

Proceedings of the Workshop - Building Capacity, Strengthening Community: Canadian Foreign Policy and Northern Voices
March 1998
International Studies Programme, University of Northern B.C.

Summary:

Representatives of various dimensions of northern society, some of who are also active in a variety of NGOs, both local, national and international, gathered to discuss the relationship between the North and Canadian foreign policy. (Members of the First Nations did not attend, given a conflict in scheduling with another workshop the same day.) In this respect, topics explored included the relationship between Canadian foreign policy and a northern identity, views of Canadian foreign policy as elitist, ineffective and dominated by the US, and the permeability of local and international issues. In particular, elements of the Northern identity were seen to consist of the unique climate, industries, and lifestyles based on distances from large urban centres. International issues listed as important to the northern community included international trade, women's issues, circumpolar issues, the environment (forestry and mining issues) and the impact of globalisation.

Policy Recommendations:

- inclusion of First Nations peoples in discussions on the North and on building the capacity of northern communities;
- Northern communities to be proactive in terms of advocating their needs and promoting their views;
- create linkages within the NGO community in the North, across provincial/territorial boundaries and between circumpolar communities in various countries;
- follow-up activities to this workshop;
- improved government support for building the capacity of the North to participate more prominently and effectively in the development of Canadian foreign policy issues, while recognising also that community-based resources can also be drawn on more efficiently.