



NORTHERN CO-OPERATION: THE EMERGING POTENTIAL OF ARCTIC PARTNERSHIPS

As Canadians, when we think about our neighbours, it's no surprise that we tend to look south. In fact, Canada has a number of other neighbours, and we share a view of the North Pole with all of them. Canada, Denmark (Greenland), Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden and the United States (Alaska) make up the circumpolar Arctic—a region that has assumed an important role on the world stage in recent years.

This is an exciting time for the North. New resource-development opportunities are being explored, and industries such as tourism are bringing more visitors to the North to appreciate the region's beauty and unique character. Today, advances in information technology and transportation also provide opportunities for many Northerners to participate in a broader national and international community, despite long distances.

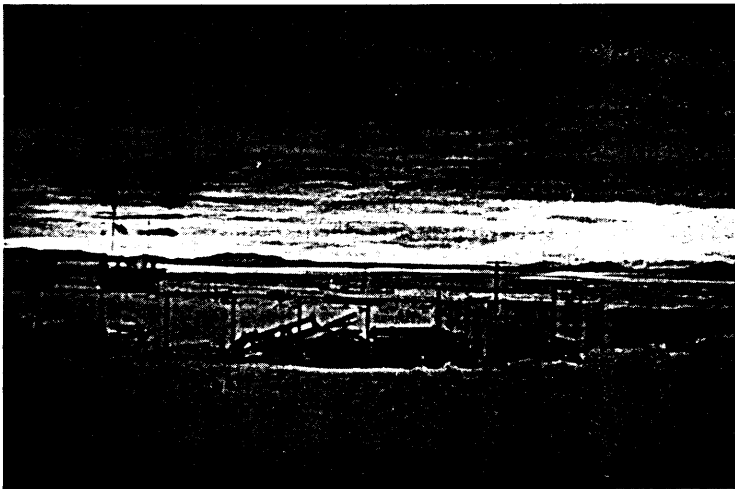


Photo by Geoffrey Hughes

In Canada's North, the ongoing settlement of land claims and the completion of self-government agreements provide certainty for land and resource use, and form the basis for strengthened and forward-looking partnership with aboriginal peoples. Land claims settlements and self-government arrangements bring opportunities for economic growth and a more promising future. Economic development corporations established through land claims settlements are becoming key economic actors and are expanding their activities outside the region. For example, First Air (<http://www.firstair.ca>), an airline owned by the Makivik Corporation of Kuujuaq, Quebec, provides passenger and cargo service to over 30 cities in Canada.

At the same time, northern communities face serious environmental, economic, social and cultural threats, many of them international in scope. The effects of pollution and climate change on the arctic environment, for example, are not issues that Canada can tackle alone. Circumpolar co-operation is necessary to address our northern challenges and to maximize opportunities for Northerners to fulfill their aspirations.

The Northern Dimension of Canada's foreign policy sets out a vision for Canada in the circumpolar world, based on co-operation with Northerners and our circumpolar neighbours. The following are a few examples of these promising partnerships.

- Over 30 institutions around the world have joined forces to build a university without walls. The University of the Arctic is a dynamic network of universities, colleges and other organizations concerned with higher education and research in the North. University members are sharing resources, facilities and expertise to build post-secondary education that is relevant and accessible to northern students.
- The Northern Chambers of Commerce Partnership Program is working toward the establishment of a Virtual Circumpolar Chamber of Commerce, with an emphasis on bringing direct benefit to northern small and medium-sized enterprises.
- Indigenous groups from northern Canada are playing an important role on the Arctic Council and in other important international fora.
- The Arctic Athabaskan Council (<http://www.arcticathabaskancouncil.com>), the Inuit Circumpolar Conference (<http://www.inuitcircumpolar.com>) and the Gwich'in Council International (<http://www.gwichin.nt.ca>) are actively representing their communities' interests and priorities in international relationships and activities.
- Russian and Canadian partners have established commercial transpolar air routes between our two countries. Canadian centres have thus become hubs for transpolar air and shipping routes.

To learn more about Arctic partnerships and Canada's role in the circumpolar world, visit the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade Web site: <http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/circumpolar/main-e.asp>