

# ACTIVITY REPORT



NOVEMBER 5, 2020

Voices from the Arctic: Diverse Views on Canadian Arctic Security

## Voices from the Arctic: Diverse Views on Canadian Arctic Security

John Lauzon

NAADSN Graduate Fellow

*Co-hosted by the International Security Research and Outreach Program at Global Affairs Canada and the North American and Arctic Defence and Security Network.*

Panelists Dr. Dalee Sambo Dorough, Marjorie Kaviq Kaluraq, Daniel Taukie and Bridget Larocque provided Canadian policy makers with their perspectives on Arctic security. The event provided a venue through which federal policy makers could see Arctic security through the eyes of the people who live there.

### Arctic Security: A Policy Maker's Perspective

David Sproule (Canada's Senior Arctic Official to the Arctic Council) provided an outline of the challenges facing the Arctic as understood by the Government of Canada. These challenges include accelerated warming in the region and rapidly advancing technology that increases accessibility for new actors. These changes are understood to represent both economic opportunities for Arctic residents, but also threats to environmental and human security.

While acknowledging Russian military re-establishment in the Arctic and the growing interest of other major global powers in the region, Mr. Sproule stated that Canada does not see an imminent military threat to the Arctic. It is in Canada's interests to maintain the regional *status quo* of low tensions and peaceful relations. This can be done through dialogue and collaboration between Arctic states, Indigenous peoples, and Northern inhabitants, while simultaneously remaining clear-eyed about the current and future threats to the region. Staying vigilant includes working with the United States and other NATO allies to address threats ranging from natural disasters up to and including military threats.

Canada's [Arctic and Northern Policy Framework](#) (2019) centralizes Northern peoples in regional security policy. This recognizes their important role in guaranteeing sovereignty and the Canadian government's obligation to integrate their views when developing and implementing Arctic policies.

## Northern Perspectives on Arctic Security

Panelist Dr. Dalee Sambo Dorough (Chair, Inuit Circumpolar Council) began with a presentation highlighting the evolution of Inuit engagement with international organizations around security issues in the Arctic. This engagement began with the Inuit Circumpolar Conference of June 1977 (which eventually became the Inuit Circumpolar Council). The Cold War shaped these early engagement efforts in two important ways: by the USSR preventing Siberian Yupik participation in the Council; and by the presence of state military installations on Inuit lands.

Environmental security and the defence of Aboriginal rights were early concerns, as was a desire to maintain peaceful and safe uses of the circumpolar Arctic. This desire for a peaceful Arctic was asserted in *Resolution 11* (1977) and reasserted in 1983 in response to ongoing concerns about the presence and testing of nuclear devices in the Arctic. Among its other activities, the Inuit Circumpolar Council was engaged in consultations that eventually resulted in the [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#) (UNDRIP). Along with other international human rights instruments,<sup>1</sup> UNDRIP provides a strong human rights-based case for direct Indigenous participation in discussions of matters of direct importance, including Arctic security.

Dr. Dorough identified climate change and increased ship traffic as two major sources of threats to Inuit communities. These threats include environmental instability and its accompanying impacts, increased militarization, and the increased risk of environmental contamination. These threats fall into the realms of cultural, environmental, economic and food security, rather than ‘hard’ security. The Inuit Circumpolar Council therefore seeks to lay the diplomatic foundation for a formal declaration of the Arctic as a peaceful zone.

## Whose Voices and Laws Matter?

In the second of the panelist presentations, Bridget Larocque teased out how the Canadian state and northern Indigenous peoples can reconcile different conceptions of security. For Northern Indigenous peoples, the Arctic is a place of peace and quiet in which everything is interconnected. In this context, security is founded on the soft power of cooperation, peace and responsibility. Social wellbeing, co-management and governance are all key issues in this conception of security.

Most significant to Government-Indigenous relations on security are the historical and modern treaties, which bind Canada to certain obligations. Among these is the need for meaningful consultation of Indigenous peoples in policies of direct importance. Current fora for security policy, such as the Northwest Territories’ Arctic Security Interdepartmental Working Group, often do not adequately incorporate Indigenous voices.

The Special Senate Committee on the Arctic’s [Fourth Report](#) (2019) asserts that prosperous, sustainable and safe Arctic communities are key to Canadian foreign policy and sovereignty in the region. A focus on human security, with all its dimensions, is required. Indigenous peoples must be partners in decisions about where

---

<sup>1</sup> Including: The International Labour Organization Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention (1989) and the American Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2016).

hard power fits into this conception of security. Legal mechanisms such as UNDRIP provide a framework for this partnership, but greater attention must be paid to its implementation.

## Cultural Resilience and Arctic Security

Educator and Nunavut Impact Review Board Chair Marjorie Kaviq Kaluraq spoke third and discussed observations and insights gained from many years of work in Nunavut. Ms. Kaluraq began by dispelling some common conceptions of the Arctic and its Indigenous inhabitants. The North is recognized as a homeland to a people with deep roots there, not an untapped frontier. It is also home to Inuit who are, and consider themselves to be, Canadians.

Acknowledging this long tradition, disruptions to it by policies such as relocation and residential schools must be considered threats to Inuit language and culture which have damaged the relationship with government and increased Northerners' dependence on outside support.

In the context of security, Inuit people have considerable knowledge which may be applicable in a range of different areas. A challenge exists in that policy makers often do not understand this knowledge and thus cannot tap into it for security purposes. Investments in Inuit language, culture and land-based education would help make this knowledge more resilient and increase its utility to policy makers. As noted in the Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. report on the [Infrastructure Gap](#) (2020), deficiencies in health and other infrastructure are real threats to the security of Northern populations. Investments in data sharing and accessibility are one way to empower people to ensure their own security. Supporting the resiliency of Northern communities will support security goals by enabling communities to protect themselves.

Rethinking how institutions recognize and evaluate credentials and experiences is one way to support resilience. Another is inculturation of non-Northerners entering Indigenous communities in ways that help them to understand Indigenous perspectives and values. Operation Nanook serves as one example of inculturation, though it remains contained to one aspect of the Indigenous-Government relationship. Applying these learnings across government was identified as the necessary next step.

## Perspective from the Coast: Inuit Marine Monitoring Program

Finally, Daniel Taukie spoke to the activities of the Inuit Marine Monitoring Program (IMMP) that he coordinates. [Nunavut Tunngavik Inc.](#) and [Oceans North](#) created the IMMP in 2017 in response to substantial increases in marine traffic in Arctic waters. Risks from this increased traffic include wildlife disturbances, accidents and environmental contamination. By combining on-the-ground Inuit marine monitors with Automatic Identification System (AIS) real-time vessel tracking technology, the IMMP is able to provide Arctic coastal communities with real-time information on vessel activities which may affect them.

The goal of the program is to gather information on transiting vessels. Information gathered includes ship characteristics, location, speed and heading, as well as information of specific concern to communities such as noise, pollution or suspicious behaviour. Over the course of the program, the IMMP has been able to produce

detailed maps tracing ship routes through Arctic waters, including chokepoints and transits of important wildlife habitats. This data aims to inform federal policy making in shipping and environmental management.

The IMMP is in the process of ramping up both its network of marine monitors and its AIS infrastructure. Planned expansions in both have been delayed by the COVID-19 crisis. Planned improvements also include winterproofing AIS infrastructure, creating user-friendly interfaces and integrating data with that collected by Coast Guard-run AIS sites. Current IMMP capacity encompasses 26 monitors and four AIS stations across six communities. This program serves to illustrate the key role Inuit can play in Arctic security, specifically in the area of situational awareness, where Indigenous knowledge can benefit all stakeholders.

## Recommendations

Upon the invitation of moderator Dr. Whitney Lackenbauer, the panelists offered recommendations to the Government of Canada with respect to Arctic security. These tended to fall along two important trends:

- 1) Improved accessibility – finding ways to build upon the knowledge and expertise of Northerners. Meaningful consultation is vital but it must be done in ways that appreciate the capacity of community members with respect to language, time, and resources;
- 2) Direct Participation – creating capacity for Northerners to meaningfully participate in agenda setting and decisionmaking on Arctic security. Attention should be paid to the differing perspectives of diverse Indigenous peoples, including between genders. The effectiveness of these engagements should be continuously evaluated to ensure that they are creating the desired impacts.

## Conclusions

This event sought to provide policy makers and academics with a diverse set of perspectives on how security in the Arctic is understood by the people who call it home. All panelists expressed a desire to keep the Arctic peaceful and emphasized the vital roles that Indigenous Northerners play in doing so. Elements of human and environmental security are central to Northerners' understandings of Arctic security. A desire to work collaboratively towards creating prosperous and culturally resilient Northern communities was seen as the best way to secure Canadian interests in the region.