

BRINGING THE NORTH TO THE MIDWEST

While the snowy Arctic is over 1,000 km from the American Midwest, the “North Star” state of Minnesota has a rich tradition of polar exploration and scientific work. It is therefore no surprise that yet another link was forged between Canada and the Midwest through a recent symposium entitled *The Changing Arctic: International Cooperation and Development*.

In partnership with the Will Steger Foundation and the University of Minnesota, the consulate general in Minneapolis organized the half-day event to explore what a changing Arctic means for economic and social development, the environment, diplomacy and security.

Speakers praised the long tradition of Canada-U.S. cooperation in the Arctic and emphasized that it must be preserved and expanded, even as nations in the region push forward with territorial claims under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.

“Canada and the U.S. stand to gain the most if we work together, continuing to do what we’ve done historically,” said keynote speaker Whitney Lackenbauer, a renowned Arctic author and professor at the University of Waterloo, in Ontario.

Lackenbauer also stressed that native peoples are the primary stakeholders in decisions regarding the Arctic. “Northerners have been there for millennia. They are on the front lines of observing changes in the region, and their views need to be front and centre.”

This point was revisited throughout the day and served to strengthen the principal theme of ongoing collaboration for the benefit of all.

COMING HOME

Native peoples were also at the forefront last spring in another strong example of Canada-U.S. cooperation, which saw the repatriation of the remains of 22 Inuit individuals taken more than 80 years ago from an ancestral burial site on Labrador’s north coast.

The remains were removed in 1927 by American archeologist William Duncan Strong, who was aiming to collect natural history specimens and artefacts that could shed light on the Inuit people’s origins and lifestyle. The remains were taken from a cemetery at an abandoned Moravian mission—over opposition from the local community—and were brought to the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago, where they stayed for 84 years.

The agreement to return the remains followed consultations between the museum and a delegation from Nunatsiavut, an area in Labrador populated largely by Inuit, that has been granted a degree of self-government.

The Field Museum, under its repatriation program, felt that returning the remains was the right thing to do, its president, John W. McCarter, saying that their removal many decades ago “did not comply with ethical archeological practices, either past or present.”

The Consulate General of Canada in Chicago proudly hosted the delegation from Nunatsiavut and facilitated meetings between the delegation and the museum. “On so important a matter, we were more than happy to help these important consultations take place,” said acting Consul General Joanne Lemay.



The reburial ceremony in Labrador: the culmination of an 84-year effort by the Nunatsiavut community
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