Northern Canada to make a final land claims agreement in 1984, providing the Inuvialuit with rights to land, wildlife management and financial compensation for giving up exclusive rights to their ancestral lands.

1989 Sámi Parliament in Norway

One of the recommendations of the Sámi Commission was the establishment of a Sámi Parliament. A Sámi Act stipulating the responsibilities and powers of the Sámi Parliament was passed by the Norwegian Parliament in June 1987 and took effect on 24 February 1989.

The parliament opened in October 1989 and its seat is in the village of Karasjok. It currently has 39 representatives, elected every four years by direct vote from seven constituencies.

1993 The Sámi Parliament in Sweden

In Sweden, the *Sametinget* (Sámi Parliament) was established by Law of Parliament in 1993 and, after an election held the same year in August, the Sámi Parliament was opened in Kiruna. The Sámi Parliament

has 31 members representing the Sámi living in Sweden. In Norway, the Sámi Parliament elects its own chairperson but, in Sweden, the Sámi Parliament chair is formally assigned by the Swedish government upon the proposal of the Sámi Parliament.

1996 Arctic Council

The Arctic Council was co-founded by Indigenous Peoples to promote cooperation between the Arctic States of Russia, Finland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Iceland, Canada and the United States. It particularly focuses on environmental protection, sustainable development and other common Arctic issues. It was formally established in 1996. The international Indigenous Peoples' Organizations of the Arctic are Permanent Participants in the Arctic Council. Today, these are the Sámi Council, Inuit Circumpolar Council, RAIPON (Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North), Aleut International Association, Gwich'in Council International and Arctic Athabascan Council.

1999 Nunavut

It took more than 20 years to negotiate an agreement that finally established the Nunavut Territory in Northern Canada. In this enormous territory, the Inuit obtained rights to land in the form of a land claims agreement similar to the one that Inuvialuit negotiated in 1984. More important, however, was the political agreement in the form of a public Nunavut government. The Inuit make up some 85% of the population of Nunavut.

2002 United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII)

The United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) is a high-level advisory body to the Economic and Social Council. The Forum's mandate includes all kinds of Indigenous issues that fall under human rights, social and cultural development, environment, education and health. The UNPFII met for the first time in 2002 and elected Sámi Ole Henrik Magga as its first Chair.

2005 Nunatsiavut

The Inuit of Labrador based their self-government negotiations on the Nunavut model when they negotiated the Nunatsiavut Agreement consisting of a land claims agreement and a regional government. In contrast to Nunavut, only Inuit can vote in the Nunatsiavut elections.

2005 The Finnmark Act

The Finnmark Act gave the inhabitants of Finnmark county in Northern Norway a large say in matters of land rights in that area. The management of Finnmarkseiendommen Finnmárkkuopmodat (FeFo) is overseen by a six-member Board of Directors, with three members appointed by the Sámi Parliament of Norway and the remaining three by the Finnmark County Council.

2007 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Following more than two decades of negotiations between governments and Indigenous Peoples' representatives, the United Nations General Assembly voted to establish the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as the most important achievement of the international Indigenous movement.

2009 Self-Government in Kalaallit Nunaat

With the introduction of Self-Government in Kalaallit Nunaat (Greenland), the people of Kalaallit Nunaat were recognized as a People pursuant to international law and Kalaallisut was recognized as the official language. With the Self-Government Act, *Inatsisartut* (Parliament of Greenland) and *Naalakkersuisut* (Government of Greenland) took over the authority of mineral resource management as well as access to taking over all other legislative areas, except for security and military relations and a few other issues. The Act includes Kalaallit Nunaat's access to independence, and in 2023, a government-commissioned draft constitution for a future independent Kalaallit Nunaat was handed over to *Inatsisartut*.

Photo: *Inatsisartut, Parliament of Greenland, convening for the fall session of 2023. Nuuk, Kalaallit Nunaat, September 2023.* ***Credit:*** *Parliament of Greenland, INATSISARTUT*

About the Editors

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Jens Dahl is an anthropologist with special focus on the Arctic. Former director of IWGIA. Among his publications are the books "Saqqaq: An Inuit Hunting Community in the Modern World", "The Indigenous Space and Marginalized Peoples in the United Nations" and "IWGIA: A History".

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***Credit:** Angu Motzfeldt*

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Kathrin Wessendorf
Kathrin Wessendorf is IWGIA's Executive Director. She has been working for the organisation since 2000 in different positions, including as Arctic Programme Coordinator, Communications Coordinator, Editor of The Indigenous World, Senior Advisor on Climate Change and most recently as Head of Programmes at IWGIA. Kathrin has an MA in Social Anthropology from Basel University, Switzerland, and wrote her thesis on Indigenous Peoples' governance systems in the Arctic (particularly Nunavut, Canada).

In July 2023, Indigenous Peoples from across the Arctic celebrated 50 years of cooperation at a meeting held in Ilulissat, Kalaallit Nunaat (Greenland). Participants explored what had been achieved since the first Arctic Peoples' Conference held in Copenhagen in 1973 and asked if the dreams set out by Arctic Indigenous Peoples 50 years ago had been fulfilled. This book contains statements, testimonies and memories reflecting on these last 50 years of Arctic Indigenous Peoples' diplomacy and looking towards the continued cooperation of Arctic Indigenous Peoples.

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