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# CHAPTER ONE

## The Inuit Gift

On July 7, 2007, I awoke early to a brilliant Arctic sun already high above my hotel in Kotzebue, Alaska. Kotzebue is a town that guidebooks refer to as a “working Arctic town,” or what I determined as code for “nothing to see here.” Such a description is in stark contrast to nearby Nome, which caters to tourists, Iditarod sledding enthusiasts, and gold rush history seekers. I traveled the extra leg to Kotzebue so I could attend the Inuit Circumpolar Youth Council (ICYC) language symposium. The invitation had been extended to me by Nome-born Patricia Cochran, international chair of the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC).<sup>1</sup> ICC represents Inuit people across the Arctic parts of Alaska, Canada, Russia, and Greenland.<sup>2</sup> ICC has both a youth council and an elders’ council in addition to the main political organization.

It was a privilege to be invited to the ICYC symposium in Kotzebue, but after I accepted, I realized the

symposium fell on the vaunted 7-7-7 date. I had originally planned to attend one of the Live Earth mega-concerts scheduled for that day. Live Earth, at that time, was one of the largest (and most expensive) efforts at generating public awareness and engagement with climate change. Many of the world's most popular musicians had signed on, and Al Gore's organization was programming the climate-related part of the program. It was meant to energize the faithful and convince others to care and do *something*—even switching light bulbs from incandescent to longer life compact fluorescents (CFLs) counted as a responsible response to climate change.

Each morning I was in Kotzebue, I would descend the stairs to the hotel lobby where a small group of male elders were chatting and laughing with one another in the seating area in front of registration. Tied together through networks of kinship and friendship, they came from various fly-in communities, like Point Hope, Kobuk, Barrow, and other villages in the northwest Arctic. The symposium was a reunion of sorts for everyone who attended. I was a bit of an anomaly, although they were certainly accustomed to scientists, social and otherwise, being in their midst to study them or their land.

The same group of elders had questioned me a day earlier about my identity. They were sure that I was a lawyer and had a good laugh when they found out I was a graduate student. Climate change as my topic of interest elicited a different response—the tone of the conversation shifted quickly. Several spoke very briefly and gravely of storms that had forced their whaling boats back in, changed game patterns, and continued dangerous erosion of their coastal villages. They didn't necessarily want to know what I was up to in an in-depth way, but they did want to inform me that these changes were very much an everyday concern for them.

On July 7, they were deep in conversation in their Iñupiaq dialect. We exchanged waves, and I headed out the front door beside them to be greeted by the gloriously bright sun and gently lapping waves of the Chukchi Sea. The dirt ring road about six feet from shore lay in front of the hotel and provided an easy footpath to the restaurant next door—one of only two or three places to eat out in a town of about 3,000 people. As I slid into a chair at the restaurant, I wondered if anyone in Kotzebue was aware or excited about the fact that somewhere in the world really famous musicians were rocking out about climate change to save the Arctic and, if one believed the most alarming projections, countries and land masses as we currently know them.

CNN was on in the restaurant, which doubled as a bar. It had updates from concerts under way in Tokyo and London. CNN's anchors were quite excited about the scientists' band broadcasting later on from Antarctica—excited, that is, in the canned performative way viewers have come to expect from on-air banter. I had to agree with their canned excitement, though. The “broadcasting from all seven continents” was a real novelty even if the seventh came by way of grainy satellite video from a socked-in Antarctic winter research station. That was it for a human polar presence, though—from the only continent devoid of indigenous human communities.

I glanced around the gritty restaurant with faded leather chairs and paneled walls. It occurred to me pretty quickly that I was the only one paying attention to the screens mounted on the ceiling above the bar. The wizened old fishermen in the booth behind me were talking about the relative merits of various winches and rigs. The elder Inuit couple and their grandchild in the booth beside them talked quietly. I couldn't make out what they were talking about, but they gave me a gentle nod to say hello, recognizing me from the symposium. Other breakfast-seekers straggled in over the next forty-five minutes, but the TV was mere background noise. Game day or election night this was not.

The Arctic was not center stage for Live Earth, despite the daily challenges of living in a vast expanse dotted with fly-in communities that have worked out a dependent relationship with ice and cold. The irrelevance of such an event to those actually experiencing the direct effects of climate change seemed palpable from this vantage point. Learning about compact fluorescent light bulbs just doesn't cut it as a solution when nearby, the ancient whaling village of Kivalina is in danger of being swept into the sea or, to put it less dramatically and more specifically, losing more and more of its small barrier island to permafrost melt and coastal erosion.

It has been argued that awareness-raising schemes like the massive undertaking of Live Earth are always removed, regardless of where one sits. Certainly, there were many critics and skeptics who wondered what the “real” net effect would be in terms of greenhouse gas emissions and the expense of broadcasting musicians like Sting, Madonna, and the Black-Eyed Peas live from large and fashionable metropolises like Tokyo, London, or Rio (Schagen 2007). Yet for those who long for a continued momentum of public interest and support for climate change action and the energizing of a new generation, there could be nothing better than a Live Aid for the Earth. After so many decades in which climate change re-

mained on what Gallup called “the public’s ‘back burner,’” it finally seemed that such a massive event might be a way to raise the profile of climate change the way Live Aid or Farm Aid or other celebrity-laden events had done for other issues.

Between this gulf of the local and global, the direct present experience and the conceptual future, lies the difficulty of communicating the amorphous nature of climate change as an issue of concern. How to talk about it, where it’s located, what the causal factors might be, when it may begin or how it already has, and any guesses at potential solutions appear, at first glance, to be audience-dependent. Locating what climate change means or when/how it is meaningful is a much more fraught process than what advocates or journalists might consider in their efforts to make an issue or a news story relevant to “audiences.” The rules, grammars, and associations related to climate change’s form of life are in motion. Locating oneself or an event in relation to climate change brings to bear history, collective identities, institutional regimes, and epistemological difference. For example, the fact that Live Earth tries to connect climate change not to where it’s happening or the people located there but to musicians and science and policy experts invests it with certain kinds of knowledge and politics.

I am beginning this book with my journeys to the Arctic because this is where climate change is a lived and felt reality. Beginning where climate change is already happening reveals the ways in which climate change has been shaped by scientific vernaculars and media discourse and the ways in which its form of life requires many different levels of negotiation by those who are implicated in the predictions and experiences associated with it. This chapter seeks to locate climate change in diverse Inuit discourse, contexts, and histories, and to locate Inuit claims and experiences in media and science-laden contexts where action, logics, and representations compete for dominance and prominence. Understood as an emergent form of life, particularly in the Arctic, climate change presents the need for excavation and reassessment of what a recognition of climate change portends for those who have endured a century of immense cultural, political, and environmental changes. My stark awakening to this began a day earlier, before I went looking for global climate change concerts.

## Climate Change as “a Three-Month Conversation”

When I first flew into Kotzebue, I wasn't sure what to expect. Most of the travelers at that time of day seemed to be local people. Though Kotzebue is small, there were two or three taxis waiting for disembarking passengers. I surmised that either locals often needed transport or much more traffic than I was aware of passed through here on the way to the nearby Red Dog mine (90 kilometers away), the offices for the Inupiat-owned Nana Regional Corporation, or any of the villages that formed a hub around “Kotz.”

My taxi driver wanted to know where I was from, what I was doing in town, and if I had ever been this far north. The thing about small towns is that once you land, there is a sense of obligation to identify and locate oneself among the pantheon of previous and future visitors. The ride to the hotel was probably about three to five minutes, yet it seemed to last much longer, providing me with my first glimpses of the Chukchi Sea.

The woman at the hotel desk was considerably more professional and urbane than the taxi driver. She checked me in without any small talk and gave me directions to the school gymnasium where the symposium was taking place. It was about a ten-minute walk and my first opportunity to wander through town. The streets were mostly empty and lined with weather-worn wooden houses and buildings. The Quaker church, a bright red barnlike structure, jumped out at me, as did the array of large satellite dishes, which I later figured out were next to the building that housed the radio station. Further from town, one could make out reddish-orange cranes at the shipping terminal on the edge of the water—the familiar outline of a working seaport.

I wandered down the gravel road that was a main street through town and found the school with little trouble. I entered what seemed to be the front door and followed the sounds of voices down the hall and past a large trophy case. There was no signage denoting the symposium, and hardly any hall lights were on.

When I entered the brightly lit gym, I had the distinct sensation of joining a community meeting of eighty to one hundred Inuit people. They mingled, drank coffee, and gossiped. The only people I vaguely knew were Patricia Cochran, whom I had met briefly at Arctic Science Summit Week some months earlier at Dartmouth College in New Hampshire, and Megan Alvanna-Stimpfle, chair of ICYC, whom I had spoken with on the

phone to secure her agreement for my attending the symposium. Needless to say, I was a bit of a curiosity. There were two other non-Inuit social science researchers there, I discovered later, but they were well known to all the participants, having either lived in Kotzebue or worked with the youth for some years.

I was greeted warmly. Most of the elders and leaders made a point of finding out who I was. Some thought I must be Inuit, which I'm not. I explained to many that I was an enrolled member of what was, for them, a "southern" Canadian tribe (the Tahltan Nation located near the Yukon/British Columbia border), but I was studying at MIT in Boston, and my research looked at the communication of climate change to Americans. My MIT status garnered more interest than my indigeneity, especially because I wasn't part of the sociopolitical or kinship fabric of any Arctic or sub-Arctic indigenous group. The responses to my research topic were varied, but one of my first conversations was transformative in a way I didn't anticipate.

A prominent locally elected official, upon hearing my personal and research introduction, said, "Climate change . . . we don't really talk much about that. It's more something they talk about on CNN. It's out there. It's not what *we* talk about." I was shocked by her comment, but intrigued as well. I wondered if I had misunderstood either her comment or climate change in the Arctic because environmental change related to massive warming trends all over the Arctic were being heavily discussed in Alaska at that time. The headline on the regional paper for the Kotzebue area announced the recent hearings by the Alaska Climate Impact Assessment Commission, which had two individuals from Kotzebue on it—another elected representative and an elder. Kotzebue is also a hub for ten nearby villages accessible mostly by boat, one of which is Kivalina.

Kivalina makes for a striking visual image. It is thousands of years old, located on a tiny barrier island whose edges are slowly being reclaimed by the sea. Several months after my trip to the area, the village leaders filed a lawsuit against major oil companies in order to cover the cost of moving their village from its barrier island to another location. Shishmaref, further north, had also been in global news reports on climate change—what some took to calling "climate porn" (Lowe 2006). Shishmaref can represent climate change in a way that makes it "real" and horrific by showing houses and a shoreline destroyed by permafrost melt, coastal erosion, and changing weather patterns—all attributable to climate change. In fact, Cochran had told me that earlier that year, Shishmaref had asked her to

pass on the message to interested media to give them a break for a bit. They were so inundated with media crews that it was beginning to become a problem for the small village. Climate change then was recognized as a serious challenge facing residents of Arctic Alaska *now*, not sometime in the distant future, and conversations with others revealed this quite vividly. How then to make sense of the resistance to climate change?

Hours later, I talked with Patricia Cochran about the CNN comment. She squeezed in a longer interview with me between conference sessions. We sat on a bench in front of the hotel, facing the Chukchi Sea—its waves gently lapping about three feet from us. Every so often, old friends or conference attendees driving or walking by would stop to say hello to her. We watched as a boat filled with younger men pulled out for points across the inlet. It was a beautiful view, with the sun high in the sky and the inlet seemingly going on forever in all directions.

It's not that people don't talk about climate change, or are unsavvy about the term, Cochran told me. They just don't necessarily call it that. Rather, the everyday vernacular in Kotzebue and among those from other communities throughout the Alaskan Arctic tends to focus on symptomatic changes along the lines of the elders I earlier described chatting to in the hotel lobby—whalers forced back in, more storms, more intense storms, early sea ice breakup, and coastal erosion.<sup>3</sup>

Certainly, when our elders talk about climate change and global warming, those are not the words that anybody would ever hear coming from an elder's mouth or anybody else. Maybe because those are just not the words that we use. But if you were to ask elders about the changes in ice conditions, and what they have seen in their lifetime, changes in ice? Well, that would be a three-month conversation.

The absurdity of trying to sum up a lifetime of discrete observations layered on oral histories and community consensus about witnessing environmental change in one term is striking, particularly for those who have a tendency to gloss over the definition of climate change as something to be found in the pages of *Science*.

And yet is this “three-month conversation” the same as “climate change”? What does a rejection of climate change in the place where it is seen to be happening mean? What kind of problem is it that *climate change* isn't a recognizable term, and one assigned to media (CNN in this case) as “their” term, as something experts and journalists talk about and not what's happening in and around this part of Arctic Alaska?

When Fischer expands on the social life of language and knowledge offered by Wittgenstein, he argues that techno-scientific problems present as emergent forms of life, bringing to the fore a direct confrontation with “the other,” with heterogeneity and historical genealogies. I wondered what genealogy lay behind this difference and differentiating between “them” on CNN and “us” and the refusal to defer to climate change. And I wondered at this occurring at a moment in which certainty seemed to have been achieved in the wider science and science policy world—where terms like *scientific consensus* and images of Shishmaref were regularly trotted out as evidence of some kind of closure. Wittgenstein describes certainty in language as the point at which questions no longer need to be asked and explanations come to an end. Yet here I experienced not an explicit questioning of climate change but a flat-out rejection of it as a term that described what direct experience with climatic changes feels like and how it is that such changes are understood and discussed.

Cochran expanded on the notion of a three-month conversation by weaving vernacular and worldview together.

It has a lot to do with different language. I don’t mean different Native languages, but the way we use common everyday language. And then the other piece of that is the Native worldview. All things are connected, and so to take one piece of a problem and not connect it to the rest of the world and the environment around? It just logically makes no sense. How can we talk about changes in weather without talking about changes in vegetation or the air or the people or the animals, as all of those things are part of a natural mix. All things are connected in our universe.

The point Cochran makes here is that the ways things get talked about have a direct relation to one’s experience and point of view. Or perhaps more succinctly: how one talks about the environment is based on how one comes to know it. In academic settings, our word for referencing or studying how we know what we know is epistemology. It references the ways in which knowledge has a history and a genealogy and the ways in which how we both know and speak about what we know are situated within cultural learning and contexts.<sup>4</sup>

For many Inuit people across the Arctic, this learning process involves communal and familial interactions with elder family members and time spent on the land. Hunting, fishing, and whaling traditions differ within communities, and all Inuit do not have the same opportunities to learn.

The transfer of tacit and formal knowledge in any context is not an even or automatic process, and in the Arctic, histories matter and vary between villages, regions, and countries. It wasn't until the 1950s that many of the assimilation practices practiced elsewhere in the U.S. and Canada reached the Arctic, where children were shuffled off to schools and previously nomadic indigenous people were forced into structures and stable locations.<sup>5</sup> For many, this was a violent and destructive process, marked by imposed colonial regimes, relocation, cultural change, and resilience. In part as a direct result of this colonial legacy, Inuit communities also suffer from many of the same social and economic challenges that plague small and rural communities across the north and far north. Suicide prevention was a primary concern of the Inuit Circumpolar Youth Council's international council, in addition to culture and language retention. Working in the social and political world of ICYC, Cochran, and many others associated with ICC involves a continual confrontation with and response to change and the historical sedimentations of diverse colonial policies of assimilation and geopolitics in the Arctic. Climate change is a recent newcomer to this discussion and the attendant negotiations over what should be prioritized.

One of the moments that made this evident was a meeting I witnessed between Cochran and ICYC council members, all of whom were in their early to mid-twenties. ICYC's council was a diverse and accomplished bunch. Some were already parents, and many were recognized community youth leaders who had worked on issues related to language and community survival. The council, being newly formed, was using the get-together as an opportunity to map out priorities for the coming four-year term. There were two representatives each from Canada and Greenland and several from Alaska, including the chair and vice chair. This meeting in Kotzebue was one of the few in which they would see each other face-to-face. There are no direct flights across the Arctic, and northern travel in general is extremely expensive. Megan Alvanna-Stimpfle, the chair at that time, told me that they usually used social networking tools, voice-over Internet protocol applications like Skype, and e-mail to communicate.<sup>6</sup>

Cochran had come to the ICYC meeting in order to talk with the ICYC leadership about what ICC as a whole was doing at the policy level where Cochran and other ICC leaders work and to talk about climate change. ICC provides a political platform as well as lobbying opportunities in global and domestic political regimes so that Inuit needs and priorities are represented and so that governments and their policies might be held ac-

countable for the decisions they make that affect Inuit people across the Arctic. ICC was formed as a response to industrialization and militarization of the Arctic and the urgent need for indigenous representation in both national and transnational policy arenas. ICC has an international office with a rotating chair from each country for a four-year term. ICC then has domestic offices in each Arctic country with their own priorities. What became clear to me at the various events where I interacted with ICC representatives is that leaders like Cochran work simultaneously at the village level, where direct observation, experience, and Inuit traditional knowledge are the infrastructure for one kind of civic epistemology and form of life, and at the transnational governance and media level, where, conversely, scientific findings form the basis for a vernacular to discuss and describe climate change.

ICYC members are less likely to take the lead in tacking back and forth between these very different worlds, and their difficulty was in reconciling the more pressing needs like language retention and suicide prevention against an issue like climate change. In some ways, they represent a microcosm of the challenge presented to national and transnational indigenous organizations where multivocality, regional priorities, and negotiating a balance between various social needs means accepting trade-offs of one kind or another. ICYC leaders discussed climate change in these terms at some length, seeking to situate it among (a) what they could contribute to the discussion, (b) where and how it fit in their national contexts, and (c) how to reconcile it against what they know to be the pressing needs of youth across the Arctic. They didn't come to a conclusion as to where climate change would fit in their pantheon of goals, but the prospects of climate change being a central or top priority did not seem likely given the more pressing needs around suicide prevention and language retention.

When I spoke to representatives from Canada and Greenland afterward, they both mentioned that they had spoken to media about climate change and had seen their role in ICYC as needing to fit with the priorities of both ICYC and their country's ICC council. ICC Canada and ICC Greenland had made climate change a high priority, and it was a natural fit that the youth would speak about this issue in their home countries. ICYC priorities were thus meant to guide their work as a council, but individuals were free to speak as they saw fit within their national contexts.

Within national contexts, climate change has different meanings and political baggage of its own as do indigenous voices, leaders' and organizational aspirations, and the needs of communities. Certainly the American/

Alaskan context presented a very differently configured challenge than the Canadian or Greenlandic one at that time. Canada and Greenland were both signatories to the Kyoto Protocol and actively working at the national and transnational levels to reduce and mitigate for emissions.<sup>7</sup> As well, Greenland is in the latter stages of a transition to Homeland Rule, an innovative thirty-year-long structured transfer to self-governance from Danish rule. Canada has chosen a different path, but one that ensures a high profile within the Canadian political and media context, marked by major events in the 1990s such as the settlement of Inuit land claims and the creation of Nunavut, a new Inuit-governed territory. In the United States, however, Iñupiat, Yupik, and Cupik people were part of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) signed in 1971 and were organized into regional corporations. Russia is a much more complex situation where indigenous rights are not legally or formally recognized through settlement or other agreements.

I spoke with Sheila Watt-Cloutier, ICC Canada's former chair and Cochran's predecessor as the international chair, and described the difficulty I had witnessed about prioritizing climate change. She responded by articulating her rationale and means for prioritizing this way:

I think that some people have not fully come to understand that there is no disconnect between the suicide rates in our communities and climate change. There is no disconnect there. Environmental issues—it's all connected. I don't know what Alaska is like. I cannot speak for Alaska. But I know that many of our young people remain quite connected to a hunting way of life. If they don't, then their parents do. There is a real connection going on with the way of life and yet even with that I remember getting a question a couple of years ago. Why do you focus so much on environment and not social issues at the ICC level? I said there is no difference between the two. I mean, it's all connected. You have to look at the larger picture of how our hunting culture is not just about going out and killing animals; it is about preparing our young people for everything, challenges and opportunities. And it is because of that disconnect between our children being prepared with the character building that a hunting culture gives and the institution separating that completely in terms of how to be taught, how to be patient, to be bold under pressure, to withstand stress, how to be courageous, how not to be impulsive, how to have sound judgment and wisdom. That is all the hunting culture that gives that.

In Watt-Cloutier's formulation, climate change continues the process of foreclosure on hope, begun by encounters with colonialism and the enduring structures it put in place via education and mechanisms (or lack thereof in previous eras) for governance, communication, accountability, and self-determination. The environment is also an extension of and constituent to culture. The response from Watt-Cloutier as well as the ICYC meeting and Cochran's formulation illustrate poignantly the multivocality within the Inuit communities that ICC represents (Steinberg 1999; Terdiman 1990). It also explains the process of relationship building with the facts that I referenced in the introduction. This process of articulation and translation must first occur within a group in dozens of small and large conversations like the ones I witnessed before it can wend its way out into positional articulations that put meaning, ethics, and morality front and center for media and wider publics.

It's not only a relationship-building exercise with the facts that is at stake here. There are also the attendant institutional structures, priorities, and categories that have sprung up around the instantiation of climate change as scientific fact. Wittgenstein claimed that training is required such that a concept becomes shared collectively and its form of life emerges. We know what something is and what it means through a system of rewards that occurs in the learning of a language in childhood. Using such a framework, one might argue that a conversation about prioritizing is actually a conversation about accepting climate change as a shared fact and one with political stakes. Conversely, resistance to prioritizing climate change might also be seen as an extension of the resistance to integrating it into everyday discourse about observable changes. Part of the resistance to climate change as "something on CNN" thus might be conceived as a resistance to what climate change *imposes*. The gulf then is not between the local and global but rather between the symptoms/experience of climate change and "climate change" as cliché.

French philosopher Gilles Deleuze describes cliché as something that creates comfort, doesn't allow one to wake up to the intolerability of the present, and lacks the descriptive or depictional powers that might allow real change to occur (Deleuze 1989; Dumit 2004b). Climate change gets defined in one way in the science, policy, and media discourse that teeters continuously on the edge of cliché but it gets defined in a completely other way "on the ground," where it's happening in real time. This is part of what makes it difficult for those experiencing it to recognize it as their own when it shows up, for example, on CNN, and it's also what makes it

difficult for reporters to cover it as an in-motion still-being-defined form of life that requires action. One of the enduring frustrations for advocates and near-advocates as I will detail in chapters 2 and 4 is the challenge of how to reveal facts so that audiences will wake up to the problem that climate change–related predictions present and the need for action, both personal and political.

These multiple definitions and ways of understanding climate change are as much about timing and distance as they are about the institutions and processes that produce a point of view and an overriding “correct” definition. Defining climate change requires a translation process that is one part transformation through assigning meaning in order for the concept to take root in other vernaculars, and one part training in order to recognize the institutional challenges and opportunities that arise through aligning one’s experience with “climate change.” So for Inuit, this “thing” that is happening, that is noticeable and felt—changes in the ice and other indications that all is not as it was—got described differently, more specifically long before the term *climate change* came to take its place. And one might then surmise that when “climate change” did or does arrive, it comes with its own sets of baggage—or rules, grammars, exceptions, and associations in Wittgenstein’s terms—that like any invading army is not greeted with the kind of embrace scientists or journalists or researchers like myself might expect. This is an issue not of complete incommensurability but of epistemological difference and a confrontation with history, institutions, and power relations.

What such a framework puts on the table is a key question: Is the refusal of climate change that I first encountered a moment in which climate change is lost in translation, a complete rejection of the system that climate change represents, or one in which climate change hasn’t yet become a means for describing the Inuit experience with climatic changes, scientific research, and/or geopolitics and transnational institutions intent on reordering worlds according to this newly agreed upon fact? If the latter, translation might thus be considered a process of elaborating climate change’s form of life, as well as recategorizing Inuit experience and negotiating on a new terrain with many of the usual suspects: science, media, transnational institutions, and national governments intent on pursuing what is currently perceived as being in their “national interests.” Such a translational process is never frictionless or homogeneous, and it allows for multivocality and multiple interpretations. It reflects the emergent aspects of a form of life yet to achieve anything like certainty

or commensurability and for which explanations continue to be needed and negotiated.

I want to first explore what this kind of translation looks like on the terrain of science and scientific claims about climate change in the Arctic. I've only hinted so far at the epistemological differences behind a resistance to climate change, but this next section addresses what's referred to as "traditional knowledge" and locates Inuit experience and knowledge within and alongside scientific facts, experts, and institutions related to both science and policy. Exploring this terrain sets the stage for the following sections that seek to contextualize and understand efforts by key individuals like Sheila Watt-Cloutier who have sought to instantiate Inuit experience in climate change and media discourse by "putting a human face" on the issue and interpreting environmental changes in the Arctic within a human rights framework.

### **Out on the Tundra and Beyond: Ground Truthing versus Model Truths**

When I went to Kotzebue, I didn't come to speak to elders specifically as most scientists and researchers usually do when they're working on climate change. But I did end up with the distinct privilege of having an elder take me out on the tundra to show me firsthand the signs he has observed regarding climate change. In fact, in a departure from many, when I told him about my research, unlike everyone else, he was deeply interested. Caleb Pungowiyi is one of two Kotzebue area residents who sat on the Alaska Climate Impact Assessment Commission, which held hearings in communities around Alaska about the impacts of the changing climate (2008). In addition, he was also an Alaskan chair of the Inuit Circumpolar Council in the past and had worked on numerous governmental committees.

Pungowiyi said he is often asked to sit on such committees, conduct talks, and partner with researchers not because he is "the most knowledgeable" but because he has "that way of communicating to the learned community about what's going on"—he has the ability to observe and talk about it in a way people understand. The implicit underlying point of Pungowiyi's is similar to Cochran's point—that the way climatic conditions are discussed in the village differ starkly from scientific, policy, and other kinds of vernaculars.

After one of the afternoon conference sessions, I traveled out on the

tundra outside of Kotzebue with Pungowiyi in his small pickup truck. It was a gorgeous sunny day and my first experience of visually interacting with the Arctic landscape outside of the town. He pulled over at various points and explained various markers of climate change.

Pungowiyi began by showing me fields of cotton grass that had moved in. Cotton grass is beautiful, dotting the landscape with swaying low-lying grass, much like prairie grass, but with a cotton puff on the end. He showed me evidence of moose markings—moose are generally found much further south in plentiful numbers. He also showed me evidence of melting permafrost, picking up chunks of soil to show me how dry it had become. He said that more moss is growing, pushing out the lichen that caribou feed on. Caribou are a dietary staple in this area and throughout the Arctic and sub-Arctic.

I asked him if sea and sea ice changes were equally evident to his trained eye. He said that, though he was not a whaler, it was well known that small boats had a hard time hunting when the wind picks up. And he said that changes in wind, water temperature, and precipitation had produced all kinds of changes that scientific instruments miss.

He said he had started to notice the changes twenty or thirty years ago. He originally thought it was weather variability and that it was a blip that would change back. But the moose didn't move south again; they kept coming, and they stayed. Things that were surprising indicators of change decades earlier had now become more common. In other words, it took a keen eye observing over a longer period of time to recognize how much the landscape was providing signs of change and what that change was.

Unlike the treeline in the south, the expanse up on the Arctic tundra is usually wide open—the land intersecting with the horizon in the distance. Kotzebue used to have one black spruce tree—an oddity on the tundra. Pungowiyi said that a couple guys had hung a sign on it as a joke that said “Kotzebue National Forest.” But owing to climatic changes, a few more black spruce trees had appeared in recent years. The trees are kind of a harbinger of change—change that will have an effect on life throughout the entire Arctic. The sign came off some time ago. It's just not as funny as it used to be.

While I tried to take in the details and grasp the weight of these small but steady changes on the tundra, what struck me is this: in the midst of rapid urbanization and the past hundred years of industrialized specialization and detachment from varied connections to the outdoor environs, climate change requires individuals to have grounded knowledge about

the natural world. But it also requires an ecosystem mind-set—a capacity to develop a mental framework in which bits of information can be dynamically plugged, reworked, and seen to interact. For the overall picture, Pungowiyi said they look to science, but they depend on their own observations for *ground truthing* that scientific instruments miss.

As it is practiced in various subfields and disciplines and as a methodology, science is another knowledge system, another mode of apprehending and deriving predictions and patterns concerning the natural physical environment. What is striking is the tacit understanding that the language and views espoused through the practice of these scientific disciplines drive mainstream media dialogue as well—a point scientists frustrated with media representations of their work might well dispute and which I'll address more fully in chapters 2 and 4. That scientific methodology governs the way the natural world is measured, ordered, and understood when the environment is covered by American media is taken for granted. Indeed, the language of the sciences is the default common vernacular for mainstream western society when it considers the environment.

In contrast, what Cochran and Pungowiyi describe is referred to as “traditional knowledge” (TK), and I would argue that it remains well off the radar in U.S. public fora, except in Alaska and when controversies erupt of the legal or other variety. Kivalina provides one such example. The well-regarded nonacademic book *The Whale and the Supercomputer* by Charles Wohlforth (2004), which profiles figures in TK, science, and science policy in tandem, also move such distinctions more concretely into popular media representations. But, arguably, the biggest move to bring traditional knowledge into constructive relations with various scientific fields is in the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment (ACIA).

ACIA was released in 2004 by the Arctic Council, and it broke new ground in its billing as a thorough combination of traditional and scientific knowledge. The report heavily involved Inuit TK experts and more than three hundred scientists. What wound its way out into international news was the remarkable disparity between predictions for the poles and the rest of the globe: where the southern United States might feel a two degree rise in temperature, the Arctic would be looking at a change of ten degrees or more. The sensitivity of the Arctic to such changing temperatures and its subsequent cascading effects for the rest of the globe in the form of melting glaciers, sea ice, and correlative sea-level rise made propositions of Arctic change highly relevant for world-wide consideration.

When Watt-Cloutier announced the Inuit human rights petition, she used the ACIA as a key point of evidence, but not just in terms of its findings. Her references to ACIA focused equally on the process by which the findings were arrived at: “We know that science and traditional knowledge are saying the same thing. What we have been saying for years now, science is affirming, confirming.” On one hand such a statement can be seen as a tiebreaker in the fierce scientific debates that were coming from industry and the Bush administration at that time: Inuit oral history and knowledge of the sea and ice add irrefutable tacit evidence to the mounting “consensus” among scientists. But what Watt-Cloutier’s rhetorical move also does is tie the Arctic region to Arctic peoples and specifically to the Inuit.

During the past decade, scientists, environmentalists, and journalists have routinely referred to the Arctic with monikers like “canary in the coal mine,” a “world health barometer,” “bellwethers for all of us on planet Earth,” an “early warning system,” a “sentinel,” or a host of other descriptors and metaphors evoking a fragile, affected ecosystem metonymic of the earth’s fragility as a whole.<sup>8</sup> Yet as remarkable and natural as all this seems given the current scope and predictions related to climate change, the focus on the Arctic is a rather recent turn. As Watt-Cloutier has stated in numerous venues, the Arctic was not even mentioned as a vulnerable area in the 1992 text of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Instead, “low-lying and other small island countries, countries with low-lying coastal, arid, and semi-arid areas or areas liable to floods, drought and desertification, and developing countries with fragile mountainous ecosystems” were named as particularly vulnerable. The omission of the Arctic or Arctic nations as vulnerable is particularly poignant considering its transformation into an increasingly ice-free area directly affects sea level rise and flooding of those low-lying areas. ACIA clearly and permanently corrected this oversight.

Conceptualizing the Arctic as ecological and vulnerable may counteract the UN’s original framing of what parts of the world are most “vulnerable” to climate change, but it still leaves the Arctic people a distant, if at all visible, recipient of the effects of climate change. Megafauna, like the polar bear, are still more likely to make the cover of *Time* magazine. Yet if we follow Watt-Cloutier’s formulation, the knowledge of the Arctic exists in relation to its inhabitants. Science is the interloper, providing a translation, legitimation, and other language of expression for the rest of the world. It’s in this sense that ACIA represents a hybridity of expertise and marks a major milestone.

It's only since the 1980s that terms like *TK*, *traditional ecological knowledge* (TEK), or *indigenous knowledge* (IK) have been widely used, and then often only in indigenous, academic, or policy arenas. The concept that TK embodies has its roots in anthropological and explorer recordings of travels beyond western civilization. Most, if not all, such travelers to the Arctic have expressed amazement at the deep local knowledge of climate, ocean, land, plants, and animals. And often their lives depended on such local knowledge in order to survive harsh and unpredictable conditions. These records encompass what Claude Lévi-Strauss (1966) theorized as "the science of the concrete"—the search for order in nonwestern civilizations, which is not primitive in the sense of an evolutionary step that precedes an enlightenment through rationality and science. Rather, it is, as Cochran notes, a separate knowledge system that is sometimes said to have its own evolutionary path of development. Such a path, it is easily argued, has been in a state of détente with science since the arrival of colonialism, despite providing science with essential insights and methods at crucial historical moments (Cruikshank 2005; Fischer 2003, 2009; Grove 1996; Koerner 1999; Wohlforth 2004).

TK is defined variously as qualitative, intuitive, holistic, moral, spiritual, empirical, lived, oral, systematic, detailed, and diachronic as opposed to the specialized, quantitative, rational, synchronic, systematic, detailed, objective qualities usually associated with science. But the line between scientific and traditional knowledge is less stark than such a laundry list would suggest, particularly as varied models of collaboration have begun to emerge, but even in previous decades, TK could prove enigmatically useful. TK was instrumental in the 1970s in supporting the claims of Inupiat whalers in Alaska who successfully challenged scientific data related to the migratory bowhead whale population (Benson 2008; Berkes 1977; Bodenhorn 2003; Feit 1987; Inglis 1993; Wohlforth 2004). Scientists eventually were forced to agree with their TK-based calculations and observations, and the moratorium on subsistence whaling by the International Whaling Commission (IWC) was lifted as a result. There are similar examples where diachronic and quantitative data have been generated through TK, but what makes it entirely separate from the project of science and the scientific process is its social context and production.

TK is part of a worldview that generates symbolic meaning from the environment, which is shared communally and historically. As anthropologist Julie Cruikshank (1991, 2001, 2005) reminds us in her investigations of local knowledge and glaciers, TK is porous and socially situated. Har-

kening back to Cochran's comments, Cruikshank's research demonstrates that how one behaves in the environment is heavily influenced by how one thinks about it. In Cruikshank's work, members of the Champagne-Aishik Nation in the southern Yukon have experienced glaciers to be sentient, sensitive, and able to exact revenge for improper observance of protocol and respect in their presence.

Based on her many decades of working with elders and communities in the southern Yukon, Cruikshank argues that "elders talk about the same issues that concern scientists," but they do so with fundamentally different objectives and a sense of causality, often assigning moral failings rather than mechanistic explanations.<sup>9</sup> Cruikshank makes clear that there are ramifications to a differently conceived and symbolized sense of place and landscape. Colonialism allowed for a certain kind of inscription on differentiated landscapes from jungles to glaciers that justified its expansion and tactics toward both landscapes and people.<sup>10</sup> And the divergence of these views remains a point of conflict and misunderstanding in current debates over environmental issues, land claims, and other negotiations or policies that involve indigenous rights (Fienup-Riordan 1990; Nadasdy 2003).

As TK has emerged as a useful node of information, a spectrum of data has emerged as has a spectrum of practitioners, both indigenous and nonindigenous. In climate change-related TK, one is less likely to hear mythology except perhaps as an orienting device. The why things happen question or moral relationship as explanation largely falls out of the equation. Instead, TK is more often deployed as evidence brought alongside scientific facts, but science in the Arctic, as I discovered, is not quite a straightforward endeavor either.

### **Traditional Knowledge, Social Science, and Science Policy**

The inaugural event of the 2007/2008 International Polar Year (most often referred to as IPY) was the Arctic Science Summit Week (ASSW), held at Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire.<sup>11</sup> ASSW is an annual event, organized and funded by a long list of Arctic-focused organizations. In 2007, that list included the International Arctic Sciences Committee (IASC), Arctic Ocean Sciences Board (AOSB), European Polar Board (EPB), Pacific Arctic Group (PAG), and the Forum of Arctic Research Operators (FARO). Many more science policy and research groups were in attendance as well—all of whom were usually referred to by their acronyms,

making it rather difficult to sort out at first for a newcomer to polar science like myself. I often found myself at the back of the lecture halls in which the meetings took place, laptop open, searching on the acronyms in order to try and keep up with the fast pace of abbreviated discussions.

ASSW's program included an in-depth update on the state of Arctic science. Lead researchers working on topics related to permafrost, coastal erosion, ice core data, sea ice measurements, social science (including traditional knowledge), and other areas gave presentations. A fair amount of time was also devoted to presenting and discussing organizational and policy issues. Every polar country was heavily represented as well as some others one might not expect, like Korea and China. The annual website describes the purpose of ASSW thus: "to provide opportunities for international coordination, collaboration, and cooperation in all areas of Arctic science and to combine science and management meetings."

Indigenous presence was few and far between at ASSW. Cochran was there, as was another ICC Canada representative. Yet rhetoric in support of indigenous people in the Arctic could be found in most public presentations and quite explicitly in an exhibit mounted for ASSW at the Hood Museum called *Thin Ice*. The exhibit made available a few of the thousands of items from the Stefansson collection. Vilhjalmur Stefansson was a Canadian-born Arctic explorer and ethnologist and later Dartmouth's director of Polar Studies, as well as a significant contributor/researcher to ASSW's cohort, the U.S. Army Engineer Research and Development Center's Cold Regions Research and Engineering Lab (CRREL), also located in Hanover. The exhibit was curated by Nicole Stuckenberg, a postdoctoral fellow at Dartmouth who had done fieldwork in Qikiqtarjuaq, a small community in Nunavut, Canada. She had gone through the collection and selected a narrative that highlighted changes in the Arctic related to climate change. At ASSW, she gave a tour for scientists attending the conference.

Stuckenberg began by talking about common metaphors we use regarding weather like the cartoon character Snoopy's famous "it was a dark and stormy night" from the *Peanuts* comic series, or 9/11 observations that "the sky was so clear and blue that it seemed nothing bad could happen." Then she explained that the Inuit use myth to understand weather.<sup>12</sup> She used the unfamiliar and almost funny image of a "bad baby" acting up to demonstrate how weather is perceived culturally. Weather, in Inuit cosmology, is like "a bad baby prone to fits," and in times previous, it could be placated by shamans.

In its panels, *Thin Ice* referenced a previously mounted Smithsonian Museum exhibit that had attempted to orient disparate publics by using the metaphor of “a friend.”<sup>13</sup>

In recent years, Inuit have described the weather as *uggianqtuq*—a word that suggests unfamiliar, unexpected behavior. The title of a recent exhibition on Arctic climate change at the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History, *A Friend Acting Strangely*, was inspired by this term. Inuit have described the weather as more unpredictable, storms as more extreme, summer days as hotter, and the land and sea ice as increasingly unfamiliar. Elder Iyerak from the Igloolik Research Center explained the meaning of *uggianqtuq* to an anthropologist as follows: “For example, I am very close with my sister. Say I wasn’t feeling myself one day and I went to visit her. As soon as I walk in the room, or say something, she would know right away that something is wrong. . . . She would say that I was not myself.”

The metaphor of a friend or the mythological belief of weather as a “bad baby” opens the way for establishing a different relationship with the natural world—one that revolves around hunting primarily, as well as other subsistence activities. *Thin Ice* makes it clear that observation and “knowing when” are the keys to hunting and survival.

Before going hunting, fishing, or berry picking, one has to know where to go and when to start out within the context of the particular season. Such decisions must be based upon traditional knowledge, observations of the weather and snow, wind, and ice conditions, and information from available technologies that measure or help deal with the environment.

It is this hybridity of knowledge and observations that has come to represent TK in the climate change conferences and conversations that I was privy to.

IPY’s director, David Carlson, an American, was on my tour of the exhibit. And like everyone on the tour, he paid rapt attention to Stuckenberger as she walked us through the panels. Afterward, he told her that he had recently been to several communities in Arctic Canada, and he was enthused by the eagerness of people to talk about changes they are witnessing there. Stuckenberger agreed, and they traded experiences about elders sharing stories with them. When I later interviewed Carlson, he said that at every meeting he attends, there’s always “talk about how it’s

important to have indigenous partners,” but he acknowledged that the rhetoric doesn’t always match reality. He said with IPY, they were trying to do better. He noted, in particular, projects by social scientists Igor Krupnik and Sherri Gearhardt-Fox as key exemplars. Krupnik and Fox have initiated long-term collaborations with communities in Alaska and Canada, respectively, in order to systematically record observational data and practices in traditional Inuit communities.

Carlson told me that he addressed relations between TK and science as a problem of valuation and evaluation. He said that what needs to occur for engagement and partnership with indigenous peoples is a rebuilding of the evaluation system so that “what constitutes valuable data” is arrived at through compromise. “Engaging means they [indigenous partners] not only need to be sources of information but they have to set up the structure of what data has value, how we collect it, and how we should share it, and that’s a different level of engagement and fairness.”

Carlson mentioned Krupnik particularly as a model for thinking about moving beyond indigenous peoples as topics and engaging them as partners. “To understand the Arctic, we have to understand how Arctic people understand the Arctic. But that’s not only weather data. That’s not only wildlife health data. It’s reminiscences, it’s language, it’s geographical mental maps that are different than geographical physical maps.”<sup>14</sup> Here it’s clear that Carlson recognizes the epistemological differences as well as the texture, form, and vernaculars that make TK a differently constituted process of knowledge production and expertise.

Partly as a result of Carlson’s praise, I sought out Krupnik after his presentation at ASSW and later for an interview in Washington. Krupnik has pioneered both the publishing of this kind of information as well as models for collaboration with communities. Krupnik told me that TK is difficult to get right. It poses significant challenges in terms of its status as a differing system of knowledge, how data in the form of narratives, observations, and beliefs are collected, and how they are integrated with science. He was careful to point out that there are experts acknowledged within most Inuit villages, particularly in Alaska where he’s spent much of his research time in recent years. TK is not ubiquitous in Arctic communities. One must have a deep knowledge of the community to be able to ascertain who is an acknowledged and trusted expert.

In his essay in *Watching Weather and Ice Our Way*, a book based on a four-year project on observations regarding climatic changes and weather patterns on and around St. Lawrence Island, Alaska, Krupnik makes the

point that his Yupik coauthors, Conrad Oozeva, Chester Noongwook, George Noongwook, and Christina Alowa, are very conversant with scientific terms (2004). They are much more able and eager to integrate scientific findings into their own systematic observations than scientists would be in their encounters with TK. Krupnik argues that the Inuit way of recording, analyzing, and integrating empirical data constitutes a system that can, when done by “experts” among the Inuit, offer long-term localized analysis and prediction, and it remains open to new data like that which science can offer. Expertise is developed over a lifetime and is usually acknowledged and revered by the community or group of communities in which an expert lives. So when hunters need to understand the conditions, they consult their own village or community experts, and in the case of sea ice, they are trusting them with their lives.

Henry Huntington, an Alaska-based anthropologist who has worked extensively with TK, including on ACIA and in other collaborations with Caleb Pungowiyi and Krupnik, said that he has watched attitudes toward TK gradually change. When he first published a peer-reviewed article on TK, it had difficulty passing, but now he regularly reviews articles by others that deal with TK. Huntington pointed me in the direction of a 2000 report based on a conference in Girdwood, Alaska (just outside of Anchorage), held by the Marine Mammal Commission on the Impacts of Changes in Sea Ice and Other Environmental Parameters in the Arctic. Convened by a group of five that included Huntington and Pungowiyi, the goal was to bring together “scientists and indigenous experts” to talk about the changes in the Alaskan Arctic. It also included some of the experts and coauthors from Krupnik’s “Watching” project. While important changes were documented, commitments to trust, communication, and collaboration also emerged. The report ends on this equalizing note:

It is almost trivial these days to talk about “barriers” and “hurdles” on the ways Native or local knowledge can be matched with the data collected by the scientific community. Those obstacles most commonly listed arise from the presumption (which more often than not remains untested and never fully examined) that traditional knowledge is assumed to be intuitive, holistic, qualitative, and orally transmitted while academic or scientific knowledge is primarily analytical, compartmentalized, quantitative, and literate (Berkes 1993, Eythorsson 1993, Lalonde 1993, Nadasdy 1999). While there is some truth to these differences, both scientists *and* Native observers can effectively operate with *both types* of knowledge. (45)

Such dual expertise is evident in collaborative projects like those undertaken by Krupnik and Huntington, and it will likely occur more often as figures like Pungowiyi and Krupnik's coauthors become more widely recognized as experts.

Backing up this articulation of an *ideal* of sorts, the continual rhetoric I witnessed in sites like ASSW point to the fact that scientists value the contributions of TK. But the smoothness of pronouncing the existence of such dual expertise and the presence of supportive rhetoric elides the varying processes by which it is occurring. By processes I mean to signal the code-switching, translation, and interpretation that is required for the various mediated and other forums that comprise climate change regimes nationally and globally. In other words, despite the gains made in these specific instances, the status and representation of TK, when considered more broadly in arenas of climate science, reporting, and policy-making, are still very much "up for grabs."

*Science* magazine's 2007 article on TK features a beautiful image of a Saami reindeer herder in traditional regalia out on the tundra and signals a new and growing acceptance of TK (Couzin 2007). Huntington, Krupnik, and Pungowiyi are featured in the article. It begins with a joke: There are three sure signs of spring. The ducks and the geese coming back, tourists coming back, and scientists who come back to check their instruments.

The joke made me laugh when I first heard it from Pungowiyi during my visit to Kotzebue, but as with all jokes, there's an uncomfortable truth here, too. Scientists are not residents, nor are they invested in community life. Rather, harkening back to Watt-Cloutier's summary of the ACIA process, they are interlopers who may make a contribution to the life of a community, but their goals, norms, and practices differ significantly from those of residents.

Several scientists told me that Nuuk and most of the villages inhabited by Inuit people in Greenland were teasingly called "fly-over" zones, since scientists tended to bypass these major cultural and population centers as they busily headed to their remote research sites further north. Both of these incidental commentaries imply that models for collaboration and partnership have yet to become anything like a widespread norm in Arctic communities.

During the course of my research, I had the opportunity to informally meet Aqqaluk Lynge, 2010–14 international chair of ICC and longtime Greenlandic activist and leader, when he spent time in residence at Dartmouth where he was an invited fellow in 2008. His visit was arranged by

Ross Virginia, a scientist and director of the Institute for Arctic Studies in the Dickey Center for International Understanding at Dartmouth. Virginia was also a lead organizer of ASSW, and I interviewed him at Dartmouth. Virginia specifically said that he invited Lynge in order to move past the “fly-over” problem and engage with communities. But he also said it was something of a risk because ICC “takes strong positions around issues of considering the community. [And] there may be people that disagree with those decisions.” But he said, “Having Aqqaluk, I think, enhances the educational experiences for students that are here, and I think it improves the scholarship in some of the programs that we’re trying to build by fully understanding and engaging with ICC.” He said that as a representative of Dartmouth, he would not “sign on to ICC positions,” but as an individual Arctic scientist, he had no problems with their positions.

The Inuit, like other indigenous Arctic peoples, have been forced into engagement with government policies and media—and into forming political representation in order to chart paths of self-determination. ICC was largely formed to engage policy, media, and science—in order to address oil and gas development, whaling quotas, seal hunting and import bans, persistent organic pollutants, and now climate change (Damas 1985; A. Lynge 1993; F. Lynge 1992). Each of these issues is fraught with controversy, conflict, geopolitics, environmental advocacy, engagement with science, and the needs of communities who depend on land-based subsistence activities. Positions, as Virginia put it, are required for a political organization like ICC.

Lynge is not one to shy away from controversy when it comes to challenges confronting the Arctic and Inuit people. In person, he is full of energy, ideas, and passion. When he spoke at the opening of the *Thin Ice* exhibit at Dartmouth, he issued this challenge to those in attendance:

It is too early to tell how climate change will ultimately affect us. Will the impact of climate change be as powerful and culture-changing as our missionaries and our colonizers were? Will we find the right adaptation measures? I don’t know the answer to that. I do know, however, that we will be strong in our resolve to take our own steps in dealing with this. Sometimes we will do it alone, and at other times we will reach out in partnership.

With all the flurry of scientific inquiry on this issue, one could easily be led to believe that it is the researchers who are most affected by the world’s changing climate and not the Inuit. I plead with western scientists to be careful how you conduct your research on our land and

on our thinning ice. Work with us as equal partners and not as the colonizers and missionaries did. Help us deal with not only your own interesting research but with our concerns. For example, help us deal with industry, which is keen to see an Arctic sea route open up to them.<sup>15</sup>

For Lynge, then, it's clear that the specter of colonialism not only hovers but can be seen in the traces of how climate change adaptation and mitigation policies are considered and negotiated. It's here that perhaps a rejection of climate change begins to make some sense, as does a continued *détente* with science. Scientists and their facts are, in this formulation, part of an assemblage with historical antecedents, sediments, and institutions. The hope he offers is in self-determination—that these same figures have the potential now to provide partnership in efforts that constitute successful adaptation to the coming environmental, economic, and social changes. Lynge's presentation echoes both the need for collaboration that IPY's David Carlson earlier alluded to and the push toward self-determination that has marked ICC since its inception.

Carlson agrees that engagement entails not only a commensurability and translation of data but indigenous groups setting the agenda of what gets researched, and he said that at times, it can be frustrating. For example, scientists wanting to study Arctic char have ended up being pulled into politics over housing. Among other scientists I spoke with informally at ASSW, I discovered a range of experiences with communities—some very successful like the Iñupiat community in Barrow, Alaska, that has a decades-long collaborative relationship with U.S. Army and other scientific researchers.<sup>16</sup> A few, however, either expressed skepticism about the rhetoric in support of TK at ASSW or cited research collaborations that either weren't productive or proved difficult to navigate. What IPY offered, however, was one of the largest funding infusions to polar science yet and a coordinated planning effort for polar scientists across the Arctic. Carlson said he wanted to see a different legacy for IPY and more along the lines of what Lynge calls for. He said he didn't know "quite how to do it, but I don't think it's possible to separate science from the policies especially in the North." For Carlson, polar scientific research is grounded in a terrain that not only involves communities but, arguably, *requires* communities. Whether or not such sentiments become the long-term legacy of IPY remains to be seen, even several years out.

## “The Right to Be Cold”

Sixteen months prior to the kick-off of IPY, the connection between science, policy, and indigenous communities achieved a major milestone that both built on and exceeded what ACIA had sought to accomplish. On December 7, 2005, at the UNFCCC’s eleventh Conference of the Parties (COP 11) in Montreal, a group gathered for a side table session called “The Right to Be Cold.” There, Sheila Watt-Cloutier, then international chair of the ICC, articulated what remains a definitive statement regarding how climate change was and is wreaking havoc in Inuit communities across the Arctic.

Beginning in Inuktitut, Watt-Cloutier identified herself by her Inuit name and welcomed the crowd. She then switched to English and acknowledged fellow indigenous people in the audience. Among those who sat at the long head table beside the podium were Inuit hunters, Robert Correll (ACIA chair), James Anaya (an international indigenous law expert and UN special rapporteur on indigenous issues), and Lloyd Axworthy (a former Canadian foreign minister).

After her greetings, Watt-Cloutier announced that, after two years of research, she and sixty-two other Inuit individuals had submitted a petition to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. The petition names the United States as a violator of the 1948 Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man. The petition states that U.S. inaction on reducing greenhouse gas emissions to mitigate the effects of climate change violated the Inuit right to life and physical security, personal property, health, practice of culture, use of land traditionally used and occupied, and the means of subsistence.

The petition was not a surprise to anyone in the room or to those like me who watched via grainy streaming video. In fact, it’s arguable that the real weight of the announcement had come the year before in 2004 at COP 10 in Buenos Aires when Andrew Revkin at the *New York Times*, as well as numerous activist and other outlets online, became aware that the petition was being considered and prepared. The headline on Revkin’s story, issued December 15, 2004, read, “Eskimos Seek to Recast Global Warming as a Rights Issue.” (*Eskimo* is a term used only by Americans. It’s considered somewhat derogatory with colonialist overtones in Canada and Greenland.) Revkin interpreted the ICC effort undertaken by Watt-Cloutier as part of a broader turn by “representatives of poor countries and communities—from the Arctic fringes to the atolls of the tropics to

the flanks of the Himalayas” who “say they are imperiled by rising temperatures and seas through no fault of their own.” Revkin summarized their actions by saying: “They are casting the issue as no longer simply an environmental problem but as an assault on their basic human rights.”

The petition serves as a record or oral history of such an “assault.” But when I first met Watt-Cloutier in March 2007, she described the petition quite differently—as a “gift.” In a speech I attended in Saskatoon, Canada, she elaborated on it this way to the audience of Arctic researchers and academics:

It [the petition] was not an aggressive act, it was not a confrontational act, and we were actually reaching out, not striking out. It was more of—much more—the powerful assertion of our rights than a lawsuit would have been because I think people would have thought they just want money and that they would have dismissed it. And so we didn’t want to go that route. So I always say that *our petition was a gift, a gift from our hunters and our elders to the world*. It is an act of generosity, in fact, from an ancient culture that is deeply, deeply tied to the natural environment and still very much in tune. And it is a gift from us to an urban industrial modern culture that has largely lost its sense of place in position to the natural world. I always say that the petition is the most caring, loving act I have ever brought forward in the protection of my ancient culture, and it is the most loving and caring act I have ever brought forward in the protection of the future of my grandson, who is learning to hunt with his father.

I didn’t fully understand the metaphor until I saw about a dozen of the sixty-two petitioners’ video depositions included in the *Thin Ice* exhibit at Dartmouth College. In those videos, petitioners describe firsthand what changes they are experiencing, what it means for their families and communities, and the ramifications of these changes for their culture and way of life. It is a staggering testament both to the life of hunting and subsistence living still practiced in the Arctic and to the changes wrought by forces far outside their control.

The video depositions were taken by two undergraduate students (one from Dartmouth), who traveled to remote communities across Canada under the tutelage and with the advance preparation of Watt-Cloutier. She said she would phone ahead and make arrangements, and community leaders would welcome the students, assisting them in setting up and conducting interviews with elders and those considered experts on the topic

of climatic changes in their environment. Watt-Cloutier said that fellow petitioners and their communities, primarily in Canada, were unequivocal in their support of the petition.<sup>17</sup>

Regardless of the largesse inherent from the perspective of the petitioners and the landmark nature of the petition, the Inter-American Commission rejected the Inuit petition in late 2006. Watt-Cloutier said that she was devastated when it was rejected. Some I've spoken with have speculated informally about American influence on the commission and the subsequent demise of the claim, but none of these suspicions have or likely could be substantiated. After the rejection, Watt-Cloutier was invited to give a presentation to the commission that would summarize the vulnerabilities globally of indigenous communities to the perils inherent in climate change predictions. This would include the list of "poor countries and communities" Revkin alluded to in his story. Watt-Cloutier told me that a member of the commission had said they wanted to do "something" about this and that her 2007 testimony would help them figure out just what that "something" was. Nothing has come of it since.<sup>18</sup> When I interviewed Revkin, I asked him why he didn't follow up on the rejection of the claims made by the Inuit. He quickly looked in his *Times* database and said that they did follow up—with an eighty-six-word story, noting that the case had been rejected.

Despite the failure of the case and the ways in which it largely fell out of mainstream media coverage, the petition moved the experience of climate change outside of the realm of mere illustration and into the domain of self-determination, power relations, and settled causality. In other words, it isn't greenhouse gas emissions doing this to the Inuit, but the U.S. government, which has stalled on mitigation policies that might prevent further loading of emissions such that climate change will occur more precipitously at the poles, where effects are known to be more extreme. The Inuit are compelled then to deploy a variety of means to address the prospects for their communities' continued survival. In contrast to largely scientific fact-driven appeals in mainstream media, the claim sought to, in Watt-Cloutier's words, "put a human face" on climate change and the Arctic. In so doing, it widened the framework of expertise and of who could speak for and about the issue of climate change in wider public arenas. It made climate change an indigenous, Inuit, and polar issue.

For Watt-Cloutier, this approach began long before she got involved with the issue of climate change. When she became Canada's ICC chair in 1995,<sup>19</sup> studies were coming out that showed how persistent organic

pollutants (usually abbreviated to POPs) were circulating from factories in the United States and being found in the Arctic ecosystem, including in the bodies of Inuit people—in fatty tissues and breast milk (Downie and Fenge 2003; Hilts 2000; P. Miller 2000; Sze 2006).<sup>20</sup>

When I started then, that was the time, very shortly after, when the actual global negotiations were starting on the persistent organic pollutants and the toxins that were coming into our bodies and nursing milk of our mothers and I jumped right in. I hit the ground running with this issue because for me, as a woman, I could certainly relate to nursing milk being poisoned. My daughter was—this was her child-birth age, and so I just felt for the women who would have to think twice about nursing their babies because of poisons coming from afar. Because for us, it was a diet-related issue in the fatty tissues of our marine mammals, and Inuit were most impacted, more than any other aboriginal peoples because we eat seals and whales and walrus, which is where these POPs would make their home.

Watt-Cloutier describes the work on POPs as one of influencing the global community to “do the right thing about toxins,” and she explains: “We did it from a high moral ground. We did it from a very human perspective that we were the net recipients of POPs.” The UN negotiations on the Stockholm Convention, she noted, were “the fastest UN treaty to have been signed, ratified, and enforced in the history of the UN.” In an essay in a book coedited by Terry Fenge (who worked with ICC Canada and Watt-Cloutier on the project), the chair of the UN negotiations noted that he was given an Inuit carving of a mother and child by Watt-Cloutier early on, and he said he kept that concept, embodied in the statue, uppermost in his mind throughout the rest of the negotiations.

Watt-Cloutier began her four-year tenure as the international ICC chair only one year after the Stockholm Convention was signed in 2001, and she said her strategy of “putting a human face” on climate change had its roots directly in the previous seven years she had spent working on POPs. In my interview with her, she explained that she saw climate change and POPs as intertwined because they were both “about health and cultural survival.” During her first year as ICC international chair, Watt-Cloutier fund-raised heavily with climate change in mind “because we still have a long way to go in getting the world to understand that this is a human issue.” Because of that, one of the avenues she immediately began to explore was the idea of it being a human rights issue.

When she took over the international chair position, she said, the ICC board began asking: “What recourse do we have as Inuit against climate change? How are we protected? We are being poisoned, and now our ice is going to go and our way of life is going to be gone. How are we going to be able to do this?” While these considerations were going on at the board level, Watt-Cloutier considers it serendipitous that in her travels to Washington, D.C., she was able to meet with others who were trying to connect climate change and human rights.

She met first with the Center for International Environment and then Earthjustice (formerly the Sierra Legal Defense Fund). She said she was skeptical at first: “I was thinking, okay, what is this all about? What’s in it for them? Are they real? Is it just some new pet project that they want Inuit to get involved in? Do they have potential to really change the discourse on these issues?”

Watt-Cloutier became convinced that a partnership would work. Bringing it before the ICC board, she was met with skepticism and challenges, much like her own initial reaction and particularly about the idea of working with environmental advocates. But eventually the idea of pursuing a human rights case received support.

Throughout the process, she said, there was fear about bringing such a case forward, particularly against the United States. She said many asked her quite pointedly: “What if we wake up the sleeping giant?” Her answer to those questions was equally candid: “That is my point. We are trying to wake up the sleeping giant, and I can guarantee you he’s not sleeping. There were a lot of fears involved in moving forward in such a bold and courageous step.”

ICC is dependent on government support and funds raised through foundation grants and other donations. So these questions and concerns represented material and structural considerations in taking on this kind of direct confrontation. Challenging the United States on emissions reduction at a time when the Bush administration still claimed that the science was not settled enough to take action certainly would seem to be “waking the sleeping giant.” Many environmental advocates cheered on the petition for this reason. It acted in ways that were outside what scientific facts alone could do, by coupling them with facts-on-the-ground in order to convince wide publics. The perceived bias of mainstream media played a central role in how Watt-Cloutier’s partners thought about publicizing the petition. When I first contacted an Earthjustice representative about the Inuit case in 2005, he wouldn’t speak with me unless I first read

the essay “Balance as Bias” by Maxwell Boykoff and Jules Boykoff. The Earthjustice representative wanted me to be aware before speaking with him that the science was indeed settled and had been misrepresented by mainstream media. For Earthjustice, scientific findings were not a side-line but a constituent rationale for Inuit claims, as was the media context in which the petition was re/presented.

In retrospect, Watt-Cloutier describes the two-year period of preparing the petition as a “leadership challenge” where she forged ahead believing in the “honorable intention” of the petition. When it came to signing onto the petition, ICC as an organization opted only to sign a resolution supporting Watt-Cloutier and her sixty-two copetitioners instead of fully joining the petition. Watt-Cloutier pointed out that ICC is a diverse transnational organization that answers in Canada’s and Alaska’s case to regional development corporations that represent the communities. Many of the corporations in Canada have land claims agreements that involve development, and Alaska is also involved in resource development that includes oil. The concern was that ICC might be considered “hypocrites” if they signed onto the petition. The lack of official ICC backing means that Watt-Cloutier continues to carry on work on Inuit human rights even now that she’s out of elected office, and as I noted earlier, she traveled constantly in the years following its submission and rejection to speak about the petition and “the right to be cold.”

### **Politics of Connection**

Coupling climate change and POPs together underscores the distinct challenge that Arctic life poses, as residents are both the recipients of industrialization’s ills and peripheral players in the policy mechanisms that might stem the tide of such ills. Focusing on the human aspect of chemical compounds and dioxins emitted in the service of industrialized lifestyles is a bold move, but casting it in a human rights framework is much more than a public relations makeover. Michael Ignatieff, a leading human rights scholar and former Canadian politician, has pointed out that human rights are best defended on pragmatic grounds and that there is a fine line between the rights of states and their citizens that must be negotiated in order to protect the legitimacy of the internationalization of human rights norms (2001). So how much an international body could and should intervene in state policies, particularly when that state is the United States and wields an enormous amount of political

power and influence, is not a simple proposition for either scholars or pragmatists.

Anthropologist Ronald Niezen has looked specifically at how indigenous political groups have been using human rights standards, particularly in conjunction with United Nations bodies (Maaka and Andersen 2006). He has observed that human rights have become a vehicle for transnational indigenous groups like ICC to pursue self-determination and to enact reform at various levels of law, international organizations, and bureaucracies. He points out that underlying such moves is a tacit agreement that state legal systems cannot be relied on for redress of rights claims. At the same time, however, Niezen points out that human rights frameworks are often unable to cope with claims to difference, group rights, or self-determination due to the antirelativist and individualistic definitions assigned to universalized notions of human rights.

The conundrum for indigenous groups further lies in what some have called “strategic essentialism,” where indigenous groups must demonstrate a special relationship with the land in order to have their claims acknowledged (LaDuke 1999). Anthropologist Shepherd Krech has been a vocal critic of these kinds of claims, particularly as they relate to the environment, drawing criticism from many, including indigenous groups, for his lack of acknowledgment and seeming ignorance about the pragmatics of community survival (Krech 2000). Niezen formulates it much differently—as a negotiation between nonindigenous public audiences and indigenous needs that can act as an “artificial boundary.”

Indigenous nationalism thus usually shapes itself around those core values that resonate most strongly with the non-indigenous public. And there is some comfort to be taken in this. Surely there can be little harm in an identity based largely on environmental wisdom. The harm comes more from public disapproval of necessary things, like legal knowledge and resource extraction. An artificial boundary is sometimes erected around indigenous communities that limits their options and inhibits their prosperity. (Maaka and Andersen 2006, 300)

Arctic scholar Carina Keskitalo posed a similar question in her 2004 history of the Arctic Council in which she credits ICC leadership with playing a key role. She asked whether or not special claims to traditional lifestyles foreclosed on the possibilities for a wide range of solutions to deal with social and economic problems. Certainly, this would seem to be a substantive concern in relation to the explanations related to ICC’s re-

luctance to formally back the petition. But as Niezen makes clear, this is not just an Arctic or Inuit concern, and negotiating an indigenous group's public image as well as desires for self-determination, assertions of indigenous title and rights, community survival, and economic aspirations is not a straightforward prospect with right or wrong solutions.<sup>21</sup>

Though she focuses on traditional lifestyles, Watt-Cloutier sees a connection between culture, environment, and community survival. She narrates the lead-up to formulating the petition not as a foreclosure but as a way of opening up possibilities. Climate change projects a wave of devastation for traditional lifestyles in the Arctic and those who rely on subsistence food gathering. Put together with the discovery of POPs, she articulates both a connection with globalized industrial pollution and scientific processes that have increasingly developed the means to substantiate these connections. Her perspective of these global science-driven conclusions as "human," as an *experience* as opposed to a *finding*, and one that is underscored by TK, led her to consider the human rights framework as a means for recourse. Her interest is less in the politics of representations of indigenous peoples and more in a *politics of connection*. She focuses more on what makes humanity similar and approaches solutions from this perspective. Media has played an enormously important role in her approach. She said that as chair, she spent 40 percent of her time fulfilling media requests. She said her approach to media was to say, "You help me tell the story, and I will give you the time to help me tell the story."

When Watt-Cloutier gives a speech, she uses a slide show of often iconic images, some of them awe-inspiring, showing snow, ice, tundra, and Inuit people. Some of the images are recognizable from ACIA, and others are taken by friends or relatives. Many of the subjects are in traditional Inuit dress and depicted outside hunting or traveling across ice and snow. In the course of her speech, she weaves in facts about climate change in the Arctic, painting a picture of rapid transition, globalization, and environmental shifts and dealing as well with the role of ICC, policy, negotiations, and human rights. There is a tacking back and forth like weaving or sailing between introducing largely southern audiences to a "foreign" or exotic world where "ice represents mobility and transportation" and where changes in temperatures can mean a hunter's loss of life or limb. She sometimes describes her neighbor who lost his legs falling through the ice while hunting, or a recent year when the temperature was 8°C when it should have been *minus* 30°C. "The reality is very stark," was how she summed it up in one speech.

The underlying argument Watt-Cloutier is making is that the vast majority of Inuit are exposed to a distinct way of interacting with and understanding the natural environment—because of the very specific environment of the Arctic and its inextricable link to Inuit cultures that have evolved there over millennia. When the majority of the American population lives far south and in urban, industrialized centers, there is a gap to bridge not only between the urban and rural but also between the particularities of the south and life in a far northern climate. Watt-Cloutier builds a case for support of the Inuit, the difficulty of their role in negotiations, the ways in which the earth's environment is connected, and a life lived simply in the cold—"connecting you to the warmth of the ice of the Arctic." Her core message is that "all things are connected," so what happens in the Arctic matters to the rest of the world. She then uses these commonalities to segue back to more familiar territory for the climate-aware, returning to Kyoto negotiations and the world of policy. The meaning of climate change thus shifts toward a form of life that is public and media-savvy enough to present images and stories that evoke empathy, while at the same time reinforcing the factual nature of climate change through on-the-ground examples of how it is already a lived, relevant experience as well as the need for national and transnational political and policy solutions to address it.

What Watt-Cloutier takes away as a definite win is the way in which the petition changed how people think and talk about climate change, human rights, and the Inuit. "It has changed the discourse, there is no doubt about that, and it will continue to do that, but it was not an easy, easy way to go. I wasn't as fearful as some of my colleagues were, thinking something is going to go wrong here and we are going to be stopped and we are going to be laughed at and we are going to be all kinds of things. The reverse happened completely, and that is the trust I had in humanity that the reverse would happen, that people would understand this as a people's right to their way of life that was being jeopardized and it is absolutely."

In contrast to either Krech's or Niezen's observations, then, human rights, in Watt-Cloutier's view, allow for indigenous people to set aside the indigenesness of their claims in order to relate to generic publics as humans, whose lives and livelihoods are threatened. Such a focus on connection doesn't do away with questions about scientific uncertainty, but makes them somewhat irrelevant. It instead evokes the ideal of precaution and communality as well as moral and ethical responsibility. In some ways, she performs a role similar to what Cruikshank describes in

relation to TK—Watt-Cloutier assigns moral meanings and not just an explanation of physical mechanisms when it comes to climate change. In so doing, she underscores themes that environmental advocates have been working to advance for decades under the broad rubrics of sustainability. Namely, the petition provides “proof” of industrialization gone terribly wrong, and for those who have already indicted industrialized lifestyles, such a claim provides welcome material proof of the consequences of not heeding earlier warning signals. Yet as Lynge hinted in his *Thin Ice* speech, climate change may indict industrialization, but it might also provide it with its greatest leap forward yet by opening up the Arctic to a level of exploration and development far outside the scope and size previously imagined.

### Arctic Rush

The Arctic is certainly no stranger to exploration of either the military or industrial kind, but projections of climate change have catapulted it into a new era of resource potentialities. This doesn't necessarily make Arctic countries more vulnerable; instead, it has the potential to make them and their multinational resource extraction companies much wealthier, which in a group that includes Norway, Canada, and Sweden is hardly a reversal of fortunes. What is more concerning is that these kinds of developments put the indigenous inhabitants in a more precarious position alongside indigenous people of the low-lying nations. How they relate to their nation-states, their distinct cultural ways of being, their relationship to the land, as well as how poised they are to be involved in the political and economic changes predicted in their region of the Arctic become determining factors in their ability to adapt to predicted changes of all kinds.

Robert Correll, chair of ACIA, was at the table with Watt-Cloutier in Montreal when she announced the human rights petition. Correll articulated the stakes of the petition in quite different terms than Watt-Cloutier did. He said, “If you're indigenous people living along the coastal margin, reduction of sea ice is a powerfully difficult thing to absorb. If you're in the oil and gas industry, it opens up pathways that were only dreams some decades ago.” Such a formulation makes indigenous people the opposite of rational corporate or state actors bent on massive and steady streams of profit, given that an estimated 25 percent of the world's oil reserves lies beneath the ice (approximately three-quarters in the Russian zone).

Yet as ICC's reluctance to sign on to the petition illustrates, this is not exactly the case, and it harkens back to the warnings offered by Niezen and Keskitalo about what roles are open for indigenous people on the transnational policy stage. In this case, Lyng's *Thin Ice* statement has special relevance on this topic, because how exploration and development play out and what role Inuit people and ICC play in it has, to a great degree, much to do with collective rights, self-determination, and partnerships with science *and* industry.

In the *New York Times* 2005 series "The Big Melt," Watt-Cloutier put it candidly to the series' reporters: "As long as it's ice, nobody cares except us, because we hunt and fish and travel on that ice. However, the minute it starts to thaw and becomes water, then the whole world is interested." The *Times* writers had put it, in contrast, and rather more pointedly in monetary terms: "The Arctic is undergoing nothing less than a great rush for virgin territory and natural resources worth hundreds of billions of dollars." It's worth noting, however, in the face of such fanfare, that as CRREL scientist Jaqueline Richter-Menge noted in several presentations I attended, unprecedented melt (in modern times) of "multi-year ice" (ice that does not melt for five years or more) is not necessarily a linear march to an ice-free Arctic in the summer. In fact, the stable progression of declining multi-year ice cover that would make all of this industrial development possible and guarantee a high return on investment is not something any scientific research can predict. Richter-Menge and James Overland put out an annual report on *The State of the Arctic*, sponsored in part by NOAA, that tracks the relative melt and refreezing, and they are more likely to characterize the future of ice in the Arctic as nonlinear progression where the next ten years may see a major thaw followed by twenty years of renewed multi-year ice cover followed by more thawing.

The view Correll expressed, and what the petition expresses as well, is the dominant mode of representing how these changes will affect Inuit people, but they are certainly not the only view possible. When I traveled in late 2007 to the Arctic Energy Summit (AES) in Anchorage, there were Inuit and other indigenous individuals and delegations there: a permitting group from Barrow, Patricia Cochran from ICC, another woman attached to an environmental advocacy group, and a couple of trained wildlife and fisheries biologists, one of whom had held leadership positions with the Gwich'in Tribe in Alaska. Cochran spoke alongside BP, Shell, and others who were advocating for offshore drilling. She advocated for a view of the Arctic as human as well as resource-based. Inupiat whalers

in Alaska have long been opposed to offshore drilling, so Cochran's place on the program was not exactly a comfortable fit, but it speaks to the way ICC is constantly in a position of negotiating industrial and state forces (that are often mixed in blatant and masked ways).

Alun Anderson, a UK writer I met at AES who was writing about "the Future of the Arctic," later blogged about the ways in which Arctic residents, and especially the Inuit, are depicted as helpless. In a post titled "Get Ready for the Inuit Oil Millionaires," he wrote:

Right now it is the fashion to see the Inuit people of the Arctic as helpless victims of climate change. It is certainly true that the sea ice is vanishing, weather patterns changing, whales and seals moving to new locations, and traditional hunting lore growing less useful. IPY researchers list many tough challenges. But "victims" they are not. The hunters of the Arctic are about the most resourceful people on Earth. If you can handle a dog team on shifting sea ice in 24-hour winter darkness at temperatures of  $-40^{\circ}\text{C}$  you know a bit about self-reliance. . . . The story that you don't hear is what the peoples of the Arctic really want: the power to run their own affairs. (Anderson 2008)

He concluded that, although the hurdles are great for self-determination, he wouldn't be surprised if the future of the Arctic included "Inuit oil millionaires alongside resourceful hunters." Anderson is correct in signaling that Inuit people are both resourceful and exploring multiple means for adaptation. Later on that year, as if to affirm Anderson's prediction of resourcefulness, I also met Tony Penikett, one of two negotiators for Nunavut at a conference on the Impact for Diminishing Ice on Naval and Maritime Operations in Washington, D.C. Penikett was the premier of the Yukon territory when indigenous claims were being negotiated there in the late 1980s, and is an expert on Arctic affairs and indigenous rights and claims in Canada. This two-person negotiation team was the lone voice for indigenous people in a room full of naval and policy experts. Their presence and Nunavut's outstanding claims to the seabed acted as a kind of irritation to representatives for Canada who were anxious to shore up their power to negotiate in/for/about the Arctic.

Conceptualizing the Arctic as a region for exploration has a much longer history than these newer stories of what the melting of multi-year ice might portend for industrial development. The Arctic does not fit within the "category" of countries, developing or developed. Instead, following the parameters laid out by the relatively new transnational political orga-

nization, the Arctic Council, formed in 1996, spills out over eight nations, 30 million square kilometers, multiple time zones, 4 million people, and thirty indigenous groups. Watt-Cloutier has mentioned this fact on many occasions, but what isn't immediately visible is that the Arctic as region came about as a result of arguments and research done by an international group of scholars and policy-oriented individuals and groups (see Young 1992). Recent historical analysis indicates that ICC also played a pivotal and constant role in the formation of the Arctic Council, and while they failed to get equal billing per country members, they did manage to secure "permanent participant" status for their organization. The Saami, Gwichin, and other indigenous Arctic groups also participate through this category. The Arctic Council is the political culmination of efforts at region-building and indigenous participation in policymaking, but the identity of the Arctic as ecologically sensitive and distinct was not fully cemented scientifically and within international climate science/policy realms until the release of the ACIA in 2001 (see Martello 2008).

"The Arctic" as entity then remains in the midst of constant negotiation between social, political, and economic forces. It is multifariously defined according to its vulnerability, varying national contexts, economic potential, strategic significance, and mixed populations, as well as its intensive interest to scientists researching climatic change and other issues through a myriad of methods and approaches. These each provide an organizing lens through which the vast expanse of the Arctic can be seen, administered, funded, and coproduced for diverse publics who may or may not pay attention to a polar world considered remote and unknowable until recently.

What ICC does is present a view not from the outside looking in but from and within the Arctic itself. The Arctic as resource looks very different through the prism that ICC representatives present where subsistence hunting and culture revolve around a constancy of ice and snow, self-determination is a constant battle, and traditional knowledge plays a vital role in the understanding of the natural world on a par with science. Getting a seat at the policy, economic, scientific, and international governance tables becomes a crucial part of survival in Arctic politics, and like any political venture, this effort is intricately woven into efforts to capture and mobilize the public imagination as well.

Many of my field sites revealed the continual *crossroads* that ICC leaders are faced with (Fuss 1989). Aspirations for self-determination, economic development, national contexts and histories, international pol-

itics, and science have a difficult time staying in their separate bins. At ASSW in particular, I was struck by how scientific findings, challenges, and policy mixed freely with issues of funding, transnationalism, and national retrenchment. TK was something of a darling. Most paid homage to it, and Arctic communities were usually a part of the analysis for the Arctic. There was one glaring and comedic exception of a bureaucrat whose detailed slide show on “regional research policies” neglected any mention of communities. She explained that she had been up late the night before and had forgotten to do “that slide.”

But rhetoric belied actual participation from indigenous community leaders. The only indigenous representative on the official program of ASSW (only nonindigenous social scientists presented on TK) was Minnie Grey, a representative of Makivik Corporation, a regional Inuit development corporation in northern Quebec. Flanked by a panel of career scientists and bureaucrats from Canada and the United States, Grey put this challenge to a room packed with international scientists and science policy bureaucrats: “My people have lived for too long with policies that we are not part of. We are slowly being killed by policies that don’t help us. Let’s create policies together that don’t harm our identity.” She was the lone voice of passion who personalized the issue of climate change and the driving need to do something—but not just anything about it. The fervently issued plea she closed with was: “Listen to us. Listen to us. We’re telling you something is not right.”

The human rights petition led by Watt-Cloutier could easily be summarized in ways similar to Grey’s message. It is a plea for experiences of climate change already under way to morally and ethically drive public policy, and it acts as a tool for communication, visibility, and connection on behalf of Inuit people. Watt-Cloutier explained to me that she sees public opinion as driving public policy, so her work is continually about tacking back and forth between these worlds. In my terms, then, she is continually pushing the public, media, scientists, and policymakers to expand their notions of climate as a form of life that can include moral and ethical demands, indigenous rights and aspirations for self-determination, potential physical impacts on indigenous ways of life, and the scientific conclusions and predictions that normally define climate change.

## Conclusion

I began this chapter by describing the gap between the global fight for attention and the local resistance to “climate change,” even in the midst of direct experience with its many symptomatic sets of changes. By seeking to understand that resistance, this chapter has sought to locate Inuit claims within climate change discourse through TK, the human rights petition, and other efforts to address new and transformative development schemes in a warming Arctic. ICC claims on behalf of all Inuit, both formally and rhetorically, espouse two principles: (a) the human in the environment as a constitutive part, and (b) the Arctic as a constitutive part of a global interactive and interdependent ecosystem. Sometimes buried underneath, sometimes front and center, is a parallel principle best described as the right to self-determination—the right of Inuit to have some say in how Inuit affairs are ordered and reordered by trade, pollution, and military/industrial developments in the Arctic and state relations that determine such social, economic, and environmental factors. Inuit claims made through ICC leaders appeal to the universal in order to elevate the particular and are at times both powerless and powerful interlocutors (see Tsing 2005). They are powerless in terms of their non-state status and the remote exoticism often applied to indigenous people and the Arctic, and powerful in terms of the ability to mobilize a transnational network and increasingly, though not without struggle, play pivotal roles in Arctic policy and representations.

ICC brings to the fore the relationship between media, science, politics, and public opinion and, in so doing, performs a multilayered translation. Its spokespeople, like Watt-Cloutier, Cochran, and Lynge, translate the concerns of Inuit communities to the world at large through an array of media and educational outlets as well as the relevance of scientific findings like the IPCC assessments to their own people. Embedded in this process is a push toward self-determination, reclaiming voice, and providing legible representation for a region that has traditionally been defined less by its inhabitants and more by its inhospitable environment, braved by historical expeditions or, more recently, studied by scientist-explorers. ICC leaders perform works of translation and interpretation both to unite an Inuit voice in international and domestic settings and to make that voice heard.

In the next chapter, and throughout the book, the Arctic and indigenous peoples’ experience with climate change provide an orienting per-

spective, heralding what a future with climate change already means. By beginning specifically with Inuit efforts to come to terms with climate change, epistemological differences, and inherently different models for collaboration and intervention, how to both consider *and* live with risk are immediately brought to the fore. Climate change thus becomes both a global and specifically indigenous challenge that is as much a problem of how to define and solve it as it is about how to speak for and about it.