

Inuit could be allies in struggle for Arctic sovereignty, critics say

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This week in Montebello, Quebec, Prime Minister Stephen Harper reminded President Bush that the fabled Northwest Passage belongs to Canada. But could a resolution to the dispute with the U.S. over the international status of the Passage lie internally?

Critics say establishing Canada's Arctic sovereignty is primarily about grappling with issues such as the impact of climate change in the Arctic and the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement.

But the Conservative government has been slow in recognizing the historic role of the Canadian Inuit in sovereignty issues.

On July 9, while Prime Minister Harper announced over \$3 billion in funding for the construction of offshore patrol ships and a deep water port in Nanisivik, Nunavut, he said that Canada has a choice when it comes to "defending our sovereignty in the Arctic."

"We either use it or lose it... more and more as global commerce routes chart a path to Canada's north and as oil, gas and minerals of this frontier become more valuable, northern development will grow ever more critical to our country."

In response, Paul Kaludjak, President of Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, the organization that looks out for Inuit concerns in the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement, wrote in the Hill Times, "The Arctic is not an uninhabited wilderness. It is our homeland and has been for centuries. More than 50,000 Inuit—proud Canadians—live in the Canadian Arctic."

Michael Byers, Canada Research Chair in Global Politics and International Law at the University of British Columbia, says Inuit leaders "are not excited" about the military development in Canada's Arctic; they want a policing presence, he says, as well as social and economic development and environmental protection.

"We cannot have a responsible policy on the Arctic without talking about climate change. The condition of the Inuit people is an embarrassment to Canada... Canada as a developed nation has a developing nation within it."

In May, Michael Mifflin, who works for the territorial government in Nunavut, wrote in Policy Options magazine that "Canada will have difficulty in asserting its claim to sovereignty if its Arctic citizens do not enjoy a standard of



Top of the world: A Canadian Air Force CP-140 Aurora long range patrol aircraft surveys the northern tip of Ellesmere Island, near the North Pole. Canadian Forces sovereignty patrols and operations are contributing to wider Canadian efforts at improving northern surveillance and reconnaissance in the Arctic.

CORPORAL EVAN KUEJZ

living on par with that of southern Canadians."

Duane Smith, President of Inuit Circumpolar Conference Canada, says the Harper government uses an "arms-length approach" in dealing with the Inuit. He says there are treaties and Nunavut land claim agreements that include sovereignty provisions and processes but "implementation is lacking."

"The Arctic is not an uninhabited wilderness. It is our homeland and has been for centuries."

Because of this, the Inuit in Nunavut launched \$1 billion lawsuit against the Federal government last December.

In 1969, the Inuit played a critical role in asserting Canadian sovereignty by stopping an American super tanker, the Manhattan, from going through the Northwest Passage. In 1986 when the American ice breaker, Polar Sea, passed through the Northwest Passage, the Canadian government drew a

baseline around the Arctic Archipelago—a legal measure asserting waters within the baseline to be internal to Canada.

"Inuit use and occupancy of the Northwest Passage, mapped in great detail in the 1970s, supported and enabled this legal move," wrote Kaludjak. The article also notes the auditor general's 2003 recommendations that the land claims agreement should be implemented.

Since the ground-breaking 2004 Arctic Climate Impact Assessment report, which stated that global warming trends are causing Polar ice caps to melt, nations have been racing to establish international navigational rights through the Northwest Passage and vying for a greater share to the resource-rich Arctic seabed.

Under the 1982 United Nations Conventions on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which came into force in 1994, coastal nations—including Canada who ratified the treaty in 2003—must establish claims related to their nations' continental shelves beyond 320 kilometres off their shorelines.

The 155 members in UNCLOS, with the U.S. expected to join soon, have up to ten years to research and file their claims. Canada's deadline for filing a claim is 2013.

However, it isn't just the possibility of the Northwest Passage becoming navigable for international commercial shipping and the benefits of shorter routes to Asia and the Atlantic seaboard for coastal nations that needs to be sorted out.

The greatest incentive for nations, says Byers, are the oil and gas reserves beneath the Arctic Ocean, an estimated 25 per cent of which have yet to be extracted. But the environmental impact of these accelerating activities in the fragile Arctic ecosystem remains of paramount concern to the Inuit who've lived there for thousands of years.

Besides resolving the dispute with the U.S. over whether the Northwest Passage is in Canada's internal waters, rights must also be established over the 1,800-kilometre-long Lomonosov Ridge between Siberia and Canada's Ellesmere Island, which is also being claimed by Russia and Denmark as part of their continental shelves.

Jointly with Denmark, Canada did a seismic acquisition program on the Lomonosov Ridge in early 2006 in the area north of Greenland and Ellesmere Island, the results of which will be publicized within the next 6 months. Currently, Canada is participating with a

Danish/Swedish expedition in the same area for further seismic data acquisition.

Meanwhile, Operation Nanook 07, the largest Canadian Forces northern operation to date, designed to "protect and defend Canadian sovereignty in Canada's North" according to a press release, wrapped up its training there last Friday.

A joint operation involving the deployment of navy, army and air force personnel and resources, Operation Nanook is being conducted in close cooperation with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and the Canadian Coast Guard.

"With increased activity in the Arctic, drug smuggling and oil spills are serious potential scenarios...we have to develop and maintain certain capabilities," says Diane Grover, Navy Lieutenant and Public Affairs officer of the Canada Command, speaking from Iqaluit.

It's a "very different world" in Iqaluit, says Grover. There are no roads connecting the town to anywhere, and everything has to come in by either boat or air. In the absence of technology, the command relies heavily on its Inuit soldiers.

"Cell phones, radios and blackberries don't work here because there's no infrastructure, so we can't just rely on technology. The Canadian Rangers, a reserve force of local Inuit soldiers, is essentially our eyes and ears, our surveillance system."

"In a sense this is a wonderful way to give them [the Inuit] a new purpose in their country," says Byers, author of *Intent for a Nation: What is Canada For?*

Last year the Canadian government replaced the two Inuit ambassadors to the Arctic council with one senior bureaucrat, Adele Dion, from the department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade. And although Dion is also Director General for Human Rights and Human Security, Canada didn't sign the UN draft declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Neither did Russia.

"Unfortunately, portions of the current Declaration do not help in providing practical guidance to States, indigenous peoples and multilateral organizations as parts of the text are vague and ambiguous, leaving it open to different, and possibly competing, interpretations," explains the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs on its website.

"We are still trying to encourage them to vote for our rights," say Smith.



Prime Minister Stephen Harper and US President George Bush shake hands following a joint press conference 21 August 2007 at the Security and Prosperity Partnership (SPP) summit in Montebello, Quebec.

MANDEL NGAN/AP/GETTY IMAGES

Bush tries to strengthen ties with Canada, Mexico

MONTEBELLO, Quebec (Reuters)—U.S. President George W. Bush will try to assure leaders of Canada and Mexico on Tuesday that the United States wants to build closer ties with them, despite the distraction of wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Bush, Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper and Mexican President Felipe Calderon are expected to unveil an initiative to avoid crippling delays in border crossings in the event of a terrorist attack, natural disaster or epidemic such as Avian flu.

But the Quebec summit of the North American leaders risked being overshadowed by the hurricane that smashed into Mexico's Caribbean coast on Tuesday.

Not long after he arrived for what has been dubbed the "Three Amigos summit," Calderon announced he was cutting his trip to Canada short to deal with fallout from Hurricane Dean.

The storm hit Mexico's Caribbean coast as the strongest Category 5 hurricane, then lost some of its power over land and was downgraded to a Category 3 storm. But forecasters warned that roaring winds and rains were still a major threat.

Bush told Calderon the United States was willing to help. Calderon canceled plans to spend time with Harper in Quebec on Wednesday and then attend a business lunch in Toronto.

The summit at a chateau by the Ottawa River got under way amid demonstrations by protesters who shouted for Bush to go home and objected to the aim of boosting trade and working on a common approach against terrorism.

A group of activists camped out overnight in Montebello, and another band of protesters left Ottawa early on Tuesday by canoe hoping to get close to the summit site by water. About 25 police boats patrolled the river.

Critics expressed concern that broadening economic ties would erode national sovereignty and that closer cooperation on anti-terrorism could lead to human rights abuses.

Don't appear too close

But both Harper and Calderon are interested in furthering the trade relationship, although neither wants to appear too close to Bush, who is unpopular in both of their countries.

Bush came into office in 2001 pledging to focus on strengthening ties with Mexico but critics say he has neglected the concerns of his neighbors in the aftermath of the Sept. 11 attacks.

Mexico is frustrated by increasingly tough U.S. border policies and by the collapse in Congress of a push to overhaul U.S. immigration laws.

Canada is irked that anti-terrorism measures have hampered the flow of goods and services across the border.

Harper discussed Canada's concerns about Russia's symbolic laying of claim to the North Pole, where it placed a flag on the seabed. Canada claims it has sovereignty over the Northwest Passage of the Arctic, but the United States views it as an international strait.

Stephen Clarkson, professor of international economy at the University of Toronto, said the Northwest Passage issue allows Harper—accused by opposition politicians of being a Bush protégé—to show some disagreement with the U.S. leader.

"It's a very safe issue for Harper to bring up because it allows him to sound a nationalist theme," Clarkson said.

On Afghanistan, where Canada has 2,600 troops, Harper appears to have resigned himself to pulling out the troops by February 2009 since opposition parties, which have more seats in parliament than Harper's Conservatives, oppose an extension.

B.C. using 2010 Olympics to promote healthy living

By WAHIBA CHAIR
Special to The Epoch Times

Getting healthy and fit is often a big part of people's New Year's resolutions. In the lead up to the 2010 Winter Games, the B.C. Ministry of Health is promoting an "Olympics resolution," with the same goal in mind.

In an ambitious drive to improve the health of British Columbians by 2010, ActNow BC, a cross-government health promotion initiative, aims to promote healthy eating, physical activity, and tobacco reduction.

Last week, Gordon Hogg, minister of state for ActNow BC, announced a 225 million funding initiative to help achieve the 2010 goal. The announcement is a result of collaboration between the provincial government and the BC Healthy Living Alliance (BCHLA), the largest health promotion group in the province consisting of a number of organizations.

According to Hogg, with its role in promoting excellence, strengthening communities, and its international allure, the Olympics provide a perfect opportunity for B.C. to lead the way in North America for healthy living.

"2010 is only a date to measure changes, and social marketing provincially, but much interest has already been shown both from other provinces and the international community," says Hogg.

For Suzanne Allard Strutt, chairwoman of the BCHLA, the endeavour is about creating "new

social norms."

"Thirty years ago, smoking was the norm, and it was a minority that didn't smoke. We've turned this around, and we are trying to do the same thing with healthy living."

The 11 strategies will build on existing programs, experiences, and networks by focusing on those that will have the most impact. The initiative is expected to not only improve the well being of British Columbians, but also leverage healthcare spending and boost productivity.

Each year about 5,600 British Columbians die as a result of smoking, but what is less known are the implications of other lifestyle risk factors. Twenty per cent of the cases of type 2 diabetes, stroke, coronary heart disease and colon cancer result simply from a sedentary lifestyle.

Being obese more than doubles an individual's risk of dying early—or losing, on average, seven years of life, according to the BCHLA.

Smoking, physical inactivity, and obesity tally up to a whopping \$3.8 billion burden on the provincial budget. The good news is that at least 50 per cent of these conditions are preventable if addressed through a series of step-by-step lifestyle changes.

"Eighty to 90 per cent of type 2 diabetes can be prevented by healthy eating, but all three sets of strategies are equally important for the prevention of not just diabetes," says Jean Blake, Executive director of Canadian Diabetes Association Pacific Area.

Using a multi-faceted approach, the program is expected to work collaboratively to bring about changes both at the individual and societal levels.

For instance, the healthy eating initiatives target adults age 35-54 and their children by promoting access to fruit and vegetables and healthy cooking programs to low income families. In schools, educators will play a key role in reducing access to unhealthy choices such as sugary drinks.

Because consumption of fruit and vegetables is known to reduce the risk of chronic diseases including cancer, heart disease, and high blood pressure, the objective is to have 70 per cent of British Columbians achieve a healthy weight by consuming at least 5 servings of fruit and vegetables daily.

In integration with the food regimen, the BCHLA identified four strategies aimed at getting British Columbians ages 35-54 to become more active, the aim being to boost the physically active population to 70 per cent—an extra 351,000 British Columbians.

The provincial walking initiative will focus on developing walking programs through provincial coordination, physician engagement, and social support. This will be integrated with the built environment and active transportation program, which, according to Strutt, "is the most promising initiative in terms of sustainability, because we are changing the physical infrastructure and walk-ability of communities."

The low income opportunity ini-



The B.C. Healthy Living Alliance team at the Nat Bailey Stadium in Vancouver during Minister Gordon Hogg's announcement of a \$22 million funding initiative to help British Columbians become healthy by the 2010 Olympics. B.C. LUNG ASSOCIATION

tiative will ensure that low-income families and individuals have access to equipment, facilities, services, and "quality leisure experiences" while the community based awareness initiative will tailor specific messages to the targeted populations.

The BCHLA tobacco reduction programs will target young adults aged 19-29—those who have the highest risk of smoking—as well as exposure to second hand smoke.

Through WorkSafe BC, the BCHLA will target a maximum of 100 companies with highest rates of smoking. Students will benefit through smoking cessation programs that aim to establish tobacco-free campuses.

The tobacco reduction community outreach strategy will involve the distribution of smoke free materials at popular clubs, restaurants, sporting and cultural events, in addition to the promotion of smoke-free housing options.

Through these three-fold interventions, the BCHLA hopes to achieve a 10 per cent decrease in

smoking, meaning 225,000 fewer British Columbians would smoke.

"This is an ambitious goal, but we will do our very best, and are confident we will achieve it," says Scott McDonald, Executive director of the BC Lung Association.

BCHLA is currently developing implementation plans, and many of these initiatives are expected to come into being within a few months. The Michael Smith Foundation for Health Care Research will evaluate the results of the strategies.

"We're excited by the investment that the government has made, and have looked at the best evidence and put together a comprehensive approach; the key will be the implementation of the programs," says Diego Marchese, Vice President, Research and Health Promotion, Heart and Stroke Foundation.

For more information, or to become involved, visit: ACTNow BC and BCHLA web sites available respectively at: <http://www.actnowbc.ca/>, <http://www.bchealthyliving.ca/>