

Arctic and Wilderness Travel—Hosts and Guests: The Territory of Nunavut, Canada

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Abstract—The semi-autonomous Territory of Nunavut in Arctic Canada requires a policy that induces economic diversification and equity for the Inuit population. Though mining continues as the primary economic activity, a focus on preserving Inuit wilderness skills would support cultural continuity and diversification of the Nunavut economy. Traditional Inuit life ways draw no line between culture and the environment. Guiding travelers in the Arctic provides a modest income and cultural integrity. Learning stewardship from northern peoples, we can restore our environment that technological culture has so compromised. To ensure continuity of all life on this planet, the developed world can learn from the cultural ways of peoples who have remained as one with the land. In the Arctic, travelers are guests, de facto students; and the Inuit, as hosts, are our teachers.

Introduction

My purpose in this paper is to argue that the economy of the North and wilderness travel have positive implications for both hosts (Inuit) and guests (travelers). This is a case-based study of one set of links: the Inuit of the Canadian Arctic Territory of Nunavut and those of us who visit that territory primarily from America and Europe. There is a potential for reciprocity: traditional hosts have become increasingly reliant on nations represented by guests for the material goods of agricultural and industrial societies; guests from the progressive world have lost much of our spiritual bearings connecting us to the land. As a hunting and gathering culture, to ensure their survival, the Inuit have for millennia remained effective stewards of the land.

As a dedicated arctic traveler, I utilize field experience, analysis, and reflection with an orientation to the costs and benefits of travel and tourism. Nunavut, in Inuktitut, the language of the Inuit (“the people”), means “our land.” Nunavut (fig. 1) was created on April 1, 1999, as the Inuit homeland of Canada’s northern-most people.

Nunavut is 777,660 mi² (2,014,230 km²) constituting 20 percent of Canada. By comparison, Greenland—considered part of North America by geologists and geographers—at 50 times the size of Denmark, is substantially larger at 2,175,613 km² / 840,004 mi². Alaska, with 700,140,613 km² / 656,424 mi², constitutes the smallest jurisdiction of these

three geopolitical entities that constitute the Arctic region of the Western Hemisphere. Each now has what is termed “home rule,” and has adopted a policy to promote tourism as a source of economic gain while sporadically regulating its absorption into village life ways.

Arctic tourism is specifically wilderness travel—wilderness being a well known but casually used term. Precision requires definition of wilderness because how wilderness is defined determines government policy, implementation, and land use. Wilderness has been defined within the context of ecology, wildlife biology, conservation, land use, travel and tourism, and by the individual traveler.

My thoughts follow two streams. One stream is the concept of wilderness: How is wilderness specified, or otherwise characterized by regulatory authorities where a governing entity defines wilderness by statute and associated rule making? The other stream, composed of “hosts” and “guests,” represents a relationship of reciprocity. This latter stream is “re-creation” or spiritual empowerment of travelers in Arctic lands. And I prefer the term “traveler” to “tourist.” To me, a tourist is one who follows the crowd whereas a traveler does not move about—particularly those visitors to the Arctic—in large groups. Turk (2005: 179) employs the Russian word *puteshestvenik* as a more descriptive synonym for the concept of traveler as “a wandering storyteller, one who carries the news, links cultures, and transfers technology.”

Stephen L. J. Smith (2000: 350), tourism and recreation consultant at the University of Waterloo, Canada, notes that American Transcendentalists of 19th century America re-constructed the wilderness as “a source of sublime inspiration and an antidote to the spiritual illness of civilization.” Remarking on contemporary life, Thomas Urquhart (2004), Executive Director of the Maine Audubon Society, describes our metaphysical search, which, literally, extends from a weekend excursion to a lifelong search. Dismissing the terms “sacred,” “mystical,” “religious,” and “spiritual” to characterize this search, he settles on the phrase: “sense of wonder,” that is, the state in which we are born and which we have genetically inherited from our hunter/gatherer ancestors. I use the word “spiritual,” both as noun and adjective, to represent that “sense of wonder” that I experience when being in the Arctic with those who live close to the land. The terms “hosts” and “guests” are borrowed from Smith (1989). These two streams conjoin to realize a flow of synergy where both hosts and guests benefit.

Four national parks have been established in Nunavut and designated—at least in part—as wilderness under the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement of April 1, 1999. Given the limited seasonal nature of northern travel, an Arctic economy cannot be built on tourism and wilderness travel alone. The most important natural resource-based activity—economically in the Arctic in a post-fur/Hudson Bay era—is mining minerals from coal to oil to uranium, and now diamonds. The

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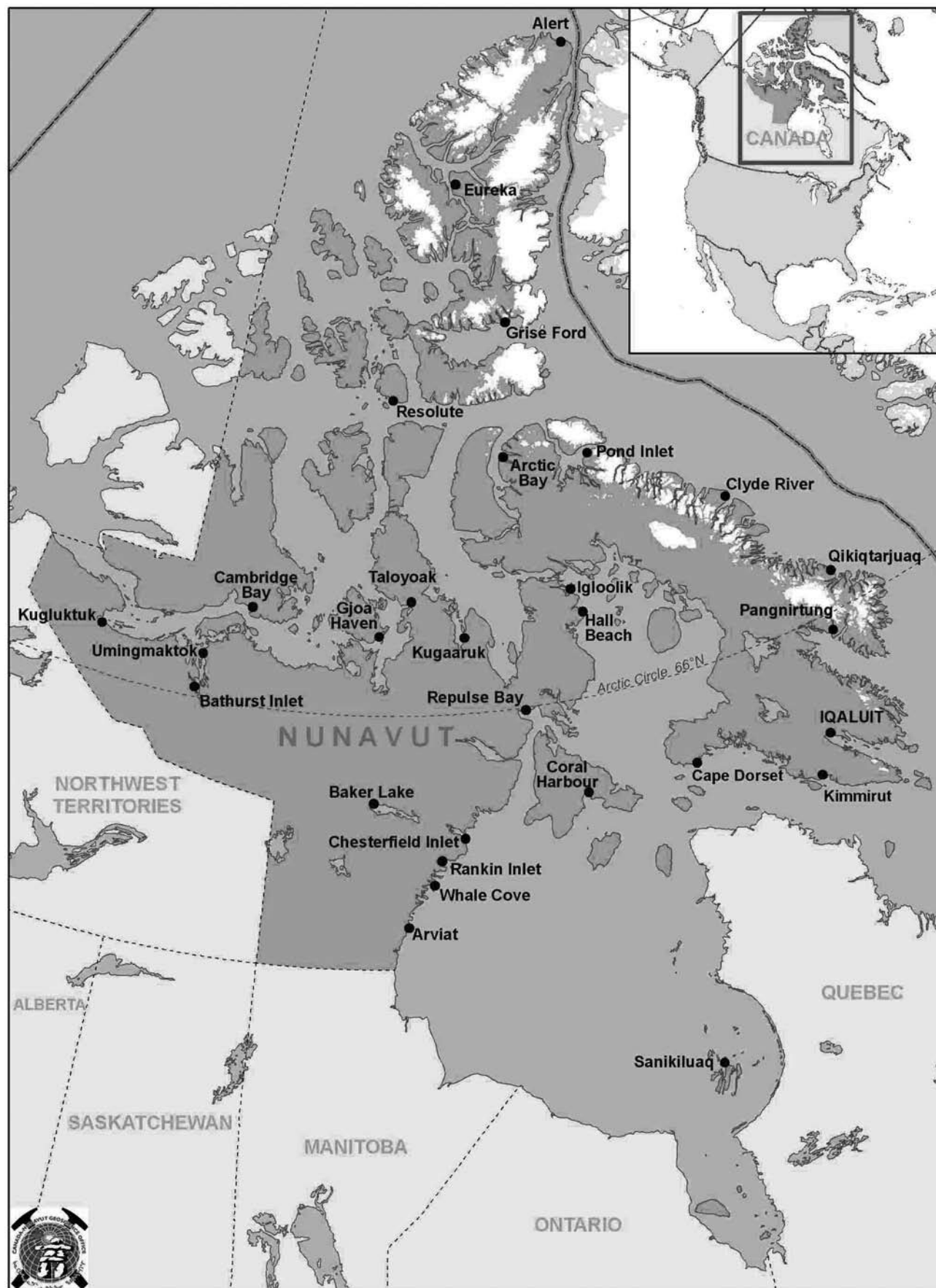


Figure 1—Map: Canadian Territory of Nunavut (courtesy of Canada-Nunavut Geoscience Office, Iqaluit, Nunavut, Canada).

hunter/gatherer economy of the Inuit endures a great deal of stress as a subsistence economy is being displaced by a market economy. Consequently, the Inuit people experience an on-going interaction—of disconnect—between the culture of the “traditional” and that of the “introduced.”

Defining Wilderness

The *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) presents three definitions of wilderness: uncultivated land; a land uninhabited except by wild animals; and, a piece of land in a large garden or park planted with trees laid out in the form of a maze. Geographer I. G. Simmons (1993) traces the etymology of the word *wilderness* to the Old English as *wil(d)-deorness*, “the place of the wild deer.” Environmental historian, William Cronon (1983), writes that colonial Europeans believed that New England was founded upon an “untouched” *wilderness*, the land given exclusively by God even though “American Indians” had been burning off the land for thousands of years to enhance the population of deer. One would be hard pressed to find a space—anywhere—where human beings have not manipulated the land; Antarctica may be an exception. Cronon (1995) writes that culture creates *wilderness*. Thoreau, Emerson, and other American Transcendentalists (Melville, Alcott, Hawthorne) perceived *wilderness* as a place to celebrate unspoiled nature, the revelation of the Divine.

Smith, in the *Dictionary of Concepts in Recreation and Leisure Studies* (2000: 349), suggests two criteria for wilderness, “an unspoiled environment” and “social value ... whether society values wilderness as good or bad [and] ...” *Wilderness* is:

1. A large tract of land that retains its natural primeval quality that is free of observable human impact. 2. Such a tract of land officially designated as “wilderness” by a public agency.

Smith’s definition constitutes the *realpolitik* of *wilderness*, because today government sets the standards for wilderness use. Nature writer David Oates in *Paradise Wild* (2003) in a chapter entitled “Wilderness” cites the U.S. Wilderness Act of 1964 as the “gold standard” of *wilderness*—at least in North America. Landscape historian Kent C. Ryden (2001: 9) writes of the downside of defining wilderness:

[I]f we set aside and venerate particular pieces of the landscape as “wilderness,” then we implicitly write off the rest of the landscape as irrevocably cultural, surrendered to human influence, not worth focusing environmental energies on.

Oates (2003: 26) writes of the Act that “[wilderness is an area] untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain. The operating assumption, a kind of formula, is that ‘wilderness equals no people.’” Oates (2003: 37) draws from the dry language of the 1964 Act the psychological and/or aesthetic implications that humans experience in the wilderness without the insulating cocoon of 21st century technology and social amenities:

[H]umans do, habitually and nearly universally, experience a ‘something’ when in the forceful presence of nature.... I don’t know what that something is. But, I’ll call it the wild.

Cronon (1995: 89) concurs; the *wild*, “... dwells everywhere within and around us.” To summarize, *wilderness* represents a unity of the positions advocated by Oates and Smith. It

incorporates Oates’s concept of the *wild* that resides individually within us as Urquhart’s “sense of wonder” which drives us to seek an expression of the wild on lands where nature holds dominion. Smith presents us with the reality of the state’s legal delineation of land as *wilderness* with all the attendant ecological, economic, social and political implications.

The Arctic Wilderness

Point Barrow, the northernmost point in Alaska, is located at slightly over 71°16’ North. By comparison, Ellesmere Island, in the Canadian Queen Elizabeth Islands (now the Inuit Territory of Nunavut), extends to 83°10’; Greenland extends to 83°40’. An immense Arctic territory lies north and east of Alaska in North America. However, its population density implies the emptiness of wilderness. Table 1 enumerates the human density of northern lands, circumscribed either by natural boundaries (usually water) or political boundaries (artificial). The farther north one travels, the larger are the units of land on which people organize to sustain their culture, thus realizing an inverse relationship between latitude and population: the greater the latitude, the smaller the population—as well as a diminution of the carrying capacity of the land.

Decreased density is not surprising as the solar-dependent biological carrying capacity of the land decreases with increase in latitude. For example, population density in Maine, New Brunswick, and Newfoundland are counted in terms of “tens of people” per land unit, in Labrador “tenths of people,” in Nunavut and Greenland “hundredths of people.” It is with these data in mind and actually walking these lands, one develops a sense of the immensity of these lands and the implications for human culture—and for *wilderness*. The political jurisdictions in table 1, with the exception of Alaska, are those areas I frequent. As an observation, I offer that there is an apparent correlation between population density and degree of wilderness.

Table 1—Selected areas and population density (sources: Statistics Canada; U.S. Bureau of the Census; Goode’s World Atlas).

Place	Area	Population	Density
	km ² / mi ²	2000/1	km ² / mi ²
Maine	91,652	1,305,728 ^a	14.24
	35,387	36.90	
New Brunswick	73,439	729,498	9.93
	28,355	25.73	
Newfoundland	108,860	458,066	4.21
	42,031	10.90	
Labrador	296,861	27,864	0.09
	114,618	0.24	
Greenland	2,175,610	59,300	0.03
	840,004	0.07	
Nunavut	1,994,000	26,745	0.01
	777,660	0.03	
Alaska	1,700,140	648,818 ^a	0.38
	656,424	0.99	

^a U.S. Bureau of the Census (2003 estimate).

Looking beyond population and ecology, how can we geographically or climatically categorize, in the Arctic, a *wilderness* that may exist only on ice and then for only part of the year as large expanses of ice, known popularly as the *floe edge* or *fast ice*. Fast ice, defined by the Ice Service of Environment Canada (2001/2002: 13) is: Sea ice which forms and remains fast along the coast where it is attached to the shore, between shoals or grounded icebergs. Fast ice may be formed in situ from the freezing of seawater, or by the freezing of pack ice to the shore. It may extend a few meters or several hundred kilometers from the coast, and it may be more than one year old (second year or multi-year fast ice).

Wilderness travelers, too, observe the return of life to the floe edge as polar bears, seals, and narwhales migrate. The Government of Nunavut designates these land-fast ice zones with the same status as parks and conservation areas (Nunavut Land Claims Agreement (May 25, 1993) (Article 26 Outer Fast Ice Zone—East Baffin Coast, 144–145). Does *wilderness* need to be vegetated? Are deserts *wilderness*? Are Arctic deserts *wilderness*, bearing in mind that the Canadian Arctic Island of Ellesmere receives less precipitation than does the Sahara Desert? Is *wilderness* determined by geography or by ecology? Simmons (1993: 161) suggests at least a historical criterion of “vegetation” for the condition of *wilderness*—or, in the absence of vegetation, “...the term desert was favored.” Environmental philosopher Andrew Light (1995: 28) writes of the classical use of the term *wilderness* “as applied [only] to green spaces.” Is the Arctic, then, essentially a desert biome, *wilderness*?

The Nunavut Land Claims Agreement (May 25, 1993) establishing the Territory of Nunavut does define the term *wilderness* in Article 8 Parks, Part 1: Definitions, as “... extensive areas which are good representations of each natural history themes [sic.] of the Park and which will be maintained in a wilderness state” (p. 71). Three of four Canadian national parks identified in the Agreement now exist in Nunavut. I discuss these three parks under “Wilderness travel.”

Arctic Wilderness: Travel and “Re-Creation”

One would be hard pressed to define the Inuit Territory of Nunavut with a population registering in hundredths of an inhabitant per kilometer or mile as not wilderness. Oates concludes (2003: 21) that “it’s hard to separate ‘culture’ from ‘nature’” because it is humanity’s adaptation to the environment that constitutes culture, the skills and associated language of a people in a given place. This statement has particular relevance to the Inuit of the Arctic where it is literally impossible for their culture to survive if the Inuit are not out on the land employing knowledge and skills refined over the millennia. The recently released Inuit film, *Atanarjuat: The Fast Runner* (2000), dramatically portrays Nunavut, where nature and culture are spiritually joined, thus avoiding the Western dualism of humans versus nature.

One needs to look beyond our urbanized, technologically dependent economy and fissiparous society to find a place such as the Arctic, with a tradition of hunter/gatherer living on the land as hunter/gatherer. Hugh Brody (2000) writes of these places, while with the Canadian Department of Indian

and Northern Affairs in the 1970s, in the Inuit settlement of Pond Inlet of northern Baffin Island. Brody, an anthropologist fluent in Inuktitut, writes of how our species has functioned for 200,000 to 400,000 years as hunter/gatherers as we wandered the Earth. He writes that in northern places he has found a correlation of “the wild” with hunter/gatherer societies that have lived close to the wilderness of nature for immeasurable generations. It is here with some distant level of subliminal cognition that guests to these northern lands connect with the culture of the hosts.

If we strike a mean of 300,000 years of hunter/gatherer existence on the Earth with 30 years represented per generation, we realize 10,000 generations as hunter/gatherer with nature versus the settled lives of urban dwellers apart from nature for about 6,000 years (200 generations). For a period of up to 4,000 years (McGhee 1996) 133 generations of Inuit and their ancestors have survived in the harsh Arctic as very effective hunters. Canadian archaeologist Robert McGhee (2005: 35) recently concluded that the Inuit, like other “... Farmers, fishers, and other commercial harvesters,” have realized the advantages of ‘monocropping,’ that is focused hunting, particularly on sea mammals and caribou.

Today’s Inuit have inherited a vast knowledge—wisdom—of living with nature. Diamond (2005) believes that the Inuit are the best hunters to have ever lived in the North. In point of fact, they prevailed over both the Dorset culture and the Norse Vikings. Brody (2000: 247-248) remarks that:

With a...mixture of information and shamanism, hunter-gatherers signal and accept that their world is not in their control. They prosper by knowing, not by controlling ... They understand the world and make critical decisions about it without trusting to dichotomies of either rationality or ethics. By escaping mere facts, they discover the most important facts of all.

The life ways of 10,000 generations of ancestry can guide us in our urban life ways to give rise, for example, to the need for a vacation through which we relive our ancestry by gathering sensual experiences where nature is omnipotent, as in mountains or on Arctic lands. A vacation breaks one’s daily routine for recreation, for renewal of health, for refreshment of strength and spirit. Hyphenating the word recreation as re-creation conveys the essence of that concept. One particular form of re-creation that most effectively captures a spiritual *joie de vivre* is wilderness travel in places where our kind has not obliterated the dynamics of nature.

Wilderness and culture can conjoin through a heartfelt “sense of place,” for example, on the coast of Maine, in the Torngat Mountains of Labrador, in the outports of Newfoundland, and in the Inuit villages of Nunavut and Greenland. Here, nature is less touched by technology, less subject to the temporal whims of humans. Time in the wilderness, as a re-creation experience, engenders a restorative use of the senses, opening us to a fleeting connection with our hunter/gatherer ancestors.

The term *wilderness* is also a word with spiritual content. Graburn (1989: 26) pursues the point of spirituality in *Tourism: The Sacred Journey*:

[H]olidays (holy sacred days are now celebrated by traveling away from home) are what makes “life worth living” as though ordinary life is not life or at least not the kind of life worth living...we celebrate with TGIF (Thank God It’s

Friday) [as we move from the profane to the sacred time of weekend—or of vacation].

This condition of alienation, of spiritual malaise, raises the question of why is it that Arctic travel is so attractive—particularly to those travelers who continue to return. We of Euro-American society seek the integrative wholeness of the wilderness experience through re-creational activity. Many of us would remain there except for the “bread question” of making a living. For Oates (2003) and Brody (2000: 292) the attractiveness of Canadian Arctic villages, such as Pond Inlet and Arctic Bay, serve as a counterbalance to outside influences that fragment culture:

The [culture of the] hunter-gatherer mind is humanity’s most sophisticated combination of detailed knowledge and intuition. It is where direct experience and metaphor unite in a joint concern to know and use the truth ... [as opposed to our] ... specialized, intense development of specific systems of intellectual order, with many kinds of analytical category and exacting uses of deductive reasoning.

Visitors to Arctic settlements are likely to experience visual discord as northern communities are caught with the presence of Euro-American cultural influences such as Pizza Huts and Subways, TVs and ATVs, cell phones and computers. But there are laudatory examples of cultural conjoining. A friend, Meeka Kilabuk (fig. 2), former fishing camp operator and a member of the team that crafted the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement, works on Saturday afternoons as a DJ on her own program out of Iqaluit (WWW.CKIQ.CA). She speaks of the value of traditional knowledge and life ways. The Inuit recognize this need to retain their culture as demonstrated in the video *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit/Inuit Traditional Knowledge* produced by the Government of Nunavut (2003). This video sends the message that when the Inuit engage in Western practices, as they must, there is the felt need



Figure 2—Meeka Kilabuk, Arctic Symposium, Bates College, Lewiston, Maine (photo by author).

to incorporate Inuit culture. For example, posters in public places exhort all to “eat country food” [seal, caribou, fish] instead of imported processed foods [tonics, candy, potato chips] high in sugar, fat, and salt.

A related activity is the reviving of bone and stone carving of traditional Inuit motifs that are quality controlled through co-ops and the awarding of a quality control label on each object sold. Fine art printing and weaving have followed, with outlets in major Canadian cities.

Economy and Cultural Change

Three primary economic activities—hunter/gatherer, mining, tourism (with crafts trade and wilderness travel)—co-exist as subsistence and market economies for the aboriginal people of Nunavut. Hunter/gatherer constitutes the traditional subsistence economy of the Arctic, with its products (meat, bone, hide) used within the village. Hunter/gatherer Inuit culture thrives on ring seal, the linchpin of a subsistence economy, for food, fuel, clothing, tools, weapons, and material to use in komatek and kayak construction.

Mining

Surface and subsurface natural resource extraction on the Canadian Shield stretches over about half of Canada. As an extractive activity, inevitably mines play out or become uneconomical as with the lead/zinc/silver mines in Nanisivik, now closed after 22 years of operation. Still operating after 24 years is the Polaris site (N 75°30' in the High Arctic), which is the world’s northernmost mine producing zinc, lead, and calcium. Changes in market demand and new technologies may reduce, if not eliminate, the need for a given commodity and, hence, jobs for local workers. Exploration continues. Again, to reference Diamond (2005: 379):

[T]he essence of mining is to exploit resources that do not renew themselves with time, and hence to deplete those resources. Since [for example], gold in the ground doesn’t breed more gold.

Commercial mining in the Arctic of recent origin—particularly diamond mining—is perhaps the equivalent of three human generations. Conversely, human culture in the Arctic from the Paleoeskimoos through the Dorset, and the Thule (now referenced as Inuit) has existed at least 4,000 years (McGhee 1996; Schledermann 1996). Diamonds may be forever; mines are not.

Mining activity and its infrastructure continue to expand in the north, as the increasing world population—tripling in the last 65 years—demands more minerals and energy. Many cultures have been drawn, through the global economy, into the Western paradigm of expansion and consumption. As readily accessible mineral concentrations are exhausted, extractive activities must locate in demanding, harsh locations, such as the Arctic. The quest for mineral deposits moves ever farther north into the upper reaches of Ellesmere Island at about 82 degrees north. Indeed, when one proceeds north on First Air (airline of the Canadian north), a seat mate is quite likely to be a geologist conducting a mineral exploration or a miner returning from time off with family.

To service the Nanisivik mine in northern Baffin, transportation infrastructure (port facilities, an airport and scheduled

transportation services) were built and so far continue to be maintained. This same infrastructure supports travel, unrelated to mining, to northern Baffin. In light of a looming shutdown of the mine, residents in Iqaluit and in Pond Inlet voice their anxiety as to whether First Air would continue to fly to Nanisivik, Pond Inlet, or Arctic Bay when the mine at Nanisivik plays out. However, those of us wanting a wilderness experience have a reprieve. A new mine with a very large concentration of high-grade iron ore, is being opened just south of Pond Inlet in Mary River by the Baffinland Iron Mines Corporation of Toronto, Canada (see www.baffinland.com/project). The Nunavut Land Claims Agreement (Article 25 Resource Royalty Sharing, Part 1: Inuit Right to Royalty) requires annually that 50 percent of the first \$2,000,000 of resource royalties and 5 percent of any additional royalty paid to the Government of Canada shall be deposited in the Inuit Heritage Trust.

Though mining provides a continuation for an important income stream and transportation accessibility, it does not guarantee continuity of Inuit culture and community. The extent of Inuit employment by mining companies is unknown, though I suspect that indigenous employment is more likely associated with the harbor and airport in Pond Inlet.

The *modus operandi* of the global economy is rapid, short-term economic gain with accountability only to stockholders' demands and does not assure continuation of a community or a culture, especially in a harsh and high investment environment. In the long run, royalties as a percentage of generated revenue could be rather limited, particularly for administering a territory that accounts for one-fifth the territory of Canada, the world's second largest nation state.

Tourism

Crafts. Crafts originate from local materials, animals (seals, polar bears, caribou), soapstone, and fossil bones. As northern peoples have become increasingly dependent upon products from the south, new or enhanced sources of income are essential for this exchange of goods, such as gasoline and heating oil, building materials, snowmobiles, and ATVs. Arts and crafts, such as the carving of an Inuit family portrayed in figure 3, generate income from travelers as well as from retail outlets in Canada, Seattle, New York and Europe. Each Inuit village may specialize in a particular medium: Pond Inlet and Clyde River with carvings from narwhal ivory, Cape Dorset and Kimmirut with carvings from soapstone, Pangnirtung with tapestries, and Iqaluit with prints. Several of these crafts are not indigenous but have been introduced to Nunavut for purposes of employment and income. Introduced crafts include large carvings, weaving, printmaking, and design of ceremonial masks. Admiring and collecting crafts provide an entrée to a culture by presenting a way to think about and to appreciate the creativity of another people. Travelers from a mass production economy treasure these exquisite pieces in which the Inuit culture and the spirit of Arctic have been united.

A major marketing problem, however, is that the U.S. Marine Mammal Protection Act [MMPA] of 1972 forbids the importation of all animal products made from marine mammals. For example, Aaju Peter of Iqaluit (fig. 4), who employs six or seven native women to fashion clothing from fur, cannot sell her products in the United States. Ironically,



Figure 3—Carving: “Inuit Family” (photo by author).

70 percent of all other Canadian furs made available to the market are sold to the U.S. Aaju Peter, who received her law degree in 2005, hopes to have the next word.

Outsiders' perceptions of sealing have been, historically, created by the visual media. Coverage of the annual seal hunt on the ice of the Gulf of St. Lawrence was justified a few decades ago as a condemnation of brutal commercial sealing because of the highly marketable pure white coats of newborn seals. The animal is clubbed to death and skinned en situ with only the pelt taken. Subsequently, the U.S. Congress added seals to the 1972 MMPA, which made the importation of seal products—along with that of whale, walrus, and polar bear products—into the U.S. illegal. Then in 1983, the European Community [EC] followed suit but with a focused boycott directed only to preventing “the industrial-scale killing of harp and hooded seals” (Wenzel 2000: 186). Geographically, the EC closure was directed specifically at the Gulf of St. Lawrence, not at all Canadian waters, nor was it directed at the mainstay of the Inuit—the ring seal. Thus, clothing designers, such as Aaju Peter, travel to Paris to market fur creations that are largely made from ring seal.

The Inuit depend upon sealing primarily for subsistence and only secondarily for market trade. Sealing is not just for the pelt but for the whole animal. Harvesting is done one animal at a time, by rifle or spear, as an Inuk hunter waits patiently, much like a polar bear, at a breathing hole in the ice that a seal keeps open. The seal is to the Inuit what all of our meat and leather-bearing animals, as well as many fruits and vegetables, are to us. Raw seal meat is a significant source of vitamin C. The Inuit feed themselves and their dogs with the complete carcass of the animal and then process the pelts for clothing and for a myriad of other applications, such as bone for carvings. Not a whisker goes unused. The people of the north live on a land with little in terms of resources for the market economy. In the Arctic, agriculture is impossible, and manufacturing is little in



Figure 4—Aaju Peter in her exquisitely handcrafted sealskins - Devon Island, Nunavut (photo by author).

evidence. As Mortensen (2001: 343) speaks of Greenland, traditional hunters have become “dependent on high-technology hunting tools and other aids, almost all of which must be imported.” And, “It is through the sale of sealskins that the hunter gets most of his cash profits [which remain in the market economy]. This is no different from Nunavut.

Unfortunately for the Inuit, the MMPA applies broad-brush strokes, by including all marine mammal species. Traditionally, animals taken in the hunt as subsistence activity is more than a Milton Friedman-type methodical externalization of non-market social and economic factors. Rather, according to Wenzel (2000: 181):

[S]ubsistence is about reciprocal relationships that include shared social responsibility as much as they do kilograms of meat, in which all community members contribute their knowledge of animals and the environment, energy in hunting and processing food, and equipment and/or money as they are available.

The dominant American model of an economic system largely negates or excludes a social function that the Inuit

traditional system gives at least equal value. Therefore, this imported “theory of value” is deficient in satisfying the traditional cultural needs of the Inuit.

As an Inuit government spokesperson states in the video, *Waiting at the Edge, Protecting Our Traditions* (no date), “The population of our people is only 27,000—probably a smaller number than the population of registered lobbyists in the greater Washington, DC, area. How can we contend with the big government in Washington and with the lobbyists who worked to ban sealing?” Inuit artists, from a marketing perspective, are in a bind because the U.S. is Canada’s largest trading partner and the primary source of non-resident travelers.

Wilderness Travel. Visits to the Canadian Arctic for pleasure began a decade ago with the establishment of a system of national parks in Nunavut and creation of the Inuit-owned First Air. Scheduled air service has made a northern wilderness experience accessible for guest populations. Tourism, that is wilderness travel, in Nunavut is strongly encouraged by the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement (Article 8: Parks, Part 2: National Parks and Part 3: Territorial Parks. Identified for establishment and management in the early 1990s are the national park of Auyuittuq (“the land that never melts”); Ellesmere; and, a “National Park—North Baffin,” which was opened in 2003 as Sirmilik (“place of glaciers”). A fourth park (not covered here) was only identified in 2005. Each park contains a “predominant proportion” of Zone II—Wilderness defined as “...extensive areas which are good representations of each natural history themes of the Park and which will be maintained in a wilderness state.”

- Ellesmere National Park (North 81°40’), with ice shelves, Lake Hazen—the largest freshwater lake north of 80 degrees latitude—the northernmost Inuit settlement at Grise Fiord and Fort Conger—the jumping off point for Polar expeditions;
- Auyuittuq National Park (North 66°40’), with Thor Peak (almost a mile high) has the highest uninterrupted cliff face in the world; the Arctic Circle crosses through the Park; and, the great variety and concentration of arctic flora; and
- Sirmilik National Park (North 73°20’), located on Bylot Island, is the third largest of Canada’s national parks.

Wilderness travel at these northern latitudes on the land/ice with Inuit guides often tests one’s mental and physical fortitude: ascending over loose rock of glacial moraines; crossing the floe edge on a komatek; traversing swollen, cold glacial streams while precariously balancing a pack; or, slogging through a mix of cold and snow—even in summer. “Being” on this land is not figurative; this wilderness challenges one’s attention to each moment, to one’s surroundings, to one’s every footfall.

Merging Two Economic Systems: Traditional and Market-Oriented

Brody (2000: 27) concludes that the Inuit have been effectively moved from life on the land into settlement life that creates “a

reliance upon wage employment (and therefore the creation of unemployment).” To enhance Inuit employment in the traditional practices of hunting and gathering, the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement (1993: 146), Article 17: (Purposes of Inuit Owned lands. Part 1: General) states that:

The primary purpose of Inuit Owned Lands shall be to provide Inuit with rights in land that promote economic self-sufficiency of Inuit through time, in a manner consistent with Inuit social and cultural needs and aspirations (emphasis added).

Article 5: (Wildlife. Part 7: Special Features of Inuit Harvesting) directs oversight for harvesting to each community’s Hunters and Trappers Organization [HTO]. An associated system of subsidies from both federal and territorial governments ensures a continuation of hunting and gathering activities oriented to “social and cultural needs.” This system of local HTOs bridges traditional subsistence hunting with involvement in the traveler-based market economy, both activities are predicated upon the application of traditional knowledge. The Nunavut Land Claims Agreement provides for federal monies (Article 37: Implementation of Agreement) to be directed to economic opportunities, training, and park establishment and management.

An overview of Nunavut demonstrates that mining provides benefits since it brings in hard currency and supports transportation networks to serve mining operations and makes it possible for travelers to visit the North. This opportunity for wilderness travel on ice, water and land attracts visitors. Most visitors purchase crafts as mementos of Arctic travel. The people of Nunavut are now filmmakers. Receiving international recognition, *Atanarjuat: The Fast Runner*, uses cinematography to communicate a traditional myth. Figure 5 is an image of Pakak Innuksuk, a lead actor in *The Fast Runner*—the “good” brother killed in the film and an Inuit guide whom I had the pleasure of meeting as a guide in the Canadian High Arctic. Canadian archaeologist Robert McGhee (2005) would give a “thumbs up” sign of approval to the Inuit telling their own story instead of the interpretive chronicling by anthropologists, explorers, and adventurers from the outside world.

Conclusions

Reciprocity between the Inuit as hosts and wilderness travelers as guests has developed. Guides “live” (practice) traditional skills on the land and receive financial compensation for this activity. Travelers are absorbed in a re-creation experience of the Arctic that requires being sensually “present” on and with the land. The expression of reciprocity is more in the inclusive community sense of friend than in the sense of the exclusive economic reciprocity of the market. Anthropologist Marshall Sahlins (1972) describes a “theory of reciprocity” in which there may not be balanced compensation but there is mutual helpfulness.

Through language, we ultimately understand the meaning of *wilderness*. Culture by definition is ethnocentric. Thus, for example, the names of many indigenous groupings translate to “the people” as is the case with the Inuit. As well, there is the universal practice of projecting one’s own

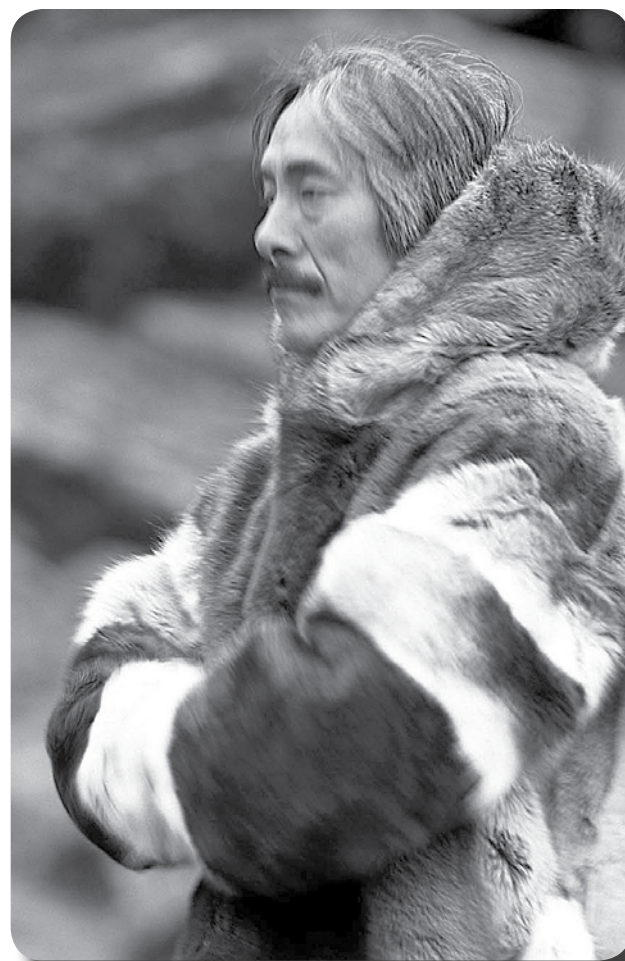


Figure 5—Actor and guide Pakak Innuksuk (photo by author).

cultural conceptualizations, primarily through language, onto another place—that of the host. However, our idea of *wilderness* (and, it is just that, “ours”) derives much of its meaning from Disney, television nature programming and academia. For example, *wilderness* with its tradition of greenery and munching ungulates is one such limited perception. *Wilderness* can also be a world of whiteness and ice. Indeed, *wilderness* is not only a Western concept, but it is an elusive concept, as I think this paper demonstrates.

Landscape, itself, is a concept originating in our Western culture. Meeka Kilabuk, my Inuk friend, queried my repeated use and meaning of “Arctic landscape.” She points out that “We”, the Inuit, talk simply of the land so why not talk of *land*. The term *landscape* derives from an early 17th century European genre of painting and then was later employed to describe landscape gardening. Quite literally the term means to “shape the land.” As a hunter/gatherer culture—with neither agriculture nor permanent settlement—the Inuit do very little shaping of the land. They are *on* the land, *of* the land. My conclusions now summarize what they as “hosts” and we as “guests” can offer each other through our contact in the land of the north.

Hosts

There is need for an enlightened Territorial—and Federal—policy that promotes economic diversification and equity where one economic activity can complement another, such as the fit of mining, craft industry and wilderness travel. Market promotion of Inuit wilderness skills and an integration of those skills with wilderness travel are key to success. Cultural continuity and subsistence are assured only through traditional Inuit life ways that draw no line between culture and environment. Guiding wilderness travelers in the Arctic is a means of providing a modest income, with dignity, for the few Inuit people.

Essentially the introduced economic activities in Nunavut—mining, wilderness-travel, and crafts—complement one another. As demand for natural resources grows, those resources located in the far corners of the planet have gained in importance. Wilderness is a resource, too—and increasingly so. Canadian tourism authority and Professor of Geography Geoffrey Wall (2000: 627) writes, “The value ascribed to wilderness has increased over time as its supply has been reduced and more people have come to live in cities.” Wilderness travel is non-extractive, and wilderness travelers do not dominate the land. Rather, they seek communion with the land to sense what the land holds.

Trade in arts and crafts and wilderness travel would not be possible, despite the wealth of artisans, without the transportation infrastructure. The irony is that transportation is possible through the economies associated with mining. Infusions of income into Inuit villages are most definitely welcome, but this transfer of profits cannot promise that Inuit cultural practices will endure. It is likely that little income, as I have suggested, can be generated at the local level in terms of wages. Any economic activity gives a few Inuit a solid reason to continue to practice their traditional ways on the land and to retain a rich culture.

Even a seasonal wilderness travel market can help promise a continued flow of employment and income that flows directly into the hands of local villages. Films could be a valuable export, as the content speaks of the unity of land and culture. The primary resource demanded by the cinema is talent and training, which makes this industry labor intensive. Wilderness travel is more likely to accomplish a continuance of native life in the Arctic through paying compensation to Inuit for their skills guiding guests from the south.

Guests

A group of us were traveling together in June 2003 on the ice out of western Baffin Bay, somewhat to the south of the entrance to the Northwest Passage. Our party consisted of Dave Reid, owner/operator of Polar Sea Adventures, two Inuit guides from Pond Inlet, our cook from Ontario, and six wilderness travelers—including a writer/photographer from the United Kingdom, two cinematographers from Germany, a cinematographer from Canada, and myself as a geographer/photographer from the United States. When our conversation turned to Arctic tourism, the general conclusion is that the High Arctic will never be a place for mass tourism because of factors such as distance, cost, weather, discomfort, and a lack of social amenities expected by lower

latitude visitors. Rather, it is a place for the occasional, well-motivated traveler, the Russian *puteshestvenik* or wandering storyteller. The carrying capacity of the Arctic is not only low in biomass production and in its ability to sustain an indigenous human population but also limited in its ability to accommodate large numbers of tourists without compromising the psychological value of the northern experience. The wilderness of the Arctic resuscitates the wild within us. Wilderness—and by inference, the wild—is not necessarily a function of density—human population, trees, or deer. It is more a matter of a culture or a human cultural presence that rests easily on the land, its spiritual connection.

By being exposed to other cultures we learn about our own, essentially, the paradigm of anthropology. We of the “developed world” have much to learn from the indigenous “fourth world,” an aboriginal cultural enclave in an otherwise developed first world nation. Now, as we become more aware of the need for stewardship for planet Earth, we need to consciously sustain alternative social models rather than our own culture of “one size fits all” which is predicated upon unlimited resources.

Perhaps those of us who desire to travel outside of the usual geographical parameters are in the tails of the norm curve. The fortunate few of us who travel to the Arctic are immersed in the monumental proportions of the Arctic—glaciers and icebergs, mountains and endless plains—unimpeded by the works of humans. The exhilaration of a brief Arctic experience is re-creative in the profound stimulation of one’s senses. The intense Arctic light, magnified by the horizon-to-horizon whiteness of ice and snow, is the essence of spirit, of life. This light is life itself.

Most of my fellow Arctic travelers remain eager to return to this land of light and solitude, reviving us. We become sensually conscious of our surroundings and subsequently more adaptable to change and catastrophe—to adapt to survive. The genes of our hunter/gatherer ancestors call out to us “vacation,” that is, to at least temporarily vacate our urban or suburban habitat. Harkening to the words of Thoreau (1988), we are called to return to a place where culture and land are once more as one. In a sense, we have come full circle as we Euro-Americans once again become hunter/gatherers but not of flesh and root but to resurrect the wilderness experiences of our not far-removed ancestors.

There is significance for all of us in the value of near pristine lands and of the re-creative value of travel on these lands. It is increasingly critical for our species to recognize that other models for living exist. To borrow from the field of geology, we of the developed world are caught in a “Homogocene” of consumerism made manifest through a world of “stuff.” The Inuit, as well as other cultures that have maintained spiritual connection with the land, may very well carry the knowledge and wisdom that the developed world desperately needs to cope with inevitable change. The premise of Western man’s hierarchical dominion over nature needs to be tempered by the knowledge that we are subject to the same rules of survival as are all other species. That knowledge only comes from knowing the land, knowing our place on the land, and by “being” on the land. As geologists say, “truth is on the ground.”

Life without fully experiencing the full range of the senses is not life. How many of us are actually cognizant of light and that it means life. Arctic travelers return to the developed

world with the value of the experience. The wilderness experience is a rejuvenation of the creature of nature that we are. Otherwise we simply exist as fragmented beings within this complex, urbanized world. There is value in the bedrock existence of wilderness, particularly the re-creativity of the wilderness experience in the Earth's polar regions.

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