

gives us the green light. This is a government-wide initiative,” said Lord.

Departments of the federal government are looking for new and innovative ways to engage civil society, Indigenous Peoples, and the peoples of other circumpolar countries, such as Russia. Ideas such as the “Arctic bridge”, small and medium business development, women’s participation in commercial networks, trade missions, workshops on “the North and governance” or northern mining, supporting traditional subsistence economies, were raised as a means to the common end of improving the lives of northerners. The government representatives made it clear they did not have all of the answers; they needed the ideas and energy of Northern civil society, individuals and organizations to make the Northern Dimension work.

“How do we turn this energy and steam into something other than hot air?” asked Wayne Lord.

Grand Chief Ed Shultz of the Council of Yukon First Nations, elected in February 2000, (also leader of Arctic Council Permanent Representative Arctic Athabaskan Council), described his peoples’ efforts to build wider networks of people and possibilities beyond Yukon, to Alaska, to the Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North and others. He said First Nations and the government can work together on developing the Northern Dimension, providing the government continues to show due respect to the self-governing Native communities as governments in their own right. “States must recognize Indigenous Peoples to reduce tensions and get on with the business of improving everyone’s lifestyles,” said Shultz.

“First Nations did have a role in creating that foreign policy,” Ed Shultz said about the Northern Dimension. He and other participants identified the sharing, management and control of natural resources, such as oil and gas as a key issue.

Arctic Council

“How do you do genuine decision-making between governments and Indigenous Nations?” asked Audrey McLaughlin. She raised the question to clarify whether Permanent Participants of the Arctic Council were “tolerated but not heard.” (Permanent Participants do not have a vote on the Arctic Council.)

Philippe Cousineau, Deputy Director of Circumpolar Affairs at Foreign Affairs, replied that Permanent Participants are part of all discussions and they participate in some of the working groups. As for the dormant issue of whether Permanent Participants should have a vote or not, he noted that the Arctic Council has never put an issue to a vote, deferring to consensus, which includes the Permanent Participants.

Ed Shultz said that as a new Permanent Participant, the Arctic Athabaskan Council has not detected any sign of disrespect or indifference. He is concerned that the Participants’ role is more representative than participative. There is also a political danger present of the perception (even if not real) that the Participants are acting as legitimizing agents for the agendas of the