

Arctic Fourth World Nations in a Geopolitical Dance

By Heidi Bruce [PEER Reviewed]

ABSTRACT

Over the past decade, the Arctic region has received increased attention from climate scientists, politicians, and transnational corporations. Human-induced climate change is causing glaciers to recede, resulting in new northern sea passages that are highly sought after by businesses and governments alike. Deeply affected by this increased northern exposure are Arctic Fourth World nations – politically and culturally distinct nations encapsulated by states – that have lived in the Arctic for millennia. This paper examines the impacts that expanded northern sea routes are having on Arctic Fourth World nations and the conflict mitigation approaches being used in the region. Research was conducted while working for the Center for World Indigenous Studies. Primary data was collected through participant observation during the Conference of Parties (COP) 17 United Nations Convention on Climate Change Session in December 2011, and from an extensive literature review of Fourth World Theory and Arctic geopolitics. Data was analyzed from the perspective of Fourth World Theory building on this critical analysis of a geopolitical phenomena affecting social, economic, political and strategic affairs globally and locally.

The Arctic is experiencing severe anthropogenic climatic changes that have led to melting glaciers, a decrease in biodiversity, and the destruction of human nutritional sources, infrastructure, and settlements. In addition, melting ice is giving way to new northern sea passages, resulting in shorter and more profitable shipping lanes for trans-state businesses and governments, yet causing severe disruptions to Arctic ecosystems and the diverse cultures that inhabit them. Arctic Fourth World nations -- distinct political nations encapsulated by Arctic states -- and the bio-culturally diverse regions they represent are disproportionately vulnerable to the effects of climate change and potential new commercial and military shipping lanes. Yet, given their long histories of cultivating symbiotic relationships with the niches they inhabit,

“Movement will always be a necessary part of life in the Arctic. We do our best to prepare our young people for that reality.”
— *Inuit Elder*

Arctic Fourth World nations demonstrate tremendous capacity to adapt to these changes. Their hypotheses and instrumentation may look and feel different than the Cartesian-based scientific methods the western world places its faith in, but it is precisely this epistemological endowment that necessitates their full and effective participation in mitigating the environmental, social, economic, and political challenges of a warming Arctic region – and beyond.

With the potential for new northern sea passages, financially powerful states and corporations literally find themselves in uncharted waters. As governments concern themselves with Arctic security measures, and shareholders envision the wealth potential of untapped resources, there is growing concern over the social and ecological repercussions of receding ice, and the danger that comes with navigating expanded waterways. Thus, the empirical knowledge of the region that Arctic Fourth World nations hold is an increasingly important and strategic component of northern geopolitics. A gradual awareness is emerging that all parties involved in the Arctic region are entangled in a complex and challenging web of interdependence. This northern geopolitical tension is increasingly being referred to as the new “cold war” and while there is currently no direct violence in the region, the potential for future conflict is alarming. Using Fourth World Theory, this paper examines the geopolitical and bio cultural implications of new northern sea routes on Fourth World nations in the Arctic.

Nations versus States

The term *nation* is incorrectly used in most political rhetoric to identify an international state. The United States refers to itself as a nation. Canada views itself as a nation. The largest governing instrument in the world, the United Nations, sees itself as being comprised of a multitude of nations. In the article *The Fourth World: Nations Versus States*, however, Bernard Nietschmann makes a distinction by suggesting that a nation is a “cultural territory made up of communities who see themselves as one people on the basis of common ancestry, history, society, institutions, ideology, and

language” (Nietschmann, 1994). Nations are self-identifying and act as cultural homelands. Deeply interconnected with place, they evolve slowly through the dynamic interplay between humans and a particular environment. “Because no group of people has ever voluntarily given up its territory, resources, or identity, a nation is the world’s most enduring, persistent, and resistant organization” (Nietschmann, 1994).

The modern *state*, on the other hand, is a legal creation that emerged as an outgrowth of European kingdoms, overseas colonialism, and the division of large colonial empires into smaller neocolonial pieces (Nietschmann, 1994). A state asserts a centralized political system within international legal boundaries that are recognized by other states. According to Dr. Rudolph Rysler, Chair of the Center for World Indigenous Studies, “a state is an ethos, a concept that humans have rationally created for the purpose of ordering and organizing societies. The five main characteristics of a state, based on the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648 are to establish 1) central authority, 2) universal law, 3) internal policing powers, 4) defined boundaries and 5) recognition by other states” (Rysler, 2011).

Fourth World Nations

After the second official World War, the world split into two large geopolitical blocs: the First World--a Western bloc of democratic-industrial states within the United States’ sphere of influence and the Second World--an Eastern bloc of communist-socialist states within the Soviet Union’s sphere of influence. The remaining three-quarters of the world’s population, those states that were not

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specifically aligned with either of these two blocs, were collectively regarded as the “Third World” ([Nations Online, 2012](#)). Deemed as underdeveloped, Third World states were considered to be dependent upon the economic and political support of the more developed states and for several decades these three main categorizations were used to legitimize much of international diplomacy.

The notion of *Fourth World* nations first came into use in 1974 with the publication of Shuswap Chief George Manuel’s, *The Fourth World: An Indian Reality*. Prior to writing the book, Manuel had been on a diplomatic trip to Tanzania where he met with Tanzania’s President Julius Kambarage Nyerere (CWIS, 2012). In discussing Tanzania’s peaceful step towards independence in 1964, and the lessons that indigenous peoples in the North America could potentially learn from their experience, President Nyerere recounted that he traveled from village to village among all the tribes in what was then called Tanganyika: “By meeting with the people directly, I was able to persuade them of how we could achieve independence and freedom” (CWIS, 2012). When Manuel asked President Nyerere if they [the Tanzanians] could now help the Indians in Canada, he responded, “No, I won’t help now, not until you organize your people first --only after the people decide on what they really want can I be of any help” (CWIS, 2012). According to Manuel, “It was an African diplomat who pointed out to me that political independence for colonized peoples was only the Third World: “When native peoples come into their own, on the basis of their own cultures and traditions that will be the Fourth World ” (Manuel, 236).

Manuel came to describe the Fourth

World as the “indigenous peoples descended from a country’s aboriginal population and who today are completely or partly deprived of the right to their own territories and its riches” ([Nations Online, 2012](#)). Dr. Richard Griggs, professor of Environmental and Geographical Science at the University of Cape town, agrees with the validity of this definition but asserts that due to limited interpretations of the terms “aboriginal” and “indigenous”, many Fourth World nations in Europe, the Soviet Union, the Middle and Far East -- such as Wales, Catalonia, Bavaria, Palestine, Kurdistan, and Baluchistan -- are forgotten (Griggs, 1992). Fourth World nations pre-date the modern state system. Therefore, to more comprehensively understand their realities and the dynamics between them and modern states, Dr. Ryser maintains that we must look beyond the perception of Fourth World nations as “brown people that dwell in isolated environments”, otherwise we will never bridge the epistemological and geopolitical gaps that exist between Fourth World nations and the western-dominated system of international states (Ryser, 2011). A slightly revised version, therefore, of Manuel’s definition of Fourth World nations—one that is more inclusive of peoples from all geographical contexts—has come to refer to “nations that have been forcefully incorporated into states, maintain a distinct political culture, but are internationally unrecognized” (Griggs, 1992).

Fourth World nations are commonly referred to as indigenous peoples. The word indigenous, however, is a political term that has no universally recognized definition in international relations. It is generally accepted as referring to the “original inhabitants” of a particular region. But when expanding the time and space horizons, however, one can

argue that all humans at some point have been or were original to some particular bioregion. Because their political and economic statuses do not fit neatly into the hierarchically-categorized international system of states, a range of definitions seeking to define the over 6,000 Fourth World Nations worldwide has thus been used: tribes, forest dwellers, indigenous, aboriginals, first peoples, first nations, and native populations are to name but a few. According to Dr. Griggs, the associations with such terms often suggest “weakness, victimization, and a convenient abstraction for seemingly invisible, intangible, immobile societies. Thus, the geopolitical force internationally unrecognized nations represent is totally unaccounted for” (Griggs, 1992).

While many of these terms have been endogenously-generated as a means of reclaiming a sense of identity, the intention behind examining the collective set of experiences Fourth World nations face -- as distinct *nations* hemmed in by *states* -- is to address the unique bio-cultural and geopolitical perspectives, knowledge, and aspirations that many of these nations share. In discussing the misunderstood nature of the Fourth World, Griggs writes, “these are peoples who through both peaceful and military means are challenging the entire state system. Furthermore, not all Fourth World nations are economically underprivileged. Some are the most economically advanced regions in their respective states such as Catalonia in Spain or Württemberg in Germany” (Griggs, 1992). By examining the realities of Fourth World nations that do not fit the traditional profile of indigenous or marginalized peoples – such as those in Europe; many of which have a great deal of political and economic influence – a more thorough, historical, and meaningful approach to inter-

national relations, conflict prevention, and development can occur.

Fourth World Theory

Consideration of the situation of Arctic Peoples requires placing them within a theoretical context that provides an explanation for what is otherwise a unique political condition. Fourth World Theory, which focuses on the bio-cultural and geopolitical realities of the over 6000 nations worldwide whose ecological niches are situated within externally imposed state boundaries, saw its genesis at the United Nations Stockholm Environmental Conference in 1972. It was there that American First Nations delegates found they had much more in common with Saami of Finland/Sweden, the Bretons of France, and the Basques of France/Spain than they did with third world delegates. They were all nations encapsulated by states, struggling to achieve some level of self-determination within their homelands (Hipwell, 1997). Through this collective recognition of shared realities, under the leadership of Shuswap Chief George Manuel, Fourth World Theory was born.

In *Industria, the Fourth World, and the Question of Territory*, Dr. William Hipwell, professor of geography at Carleton University in Ottawa, Canada writes, “in order to adequately account for the realities of indigenous peoples, one must make reference to Fourth World Theory, as it seeks to enact social change by addressing the fundamental imbalance of power that has been created as a result of the international state system and hyper-capitalism” (Hipwell, 1997). The International Relations Theory website explains that “Fourth World analyses, writings, and maps aim to rectify the distorting

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and obscuring of indigenous nations' identities, geographies and histories and expose the usually hidden 'other side' of invasions and occupations that generate most of the world's wars, refugees, genocide, human rights violations and environmental destruction" ([International Relations Theory, 2012](#)). By examining the distinction between nations and states, Fourth World Theory provides a geopolitical perspective from which one can paint a "ground-up portrait of the significance and centrality of people in most world issues, problems and solutions" (International Relations Theory, 2012).

In his paper, *The Meaning of Nation and State in the Fourth World*, Dr. Griggs writes, "The ancient nations from which the patchwork quilt of states was stitched have no internationally recognized sovereignty--but their geopolitical force, through self-determination movements, is challenging the entire state system" (Griggs, 1992). Kathy Seton of Queensland University in Brisbane, Australia expands upon this notion in *Fourth World Nations in the Era of Globalization: An Introduction to Contemporary Theorizing Posed by Indigenous Nations*:

The rise of indigenous social movements in world politics, as well as the single international indigenous movement, signifies that international solidarity is a 'real world' event. Indigenous nations everywhere are demanding the right to self-determination. They are asserting their sovereignty as distinct and autonomous nations of peoples. Popular stereotypes of indigenous nations as having 'primitive', 'backward' cultures have helped cover-up and often rationalize the reality of their ongoing marginalization. This process of marginalization has

frequently been motivated and legitimized by colonial powers under the banners of modernization, development, and progress. (Seton, 1999)

Fourth World Theory not only examines the current and historical realities of Fourth World Nations, it also holds tremendous potential for the study of all humans. Dr. Ryser argues that one of the greatest challenges humans face is the "conflict between bio-cultural diversity and standardization; a contest between the diverse nature of human beings and the compression by corporations and states to standardize everything" (Ryser, 2011). Nietschmann writes, "if you're interested in biological diversity, you have to be interested in cultural diversity, because nature is the scaffolding of culture - it's why people are the way they are" (Nietschmann, 1994).

Roberto Vela-Cordova, professor of literature at Texas A & M University, views Fourth World theory as driving a critical wedge into the fundamental organization of capital as it relates to labor, ecology, and property (Vela-Cordova, 2011). In *The American Empire and the Fourth World*, Anthony J. Hall writes, "the Fourth World is valuable today because it envisages a pluralistic global village without tyranny of a universal and homogeneous state" (Hall, 2003). Fourth World analyses of self-determination movements, economics, and the resulting inequities have the potential to resonate with all people because at the core of human beings is an unrelenting desire to understand how we configure societies, set up governing institutions, and allocate resources. As George Manuel suggested, "once the Fourth World enters the historical consciousness of the globe, it arguably beacons the most dramatic history of transculturation ever witnessed" (Vela-Cordova, 2011).

Circumpolar Context

There is perhaps no other region in the world where geography, cultures, and epistemologies collide more profoundly than in the Arctic; a circumpolar region located at the northern-most part of the Earth. The name Arctic stems from the Greek word *arktikos*, meaning “near the Bear, northern”, with reference to the constellation *Ursa Major*, the “Great Bear”, which is prominent in the northern portion of the celestial sphere (etymonline.com). The Arctic is 14.5 million square km (5.5 million square miles) and consists of the ice-covered Arctic Ocean, treeless permafrost, and tundra. With a tremendous portion of the world’s natural resources including oil, natural gas, minerals, fresh water (1/5 of the Earth’s water supply), and fish, the Arctic is increasingly being viewed as one of the most important geo-strategic regions in the world.

Of more immediate consequence, however, is the fact that the Arctic’s climate has warmed dramatically over the past four decades. According to the Arctic Council, an intergovernmental forum that promotes cooperation, coordination and interaction among Arctic nations and states, the magnitude of temperature increase in the Arctic is twice as large as the global increase. Sea ice, snow cover, glaciers and permafrost are all diminishing due to Arctic warming. Vulnerable ecosystems are under threat, as are traditional hunting, fishing, and herding activities ([Arctic Council, 2012](#)). In 2011, the Indigenous Peoples Biocultural Climate Change Assessment (IPCCA) initiative met in the community of Sevettijärvi, located in northeast Finland. The following is an excerpt from a Declaration that IPCCA members shared with regards to their personal experiences with climate change

in the Arctic:

Locally, we see our calendars shifting, ecosystems and species disappearing, food shortages, cultural disruption and destruction of livelihoods. For example, on Skolt Sámi lands, waters don’t freeze in the same way anymore, and in the autumn, instead of proper snow cover, ice rain falls on the ground, impacting reindeer food cycles. In the Republic of Sakha-Yakutia, Siberia, Russia, in the lands of the Chukchi reindeer herders, the permafrost is melting, having major implications for global climate change and weather systems as millions of tons of greenhouse gasses which are currently trapped in the permafrost will release additional emissions into the atmosphere. (snowchange.org)

Changes in the arctic climate affect climates in the rest of the world because many of the world’s climate processes (wind and water currents) are driven by the difference in temperature between the Arctic and hotter parts of the world ([ACPP, 2012](#)). Ultimately, the effects of Arctic climate change will have profound local, regional and global implications.

Arctic Fourth World Nations

People have inhabited the Arctic for over twenty thousand years. Currently, there are approximately four million people living in the Arctic; of those roughly 500,000 are Fourth World peoples. These nations comprise varying percentages of the Arctic population; ranging from about 80% in Greenland, 50% in Canada, 20% in Alaska, 15% in Arctic Norway and 3-4% in Arctic Russia (athropolis.

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com). The majority of the Arctic inhabitants – mostly of European descent – came to the area as populations expanded elsewhere, access and communications were improved, and natural resources were exploited. Piers Vitebsky, head of Anthropology and Russian Northern Studies at the Scott Polar Research Institute at the University of Cambridge emphasizes, however, that it would be a “mistake to divide the history of the Arctic simply into two periods, before and after the arrival of the Europeans. The Europeans came gradually and have affected different areas in different ways at different periods. The traditions of the peoples themselves, as well as the findings of archaeologists, show that the populations which are now called *indigenous* had already migrated extensively themselves during the previous few thousand years” ([thearctic.is](#)). In the following passage, he describes the complex and often overlooked historical migration patterns that characterize the Arctic region:

Some Inuits migrated eastward towards Greenland from Canada over 1,000 years ago, not long before the Vikings reached there from Europe. The Vikings brought with them a culture based on farming. Their society persisted for nearly 500 years but probably died out due to a combination of climate change, subsistence failure and lack of culture contact. The Arctic hunters did adapt to the colder climate and became the ancestors of the modern Greenlandic population. In the Asian North, the largest northern people are the Sakha, who number 382,000. They speak a language related to Turkish and migrated from central Asia into the Lena valley only in the middle ages. When they arrived, they found the valley already occupied by the Eveny who were also not originally residents of

the North and had earlier migrated from northern China. ([thearctic.is](#))

What this map demonstrates is the overlapping nature of human migration patterns. Based on Vitebsky’s description of migrating populations in the Arctic region, one might argue, then, that no particular culture – or nation – can assert bio-cultural claims to its land, ice and waterways. To this, Vitebsky would argue that there is an important difference between more recent immigrants and Fourth World nations. Newer immigrants do not for the most part depend on the land for their living, but come as representatives of a global industrial culture that continues to feed them by via external supplies. “For humans to thrive on this landscape as the indigenous peoples have done requires extraordinary adaptation. This adaptation is not just a physical one to the changing climate; it is also a cultural adaptation, which has evolved over thousands of years. This culture is based on a particular view of how nature works in this environment, and how humans fit into it” ([thearctic.is](#)).

Examples of this adaptive, symbiotic, and historical relationship between Fourth World nations and place can be found in numerous tangible manifestations throughout the Arctic. According to Vitebsky, Fourth World nations such as the Inuit and Aleut in Alaska, the Métis in Canada, and the Saami in Sweden and Norway all utilize animal skins as locally-sourced materials that can be spread out and are used for clothing and footwear, as well as for the coverings of tents and boats ([thearctic.is](#)). They have all developed some kind of ski, sledge, toboggan or snowshoe, and many have domesticated dogs or reindeer and trained them to carry baggage or pull sledges. They’ve worked out ways of controlling animals that



Arctic peoples subdivided according to language families

- | | |
|--|--|
|  Indo-European family |  Isolated languages (Ketic and Yukagir) |
|  Germanic branch |  Eskimo-Aleut family |
|  Uralic family |  Inuit group (of Eskimo br.) |
|  Finno-Ugric branch |  Yupik group (of Eskimo br.) |
|  Samoyedic branch |  Aleut branch |
|  Altaic family |  Na-Dene family |
|  Turkic branch |  Athabaskan branch |
|  Tungusic branch |  Eyak branch |
|  Chukotko-Kamchatkan fam. |  Tlingit branch |

-  Arctic circle
-  Arctic boundary according to AMAP

Notes:
Areas show colours according to the original languages of the respective indigenous peoples, even if they do not speak their languages today.
Overlapping populations are not shown. The map does not claim to show exact boundaries between the individual language groups.
Typical colonial populations, which are not traditional Arctic populations, are not shown (Danes in Greenland, Russians in the Russian Federation, non-native Americans in North America).

Figure 1 illustrates this historical migration pattern of Arctic Fourth World nations, according to language families

would otherwise roam across the landscape out of their reach: traps, corrals, bows and arrows, and weirs and nets for fish (theartctic.is). In addition to these similarities, however, Arctic Fourth World nations continue to adapt to the unique specifications of their particular

surroundings, as well as to their interaction with immigrant populations.

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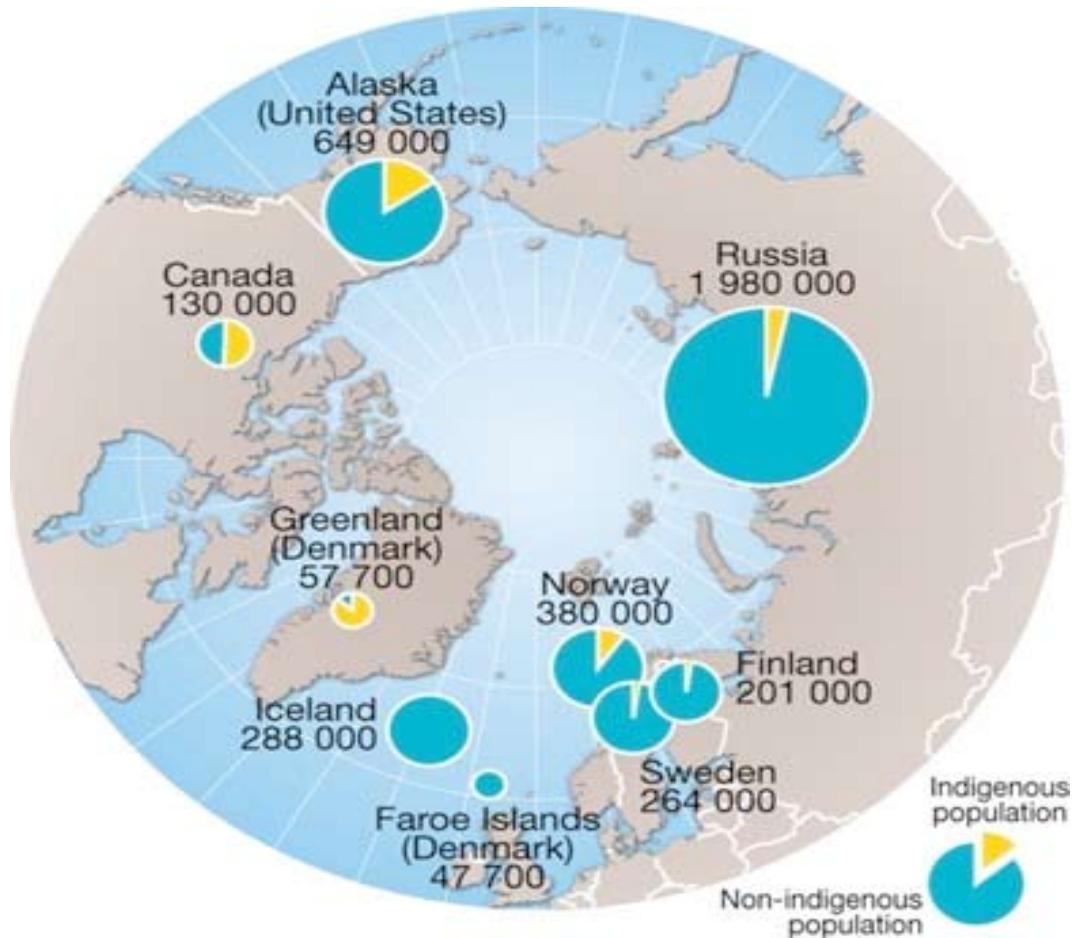


Figure 2 Arctic Population Distribution (GRID Arendal (UNEP), 2012) United Nations Environmental Program

Arctic States

Arctic Fourth World nations share geopolitical borders with the northern territories of eight Arctic states: Canada, Russia, Denmark (Greenland and Faroe Islands), the United States, Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Iceland. This map illustrates the percentages of population that Fourth World nations (noted as indigenous) comprise in the Arctic states.

As we apply Fourth World analysis we can see that the above map also indicates examples of the conventional political and cultural misuse of the terms, *indigenous*, *nations*, and *state*. Drawing on Nietschmann's definition of a nation – a cultural territory made up of communities who see themselves as one people on the basis of common ancestry, history, society, institutions, ideology, and language – the map's graphics warrant possible reconfiguration, so as to illustrate a more historical and

Table 1: Circumpolar Territories and Political Designation

Geographic Designation	National Affiliation	Designation
Alaska	United States	State
Aleutian Islands	United States	Alaskan Archipelago
Arkhangelsk Oblast	Russia	Federal subject
Canadian Arctic Archipelago	Canada	Canadian Archipelago
Diomedes Island (Big)	Russia	Island
Diomedes Island (Little)	United States	Island
Finnmark	Norway	County
Franz Josef Land	Russia	Federal subject archipelago
Greenland	Denmark	Autonomous country
Grimsey	Iceland	Island
Jan Mayen	Norway	Island
Lapland	Finland	Region
Lapland	Sweden	Province
New Siberian Islands	Russia	Archipelago
Nordland	Norway	County
Norrbottnen	Sweden	Province
Northwest Territories	Canada	Territory
Novaya Zemlya	Russia	Federal subject archipelago
Nunavik	Canada	Northern part of Quebec
Nunavut	Canada	Territory
Russian Arctic islands	Russia	Islands
Sápmi	Norway, Sweden, Finland, Russia	Fennoscandia region
Severnaya Zemlya	Russia	Federal subject archipelago
Siberia	Russia	Region
Svalbard	Norway	Governor of Svalbard archipelago
Troms	Norway	County
Yukon	Canada	Territory
Wrangel Island	Russia	Zapovednik (nature reserve)

Source: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arctic

comprehensive depiction of Arctic nations.

Nietschmann describes Iceland, for example, as one of the few *nation-states* in the world. It is a political entity where a majority of the population views itself as a single people, with a common identity, a common territory, and a government that is internationally recognized (Nietschmann, 1994). Dating back to 930 A.D., the ruling chiefs of Iceland had already established a republican constitu-

tion and an assembly called the *Althingi* -- the oldest parliament in the world (state.gov). Iceland remained independent until 1262, when it was colonized first by Norway and then by Denmark. In the early 19th century, national consciousness was revived, the Althingi (which had been abolished) was reestablished, and Denmark granted Iceland limited home rule in 1874. After a series of enhanced self-determination configurations during the early 1900's, Iceland formally became an indepen-

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dent republic on June 17, 1944 (state.gov).

Defining Iceland (noted on the above map as consisting of 0% indigenous population) as an indigenous nation, however, is not necessarily something that most academics, diplomats, or perhaps even Icelanders would consider, given the stereotypical racial associations the word *indigenous* conjures up. While its original inhabitants were of Norse origin, Iceland's history of shared cultural continuity for more than a thousand years, centuries of colonization, and a subsistence-based fishing economy has a great deal in common with the histories of Arctic Fourth World nations. Fourth World analysts would argue, therefore, that the traditional dichotomies between "indigenous" and "non-indigenous" peoples in the Arctic (and beyond) do not provide a comprehensive analysis of past, present, or future geopolitical dynamics.

The nation-restoring phenomena of Iceland is relevant to Arctic Fourth World nations such as the Inuit of Greenland and Nunavut (Northern Canada), who are on their own path towards enhanced political and economic self-determination. Within the boundaries of the eight Arctic states, a multitude of political subunits with varying geopolitical arrangements are being formed. The following table outlines Arctic lands and notes their official designation within the international state-system.

This table illustrates the complexity and creativity of geopolitical arrangements in the Arctic region. Contrary to most articles and publications on the region, the actors in this northern dance are not only the eight official Arctic states and non-littoral states engaged in diplomatic and economic negotiations, there are autonomous countries, provinces, territo-

ries, counties, islands, and federal subjects—all with a specific set of interests, natural resource endowments, levels of self-determination, financial realities, and political creativity.

Conflict in the Arctic

Climate models project that summer sea ice in the Arctic will retreat further and further away from most Arctic landmasses, opening new shipping routes and extending the navigation season in the Northern sea passages by up to four months ([GRID Arendal \(UNEP\), 2012](#)). Previously frozen areas in the Arctic may become seasonally or permanently navigable, increasing the prospects for marine transport through the Arctic and providing greater access to Arctic resources ([GRID Arendal \(UNEP\), 2012](#)). Despite growing global concern over the detrimental effects of warming temperatures in the Arctic on one hand, inter-state and inter-corporate parties see tremendous military and economic potential in these new shipping lanes; making this expanding Northwest passage one of the world's next prime latitudinal trading routes ([GRID Arendal \(UNEP\), 2012](#)).

Margaret Blunden, Emeritus Professor of the University of Westminster, London, who researches geopolitics in the Arctic says the Northern Sea Route (NSR) across the top of Russia -- one of the two main contested passages -- is not a single, clearly defined route. Rather, it constitutes a number of alternative passages between Novaya Zemlya (an archipelago in the Arctic Ocean, north of Russia and in the extreme northeast of Europe) and the Bering Strait (a sea strait between the easternmost point of the Asian continent and the westernmost point of the North American

continent). The NSR's are likely to become operational before the less-open North-West Passage through the Canadian archipelago, since the ice there is receding more quickly (Blunden, 2012). Increased marine transit in this region is not only dependent upon melting ice; technological innovations in ice-capable shipping will be necessary -- encouraged both by the physical limitations of the Suez Canal for increasingly large vessels and by the increasingly dangerous southern sea routes that are vulnerable to acts of piracy (Blunden, 2012). Yet, NSR's also bring forth issues of security. In the article, *Channeling Arctic Indigenous Peoples' Knowledge Into an Arctic Region Security Architecture*, Olin Strander, Arctic Military Strategist for the Arctic Institute and Alison Weisburger, Analyst and North American Arctic/Outreach Coordinator for the Arctic Institute, assert that "those who live below the Arctic Circle are generally ill-equipped to operate and survive in the Arctic without leveraging expertise of Arctic indigenous peoples" (Arctic Institute, 2011).

States with obvious vested interests in these new northern seaways are the eight Arctic states. Increasingly, however, the economic and geopolitical significance of the Arctic is attracting the interest of non-littoral states as well. China, for example, in its quest to help feed its voracious appetite for raw materials, has begun collaborating with the Russians. In November 2010, the China National Petroleum Corporation signed a strategic agreement with Sovcomflot (a Russian shipping company) according to which the companies will coordinate their efforts in utilization of the NSR (spacedaily.com). In its bid for observer status in the Arctic Council, China was initially snubbed by Norway due to its diplomatic row over the 2010 Nobel Peace Prize

to Chinese dissident Liu Xiaobo. But in early February 2012, out of a willingness to engage in dialogue over their "mutual interests" in the region, Norway's Foreign Minister Jonas Gahr Støre told parliament that Norway would support China's admission: "The areas and the potential for cooperation between our two countries are significant. Norway has supported and still supports China's ambition to become a permanent observer on the Arctic Council" (spacedaily.com).

Further articulating the increasing geopolitical complexity in the Arctic region, Blunden provides the following narrative:

German diplomatic and defense policy has also been brought into play. It is broadening its military cooperation with the Nordic-Baltic countries, a cooperation which could include joint military maneuvers in the far north. Germany is also nurturing its traditionally close connection with Denmark and its strategically important relations with Norway. The German government is urged by its advisers to emulate the Chinese in cultivating relations with Iceland, whose sea area enjoys a central position in the region where Arctic traffic is projected to grow. Carsten Schymik of the SWP noted in May 2009 that 'Iceland, due to its strategic location, could become a strategic bridgehead into the increasingly important Arctic region', and argued that it would be to Germany's advantage to support Iceland's application to join the EU. German policy institutes also see Greenland, en route to independence from Denmark, as a strategic bridgehead into the Arctic. Whereas in Iceland the main competitor for influence is China, in Greenland it is the United States, whose

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diplomats have advised their government to commit itself to 'shaping Greenland's future' in such a way as to guarantee American interests, taking the unique opportunity presented by the emergence of this independent nation. Therefore, German advisers have urged the EU to actively support Greenland's legitimate pursuit of independence. (Blunden, 2012)

In addition to describing the complex geopolitical confluence in the Arctic, the above passage also illustrates that the size of the state -- both politically and geographically -- does not bear proportionately on those dynamics: both small and large states are succeeding in asserting their interests. According to Natalie Mychajlyszyn of the Canadian Parliaments' International Affairs, Trade and Finance Division, "at any given time, the dynamics are highly specific to a particular issue: some play out multilaterally, others bilaterally. Likewise clashes of interests and collaborative initiatives can occur simultaneously, regardless of whether the players are allies or adversaries"(Mychajlyszyn, 2008).

The Arctic Council

Renewed interest in the Arctic region comes at a time when Arctic Fourth World nations are becoming more organized, focused, and assertive with regard to their own political, economic, and cultural self-determination -- especially in the aftermath of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) in 2007. While Arctic geopolitics has been predominantly characterized by a multitude of individualized state interests, it is also home to the northern-most organizational attempt at more inclusive, multilateral

diplomacy. In 1996, the Ottawa Declaration formally established the Arctic Council as an "intergovernmental forum to provide a means for promoting cooperation, coordination and interaction among the Arctic States, with the involvement of the Arctic Indigenous communities and other Arctic inhabitants on common Arctic issues, in particular issues of sustainable development and environmental protection, yet excluding matters related to military security ([Arctic Council, 2012](#)). The Arctic Council's official Member States are the eight Arctic states, with Chairmanship rotating every two years. What distinguishes the Arctic Council from other trans-boundary organizing bodies is that it is also comprised of six Fourth World nations' organizations that hold *Permanent Participants* status. The Arctic Athabaskan Council (AAC), Aleut International Association (AIA), Gwich'in Council International (GGI), Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC), Russian Arctic Indigenous Peoples of the North (RAIPON), and the Saami Council (SC) have full consultation rights in connection with the Council's negotiations and decisions, although they do not -- yet -- have actual voting power ([Arctic Council, 2012](#)).

The Arctic Council also extends *Permanent Observer Status* to non-Arctic States, regional and global inter-governmental and inter-parliamentary organizations, and non-governmental organizations that the Council determines can contribute to its work ([Arctic Council, 2012](#)). Thus far, six states have been admitted as Permanent Observers: France, Germany, Spain, Poland, The Netherlands, and the United Kingdom -- with China, Japan, Korea, India, and the EU currently negotiating for a seat at the table ([cbc.ca](#)).

To ensure their consultative status, the

Arctic Council Indigenous Peoples' Secretariat (IPS) – based in Copenhagen -- was established to support Fourth World nations' organizations. Specifically, the IPS's work is to ensure that Permanent Participants are sent documents and reports connected to the work of the Arctic Council; help Permanent Participants present their views to the Arctic Council; collect and communicate information about the Arctic Council and its results to the Indigenous Peoples in the various parts of the Arctic; and provide co-ordination for the Indigenous Peoples Organizations to meet with each other and to participate in the Arctic Council Working Group ([ACPP, 2012](#)). The working language of the IPS is English, but communications are in both English and Russian so as to accommodate Russian Fourth World nations.

There is considerable solidarity amongst Arctic Fourth World nations anchored in the Arctic Council. One important example is the fact that they agree that qualified observers should be welcome to attend and participate in meetings of the council -- a decision that most Arctic States like Canada and Russia dislike as it threatens their existing power in the region. While it may add to the complexity of the council's composition, Arctic Fourth World nations believe that a more diverse observer body could lead to new alliances that may not have otherwise occurred ([arcticathabaskancouncil.com](#)).

Law of the Sea

Given that the Arctic region is comprised primarily of water and ice, many of the issues raised in the Arctic Council have to do with rules pertaining to rights and responsibilities

of nations and states in their use of the Arctic Ocean. Establishing guidelines for businesses, the environment, and the management of marine natural resources, the Law of the Sea Treaty (LOST) is an attempt to address such disputes. Adopted in 1982 (although it has yet to be ratified by several states including the United States), its purpose was to establish a comprehensive set of rules governing the oceans, thereby replacing outdated and inadequate policies that had been set forth by previous U.N. Conventions on the Law of the Sea: UNCLOS I in 1958 and UNCLOS II in 1960 ([UNLST, 2012](#)).

The Treaty calls for technology and wealth transfers from developed to undeveloped nations, and requires parties to adopt regulations and laws to control pollution of the marine environment -- provisions not well received by politicians and businessmen who advocate for deregulation. In addition to the economic provisions, the treaty also establishes specific jurisdictional limits on the ocean area that countries may claim, including a 12-mile territorial sea limit and a 200-mile exclusive economic zone limit. Some proponents of the treaty believe that the treaty will establish a system of property rights for mineral extraction in deep-sea beds, making the investment in such ventures more attractive ([UNLST, 2012](#)).

Arctic Fourth World nations – those who actually reside in the contested region and who hold tremendous knowledge about the disputed water and ice passages – are gradually becoming more involved in the negotiating process. Article 26 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) states that:

Indigenous peoples have the right to the

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Figure 3: Greenland and Nunavut (GRID Arendal (UNEP), 2012 United Nations Environmental Program)

lands, territories and resources, which they have traditionally owned, occupied or otherwise used or acquired; Indigenous peoples have the right to own, use, develop and control the lands, territories and resources that they possess by reason of traditional ownership or other traditional occupation or use, as well as those which they have otherwise acquired; States shall give legal recognition and protection to these lands, territories and resources. Such recognition shall be conducted with due respect to the customs, traditions and land tenure systems of the indigenous

peoples concerned.” (IFG, 2012)

By applying Article 26 to the following map, which depicts Greenland and Nunavut (autonomous Arctic Fourth World nations) as the two main nations with actual territorial continuity in the Arctic Ocean, it can be argued that Arctic Fourth World nations are strategically poised to play an active, voting role in matters that concern Arctic waters.

Therefore, through such mechanisms as the UNDRIP, Arctic Fourth World nations now have enhanced diplomatic opportunities

to assert their rights to waterways, ice, and other resources that their people have depended upon for millennia. According to Jessica Shadian, a Research Fellow at the Barents Institute in Norway, “emerging global governance processes [such as the Convention on Climate Change] delineate power and authority to new non-state actors, thereby pushing traditional international laws aside to make room for new voluntary legal compliance measures, regional legal treaties and local initiatives” (e-ir.info). Shadian asserts that these emerging global governance practices “reify an emergent reality; the state is only one source of power and legitimacy in world politics. In this new political milieu, governance does not have to come from, or need to be played out within, the international system or by states” (www.e-ir.info). As the power of Arctic states is increasingly challenged, new leadership opportunities for Fourth World nations are beginning to emerge. This more diversified geopolitical cast not only has the political and economic will to assert its self-determination, but also the cultural will to ensure its longevity in the region.

Fourth World Perspectives on Conflict

In its analyses of global conflicts, Fourth World Theory emphasizes the fact that, currently, most of the world’s conflicts are between states and nations – rather than between states. Bernard Nietschmann writes, “The nature of conflicts has changed, yet the means to understand and resolve them have not. With 193 states [as recognized by the United Nations] asserting the right and power to impose sovereignty and allegiance upon more than 6000 nations, conflicts occur that cannot be contained or hidden, nor resolved

on a state-to-state basis” (Nietschmann, 1985). According to Ryser, the majority of the world’s current wars result from actions taken by First, Second, or Third World states against Fourth World nations (Ryser, 2011). Actions deemed as nation building, economic development, and integration by the state are perceived by Fourth World Nations as attempts to dispossess and covertly annex Fourth World lands and resources (Nietschmann, 1985).

A critical component of Fourth World resurgence, therefore, is bio-cultural diversity, and its often-neglected relevance to geopolitical strength. “Cultural and biological diversities are the building blocks of life. Where there is a concentration of nation-peoples, there is typically a concentration of species, genes and ecosystems; indeed the vast majority of the world’s 6,000 nations are centers of surviving biological diversity and ecological variety – Fourth World Environments” (Nietschmann, 1994). As long-term stewards of the land, Fourth World nations are subject to what conflict transformation professor Tatsushi Arai deems eco-structural violence; which represents the “collective karma that binds nature and humanity through cycles of mutually destructive interactions” (Arai, 2011). This form of violence results from the fact that:

The world’s states are internationally recognized governments that begin without environments or resources; it is the preexisting nations that have the land, freshwater, fertile soils, forests, minerals, fisheries and wildlife. As such, most states exist only by the invasion and takeover (called nation-building, political integration, or economic development of unconsenting nations environments and resources. Following an ideology of centrifugal expansion to fuel

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unchecked growth, many states commonly use environmental and resource-destroying methods and often military force to extract the biological wealth and suppress the culture of nations. (Nietschmann, 1994)

The history and geography of state expansionism has resulted in two disparate environments in the world. The *state environment* is dominated by state cultures and is usually characterized by “large and dense numbers, environmentally unsustainable centrifugal economies, biological impoverishment and, most often, razed landscapes” (Nietschmann, 1994). *Nation environments*, on the other hand, are “historically populated by nation peoples and characterized by ecologically adapted, centripetal cultures and economies, surviving biological richness and variegated, healthy landscapes” (Nietschmann, 1994). These two very different manifestations of the bio-cultural interplay between humans and a particular environment speak to the heart of the conflict in the Arctic Region.

Melding the seemingly disparate pieces of the Arctic puzzle together, so as to discern any practical, preventative diplomatic measures, requires a willingness to question the established international state system, the supposed benefits of hyper capitalism, and what it means to be culturally bound to a particular place. Cartesian and neoclassical-based ideologies have been overstated in the Arctic; scientists scramble to quantify the occurrence of human-induced climate change, while states and corporations vie for legal claims to its resources. Less-respected, are the epistemologies of Arctic Fourth World nations.

According to interviews with Inuit community members, conducted by the Inuit

Circumpolar Council in 2008, the potential for greater use of the Arctic by newcomers raises great concern. “While they have resolved to adapt to the changed climate and thinning ice as best they can – and show considerable confidence they will succeed – they are less sure about what increased shipping may mean for their future. Newcomers to the region are reminded that Inuit have lived in the Arctic for thousands of years and they intend to live there for thousands more” (inuitcircumpolar.com). Inuit settlements are primarily located on seacoasts and their livelihoods are inextricably linked with water and ice-ways. As one Inuit hunter explains,

Whether thickly frozen or open for the summer, the sea is our primary means of transportation. The usually ice-covered sea is our highway, the only physical connection between many of our communities and the only way we can access many of the animals we depend on for food. As subsistence hunters, we Inuit follow the animals as far as needed in each season, according to the overall conditions of that particular year. While Inuit do use the sea ice for general transportation in addition to hunting, we are practical people who harvest as close to our communities as possible. The fact that we often travel long distances as part of the hunt means our people from Chukotka to Greenland need free movement over the land and sea in order to continue our subsistence-based way of life. (inuitcircumpolar.com).

Many Inuit hunters are reporting changes in the locations and times that their traditional animals can be found. This is why they are very concerned that sea ice routes remain passable for hunters as well as the migratory game

they follow, and that the entire Arctic environment be kept free from contamination – both in the areas they use now and in those they may need to hunt in the future:

As a people who have lived in harmony with our ecosystem for thousands of years, we Inuit have a very different concept of sustainability. For us, an action that can continue for ten or twenty, or even fifty years before its damaging effects are seen does not qualify as sustainable. A way of doing things, a way of living and behaving, must be done in such a way that it could continue for hundreds and thousands of years without harming the natural way of things in order for it to meet the Inuit standard of sustainability. If something were to happen to our fragile Arctic ecosystem, our way of life would be lost and we as a people would be lost. Therefore, any activity in the Arctic, whether it is resource extraction, tourism, or military-related, must be undertaken according to the Inuit definition of sustainability – it must support the continuation of the Inuit way of life for thousands of years to come. (inuitcircumpolar.com)

Arctic Fourth World Nations are deeply vested in remaining in their homelands — long after new shipping lanes have been opened and oil and mineral reserves have been exploited. This cultural tenacity should not be underestimated.

Conflict transformation is described by professor Tatsushi Arai as a “sustained process of examining conflict sources and contexts systematically and developing relevant means to redirect its momentum into constructive relationship building and social change” (Arai,

2010). The practical applications of conflict transformation necessitate dialogue, creativity, and patience – and work best when addressed within all layers of society. The Arctic Council – while certainly not perfect -- is one such mechanism, serving as a high-level intergovernmental forum to promote cooperation, coordination, and interaction among Arctic nations and states. Research is another arena where cooperation is occurring. As the realities of climate change become increasingly more alarming, teams of Fourth World scientists and western scientists are using triangulation methods that combine approaches, data sets, and investigations, in order to generate more comprehensive, inclusive and confident analyses (beyondpenguins.ehe.osu.edu). And in the business realm, which is highly influential in the Arctic region, Arctic Fourth World nations are continuously engaged in negotiating and reclaiming their economic viability through entities such as *Doyon, Limited*, an Alaska Native for-profit corporation and largest private landowner in Alaska.

One proposed conflict transformation model that could shift the Arctic power dynamics relates to concerns about safety that are emerging as a result of the new northern sea passages. As a way of incorporating Arctic Fourth World nations' knowledge into what they describe as *Arctic Region Security Architecture*, both Olin Strander and Alison Weisburger of the Arctic Institute envision an indigenous circumpolar security force ([Arctic Institute, 2011](#)). Working from the existing model of Canadian Rangers --a volunteer safety and security force in northern Canada, made up of predominantly Inuit, Métis, and other Fourth World Nations -- Strander and Weisburger believe the Arctic could be ringed by Arctic Fourth World nations providing forward secu-

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rity and safety:

The North Slope Inupaiq could be organized into a Coast Guard auxiliary in support of the Coast Guard's maritime security and safety missions. A North Slope Coast Guard Auxiliary could then link in with the Canadian Rangers, and the Rangers could link in with the Kalaallit of Greenland. The North Slope Coast Guard Auxiliary could theoretically link in with their Serbian Yupik and Aleut relatives, were they to be employed by the Federal Security Bureau's, Border Guards. (Arctic Institute, 2011)

They argue that this model also has the potential to strengthen political and ancestral bonds of Arctic Fourth World nations. By encouraging Arctic Fourth World nations to take the lead in securing their traditional lands as partners with Arctic state security services, Fourth World nations could have a stake in how security in the region is provided ([Arctic Institute, 2011](#)).

Fourth World nations' participation in a circumpolar security force does have the potential for exploitation, if not mitigated by enhanced political representation. To ensure that Arctic Fourth World nations' interests (and lives) are protected, their participation in security measures should be coupled with voting power within the Arctic Council. If they are asked to "put their life on the line," Arctic Fourth World nations should be given the right to vote on matters that relate to their security, livelihood, and cultural continuity. It may appear as an oversimplification, but the fact is that in the Arctic region, Fourth World nations hold key strategic territory. The sheer size and location of Greenland combined with

the autonomous region of Nunavut, alone, constitute a land-and sea-based stronghold by Inuit peoples. When combined with the increasing political and economic strength of Alaska Natives, the collective role of Arctic Fourth World nations is by no means passive, nor irrelevant to the diplomatic negotiations of states. Dr. Ryser suggests that in international diplomacy, there is great creative potential in naming something that did not previously exist, and then asserting its importance (Ryser, 2011). Essentially, the international state system was created in this manner: states agreed upon their own definition, and then developed the right instruments to perpetuate their political existence. In the same vein, Arctic Fourth World nations, in finding that inter-state models do not serve their needs and interests, have the right and the capacity to develop their own organizational bodies. An Arctic Fourth World Council could perhaps better serve their interests; they define what it means to be a Fourth World governing body and then set about creating the rules, infrastructure, and financial support to reinforce its vision. Partnerships with Fourth World nations from other areas in the world affected by climate change and hyper-capitalism could also be forged. Speaking to this need for more inclusive, effective, and relevant models of governance, George Manuel writes,

The Fourth World is not, after all, a Final Solution. It is not even a destination. It is the right to travel freely, not only on our road but also in our own vehicles. Unilateral dependence can never be ended by a forced integration. Real integration can only be achieved through a voluntary partnership and a partnership cannot be based on a tenant-landlord relationship. The way to end the condition of unilateral de-

pendence and begin the long march to the FW is through home rule. The demand of Indian people that we be allowed to sit at the table where our lives are being negotiated, where our resources are being carved up like a pie, is not different than the demands being made by non-Indian groups. The way to end the custodian-child relationship for Indian people is not to abolish our status as Indians, but to allow us to take our place at the table with all of the rest of the adults. The imposition of models on those who did not have a hand in the design has been the problem throughout history. (Manuel, 1974)

The Arctic Region has not only become the barometer of global climate change, it also holds tremendous potential for creative diplomatic measures between Fourth World nations, states, and transnational corporations. Fourth World theory provides an important lens through which to examine the unfolding geopolitical dance in the Arctic. Whereas most of the political and academic discourse on the economic, political, and bio-cultural significance of new northern sea passages in the Arctic region focuses on Arctic and non-Arctic states' interests, the steady undercurrent of Arctic Fourth World nations' organizing is proving to be a political force that can no longer be ignored.

In a region whose geography and climate is shifting at an accelerated pace, the ability of Fourth World nations to adapt to and mitigate these changes provides an interesting analysis of the bio-cultural and geopolitical trump cards that many Fourth World nations have. While it is undeniable that Arctic Fourth World nations have experienced severe forms of marginalization through political,

economic, and ideological exclusion, they do still maintain a cultural continuity that deeply connects them with the Arctic environment. This resolve to continue living in their respective ecological niches for multiple generations is a critical component of Arctic Fourth World nations' political will to manifest more equitable models of self-determination. Given their empirical knowledge of the Arctic's harsh and delicate ecosystems, the full and effective participation of Arctic Fourth World nations is not only a precursor to their own geopolitical assertions, it is imperative for the safety and security of all parties that have vested interests in the region.

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About the Author



Ms. Heidi Bruce was born and grew up in a trilingual (English, Spanish, and German) home in Alaska, USA. She is a writer, researcher and an avid traveler. She earned her Master degree in intercultural service from the SIT Graduate Institute (formerly known as the School for International Training) in Vermont, USA. As part of her field-based studies Heidi worked as a research assistant with the Center for World Indigenous Studies where she investigated historical food security and climate change adaptation in western Mexico.

Contact

heidigisela76@gmail.com

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