

KLEMEN JEJINČIČ

## SELF-DETERMINATION AND THE INUIT

## INTRODUCTION

Since the World War II the principle of self-determination of peoples has gained much in its importance due to the inclusion in the Charter of the United Nations and has later on played a determining role in the processes through which most of the European colonies gained their political independence. Its application, though, was somehow limited by the principle of inviolability of the territorial integrity of sovereign states and therefore did not include several groups, like the national minorities, e.g. Hungarians in Romania. It certainly did not include the numerous ethnic groups that have been populating the areas territorially connected to the metropolitan state long before the processes of European colonization have begun or before the expansion of the modern state, as it followed the retreat of colonial rule and that still pursue through several practices the traditional subsistence activities, upon which their culture and identity is/was based. Many of these groups with very diverse forms of social organization, have been, despite its problematics, described in the terms of tribal societies.

These groups are collectively known under many names, such as Native, Aboriginal, Indigenous, First, Tribal or Original peoples, but also as the Fourth World. Many times the terms are interchangeable and are used as self-designation by several of these peoples (Native in Alaska, Aboriginal in Canada, Tribal in India) or as names of NGO's representing their interests (Committee for Original People's Entitlement in Canada, The Indigenous Peoples Union in the USA), but the literature as well is prone to use more than one of these terms.

The first international institution to codify the rights of indigenous and tribal peoples was the International Labor Organization (ILO) with its Convention No. 107 in 1957 in which there already were articles dealing with land rights (Plant, p.9). In 1989 ILO issued new Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention. Also the United Nations became increasingly involved in such issues and in 1982 they formed a Working Group on Indigenous populations. They immediately started to prepare a Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; today already adopted (Plant, p. 11).

Since many claims issues connected to the indigenous peoples are tied to environmental and development issues, several organizations and movements around the world have sprung as a result of that. One example would be the Inuit Circumpolar Conference. In addition, the World Bank, a financier of many great environmentally threatening projects has in 1991 issued a new Operational Directive on indigenous peoples, which requires project adaptation by the indigenous population (Plant, p. 11).

The process in which the principle of self-determination is increasingly being applied in the "internal colonies" of the states has demanded a distinction between the indigenous peoples who may now enjoy the principle of self-determination and minorities that may not (yet?). It also poses two main challenges to the states. Indigenous self-determination defies the constitutional unity and challenges the internal sovereignty of states, whose territories they populate. But it also implies difference in treatment among indigenous and non-indigenous population (Harhoff, p. 244-245). In arctic and subarctic regions, several land claims successfully came through from 1971, but the first time the self-determination was embodied in a law was the case of Greenland Home Rule in 1979 what reoccurred with the March 1999 establishment of the Nunavut Territory in Canada. The wave of the diverse forms of nationalisms and demands for self-determination that spread over Central and Eastern Europe in the 1990's certainly had some influence over the position and organization of the Northern Peoples of Russia.

Today more than 30 ethnic indigenous groups populate the arctic and subarctic areas and are divided between seven sovereign states. The Saami people of the northern Fennoscandia may include some 60,000 people. Numerically Inuit are the largest of these groups and number around 150,000 people (Greenland - 50,000, Nunavut (CA) - 20,000, the rest of Canada - 15,000, Alaska - 60,000, Chukchy Autonomous *Okrug* (Russia) - 1700). They represent a majority of the population in Nunavut Territory and on Greenland. Linguistically related Aleut people inhabit the Aleut Islands in Alaska (25,000) and Komandirovsky Islands close to Russian coast (700).

Russia contains the largest number of minorities that inhabited these regions prior to the European arrival. The largest two, Sakha and Komi are organized into 2 Republics (Sakha and Komi) and Komi-Permyak Autonomous *Okrug*. There are additional 7 autonomous national *okrug*s; Nentsy AO, Yamal-Nentsy AO, Taymir AO, Khanti and Mansi AO, Evenki AO, Chukchi AO and Koryak AO, but most of the numerically small First Nations of the Russian North aren't organized into such frameworks. These groups are Saami, YUPIIT (Eastern Inuit), Chuvans, Evens, Nganasan, Yukagir, Nanay, Ket, Orochi, Tofalar, Dolgan, Aleut, Nivkhi, Negidal, Selkup, Ents, Ulchi, Orok, Udegey and Itelmen (Fondahl, p. 217).

## 1. INDIGENOUS PEOPLES OF ARCTIC AMERICA AND GREENLAND

As in other cases of aboriginal, native or communities living in the areas prior to the European colonization, the use of ethnonyms is problematic. The term Eskimo is on one hand commonly used self-referentially by Alaskan Inupiat and Yupiit, but in Canadian and Greenlandic context it has clear racist/colonialist connotations (Hensel, p. 191, note 1) and the word Inuit is preferred. In linguistic terms, the term Inuit is reserved for the peoples speaking the group of languages from the Bering Straits all over to Greenland and Yupik for those speaking the languages stretching from Norton Sound and Siberian coast to Bristol Bay on the southern Alaskan coast. Here the term Eskimo would refer to all the peoples speaking Inuit and Yupik languages (Atlas of Languages, map 1), while the ethnonym Inuit was chosen as all-encompassing self-designation of the Eskimo peoples, as seen through the name of the Inuit Circumpolar Conference. The languages belonging to the Eskimo-Aleut family are spread from the tip of Siberia to the eastern coast of Greenland. They are divided into two branches, the Aleut language and the Yupik-Inuit language family. The Inuit-Yupik language family consists of the Yupik group (from Yupiit = People) and the Inuit (= People) group. The Yupiit speak three different languages: Siberian, Pacific Yupik and the most numerous Central Alaskan Yupik, each of them with several dialects. The Inuit group, though, is consisted of fairly unbroken chain of dialects with mutual intelligibility, the furthest extremes being unintelligible to each other. According to somehow standardized scripts that have developed, three languages were formed. The Greenlandic Inuit is itself divided into three versions; the dominant and official West Greenlandic and the smaller East Greenlandic and the Thule or Polar Inuit. In all of Canada, east of Mackenzie delta Inuktitut is spoken and it consists of several groups. From Mackenzie delta and all over to Norton Sound across the Alaskan coast around the Inupiat speak Inupiaq.

Human settlement of the western arctic areas beyond southern Alaska has begun only in around 3.000 BCE, when a new hunting and gathering culture, The Arctic Small Tool Tradition, rapidly spread all over to Greenland. This first wave of immigration was followed by a period when separate cultures evolved in their adaptation to the local circumstances. In the 10th Century CE a second wave of immigration called the Thule Culture influenced the entire area. It originated in the area north of the Bering Straits and was based on coastal villages dependent on whaling from *umiaks* and *kayaks* (Blackwell and Sugden, p. 192). It rapidly spread along the northern coast to Greenland, while successfully replacing the Dorset Culture with incorporation of their ice hunting techniques and the igloo. The communities south of Bering Straits and Siberia were not affected by this and



maintained a distinct culture and language. The spread of Thule culture signifies a linguistic division among the Inuit peoples, i.e. between the Inuit and the Yupiit. The Thule people spent their summers in open water hunting of the sea mammals. In few areas, where it was possible the summer hunts were directed to caribou and fish, but the accumulation of winter store remained part of the Thule economic pattern. Winters were spent in villages of permanent houses built from stone and turf and were passed in the sedentary consumption of supplies accumulated in the summer with the addition of winter ice sealing (McGhee, p. 566). Among the Thule culture Inuit continuous inter-group contacts, through which material items over long distances were transmitted, were a common characteristic. The transmission was facilitated by the dog-slide, *umiyak* and *kayak* transport technology.

In the 16th Century all along to the 18th Century a rather quick transition from the Thule Culture to the Historical Inuit Culture occurs in the areas beginning west of the Mackenzie River delta: Central Arctic, Labrador and Greenland. This period is also marked by a break of local trade spreading to Siberia between the two areas in which eventually different cultural patterns developed, due to the lack of the contact dividing the Inuit language speaking groups into Inupiat of North Alaska and Mackenzie delta and Inuktit of Canada and Greenlandic.

The Inupiat continued to depend primarily on whaling; living in permanent winter villages and the area remained densely populated. The Eastern Inuit started to experience a period of environmental changes called The Little Ice Age that reached its height in the late 18th and early 19th century. Climatic cooling influenced the economic organization while the increase in the sea-ice choked the channels of the High and Central Arctic where it caused the decline in the importance of whaling. Even though many elements of the Thule way of life survived along the subarctic coast of Greenland and Labrador, few Inuit living in arctic regions maintained the essential attributes of the Thule Culture (McGhee, p. 566). Most of them could not succeed to store large supplies of winter food from summer hunting. They therefore had to spend much of the winter in snow-house villages hunting seals beneath the ice-sheath and pursue more intensive fishing in the summer.

The Inuit were the first North American group to contact the Europeans and by the time of Columbus they have been experiencing encounters with the Greenlandic Norse for approximately 300 years. McGhee (1994) connects the cultural distress and the break in social order, where larger groups had in order to survive, divide themselves into smaller, primarily extended family units, not only to the environmental causes. He suggests that the spread of epidemic diseases, originating in the European-Inuit contact in 1500-1750, may have played a significant role in the decline of Thule Culture in the Central and Eastern Arctic.

Until the renewed colonization attempts of the Europeans in the end of the 19th century the Inuit-European contact was very limited and based mostly on commercial activities, while the traditional social organization of the Western Eskimo peoples wasn't much affected by it until the 19th century.

## 2. TRADITIONAL INUIT SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

The traditional Inuit societies were as hunting and gathering cultures strongly dependent on the local provision of food resources. Their culture and social structure was most complex in Alaska and Western Greenland and least complex in the Central Arctic. Inuit and Yupik groups lived in numerous geographically defined subgroups that were extremely flexible in composition and structure. The basic social and economic unit was the nuclear family.

For much of the year from spring to fall families lived together in small houses or tents together with other families in groups of 20 to 30 people moving from one camp to the other. Winters were spent in larger settlements where a large number of families gathered to spend the season together. The Copper Inuit of Central Canadian Arctic gathered in snow-house settlements on the ocean ice to hunt seals (Condon, p. 25), while the Yupiit and Inupiat spent winters in permanent coastal villages.

Traditionally men and boys over the age of five spent their days and nights in the men's house. This traditional semi-subterranean house of which there was at least one in the settlement, was the communal men's residence hall and workshop, where men lived and were served meals by wives, daughters and sisters. It was also the place where community dancing and ritual activity took place. Women and children lived in smaller individual houses. This separation of man and women's spaces coincided with somehow dichotomous approach of reciprocal obligation that occurs in Inuit world view; hunter/hunted, relative/non-relative, man/woman, summer/winter, host/guest, land/sea (Fienup-Riordan, p. 341). The subsistence activities were (and still are) also divided according to gender. Women were gathering greens and berries, setting and checking nearby nets, cutting and drying fish and game and preparing food. Girls were often partnered in arranged marriages soon after puberty, but divorce was, initiated by either sex, also often. Men on the other side were occupied by hunting land and sea animals, usually outside the village or camp by solitary individuals or by pairs (Hensel, p. 38 & 39).

The ideal-type system of virtually complete gender separation and labor division was operational only in the permanent villages and camps, but even in small-



er groups, in camps with no men's house, a sense of spatial separation was preserved. Since general conception was that gender roles were complementary and flexible and the couple was seen as a productive unit, some flexibility in gender roles occurred, especially in cases of need. Boys learned girls tasks and vice versa. There were no specialists in these communities. Even shamans hunted, gathered like anyone else, although a powerful shaman could request things from people, with the expectation of not being refused. Many people had different shamanic powers.

The fundamental feature of the Inuit social organization is the absence of unilinear exogamous kinship units, the prevalence of principle of bilinear descent and flexibility in group composition. Even though the Inupiat and the Yupiit put more emphasis on the patrilinear descent, the matrilinear descent for example plays a great importance at seal parties connected exchange rituals (Fienup-Riordan, p. 306 & 307). In Canadian Arctic the concept of relative included people of several different categories of kin, between which the Inuit saw no difference (ibid. p. 141). Only on the St. Lawrence Island, populated by the Siberian Yupiit, patrilinear kin groups do exist, but they aren't exogamous and the residence after marriage is matrilocal. A limited number of descent groups exist. They are commonly known by definite names, share distinctive subcultures and are recognized by all the participants in the common culture as distinctive sociopolitical groups (Hughes, p. 248).

The social structure of the traditional Inuit does know the existence of descent, kinship, nuclear family, group, hunting party and other institutions, but their boundaries and definitions are flexible and constantly negotiated. The concept of leader never really developed in such communities and when these communities grew larger in winters the leadership was ephemeral and cooperation was maintained through bilateral kin ties, alliance mechanisms, as well as by economic necessity.

The usage of the term tribe to describe the traditional social organization of the Inuit is problematic primarily in two aspects. First, the use of the term itself, for growing number of persons, has become inadequate since its limitations outweigh its classificatory capacity and that the categorization itself is imposed from outside and therefore having colonialist connotations (Sheleff. 1999; Dictionary of Sociology, *tribe*, p. 528). From the other side if we do use the category of tribe as describing a society whose members share cultural and linguistic characteristics and with strong lineage structures important for social interaction, the term is also inadequate. The Inuit groups, where a number of camps would share a dialect and certain stylistic forms can be described as regional sub-cultures, but they were not tribes, for they had no strong kinship or political structure (Valentine and Vallee, p. 109).

Therefore, no specific social structures developed which would embody group law and would have a monopoly on the legitimate use of physical force. A clear example of the absence of strong social structures like unilinear clan or other clear intra-Inuit divisions can be seen in the case of the town of Inuvik in the Mackenzie delta, where the native population is divided socially and administratively into Indians, Inuit and Other Natives. As opposed to the Indians, whose status is based on the inclusion in an Indian band roll or treaty list, the Inuit disk list, maintained by the R. C. M. Police simply enumerates the Inuit, even though they distinguish among themselves four different groups, based on the area of origin (Honigman, p. 32).

An additional important feature of Inuit traditional society was that the land was communally owned. But not even that. People did not own the land; they just considered themselves to have the right to use the land on which they are settled and the resources they find with it. Animals as well as significant objects in the natural world were conceived as having a *yuk/inuk* (person). Hunting was not conceptualized as a zero-sum game, but rather animal population and hunter success were both affected by how animals were treated (Hensel, p. 40, 41). Even when trapping assumed greater economic importance the area around the trapping camp was not owned by the trappers but was rather recognized as an area in the use of a specific trapper/s.

### 3. COLONIZATION OF THE INUIT LANDS

The first Portuguese voyage to Greenland is recorded already in 1500, while in 1520 there is already evidence of Basque whalers in the areas of South Labrador. Again in the 1555 and in 1558 a contact with the Inuit is reported by Portuguese, French and Danish sailors (McGhee, pp. 569-70). From these areas the Europeans started to penetrate into the interior and the English established first trading post in the Hudson Bay in 1670, and the Inuit population became exposed to European trade but also disease.

The first true colonizing steps undertaken by the Europeans were the Danish, more accurately Hans Egede, when he established in the vicinity of the present day Nuuk - Gothaab, the first colony in Greenland in 1721. By 1776 the Danish Crown took over the colonization of Greenland and established Royal Greenland Trading Company that preserved its monopoly well into present century. In 1782 the first true legislation for the country was issued under the name Instruction to The Trading Station in Greenland (Hertling, p. 128) This instruction monopolized all trade and closed the land to all foreign interest and by this disconnected the

developments on Greenland from the ones in America.

In 1649 the Russians reached the subarctic Pacific coast and established a trade post in Anadyr, mainly for fur interest. In 1741 Bering reaches the southern Alaskan coast, but the exploitation of the area begun only in the 1770's, primarily based on the fur-sealing that continued until the beginning of the present century when the seals were on the brink of extermination. The effects concentrated on Aleut and Pribinof Islands where permanent trading settlements were established. In 1825-26 the Russians moved a group of Aleut from the Aleut islands to Komandirovsky Islands next to the Siberian coast, where according to the 1989 census they numbered 702 (Wixman, p. 9). Due to the subjugation, slaughter of the seals, the main food source, and the diseases the Russians brought, mostly tuberculosis, the Aleut population plummeted. In the Bering Sea area in 1839-39 a smallpox epidemics wiped out whole communities and seriously reduced population, while another one struck in 1861 in the Central Yupik territory.

The other route from which the European influence came to the Inuit was from the south by the Canadian traders who have established themselves in the Mackenzie River valley already in 1805. In 1840 The Hudson Bay Company built a palisaded Fort McPherson, 150 miles from the sea in the Mackenzie River area. The Sigliaq Inuit of the Delta became more and more involved in the trade through which they acquired guns, ammunition, tobacco and tea in exchange for furs. Through this trade links modern items spread all over to the Point Barrow where they overlapped with the Alaskan-Siberian trade (Blackwell and Sugden, p. 22-27).

In 1880's the whalers started to over-winter on the coast of N Alaska, where they drew on the services of the Inupiat for meat, women's sexual favors and furs. In return they provided guns, tobacco, and hardware and introduced alcohol. The practice of over-wintering attracted Inuit and encouraged their concentration in permanent settlements. The adoption of rifle by the Inupiat only quickened the exhaustion of the game, already severely depleted by the whaling and accompanying activities. The whole whaling industry of the area collapsed in 1907 (*ibid.* p. 303), due to the almost complete disappearance of the whales. The Inuit population became depending on the whalers for supplies of the things they didn't need beforehand, starvation has become common and the population additionally succumbed to the epidemics of the smallpox, influenza, common cold, but also to the alcoholism.

Even though a fur was traded for almost a hundred years, only in the beginning of the 20th century were permanent trading posts first established north of the tree line. In 1910 Aklavik in the Mackenzie delta was set up and in 1916 the Hudson Bay Company opened a store on the mainland, just opposite Victoria



Island, already in the area of Copper Inuit. In Canadian Arctic the families no longer gathered in winter, but spent them in isolated family camps engaged in trapping. Other families moved to permanent settlements and centered trapping activities on the surrounding areas. By this time majority of Inuit groups exchanged an economically independent subsistence activities for a symbiotic relationship with the larger society and a cash economy.

#### 4. THE SPREAD OF GOVERNMENT IN THE INUIT LANDS

##### Siberia - Chukchi Peninsula

The first Soviet government after the Revolution reached the Chukchi Peninsula on which the Yupiit reside only in around 1923. In 1933 Provideniya settlement was founded as a supply post for the Arctic settlements in the region and the European settlers became arriving in larger numbers. Due to the closeness of the St. Lawrence Island to the Chukchi Peninsula the island Yupiit have maintained strong links through hunting, fishing and intermarriage with the mainland ones. The passage was closed with the height of the Cold war in 1948 (National Geographic, p. 504). During the 50's the party native language education of the 20's and the 30's was replaced by a strong tendency of Russification. Thus in the late 50's, the director of a college in Novo-Chaplino burned all available copies of Yurii Anko, the first literary work in Siberian Yupik (Vitebsky, p. 98). In addition, as a result of the sedentarization policy, the Yupiit were in 1958 forced to move from several coastal villages and hunting camps to four collectivized villages and were organized in teams of 10 to 20 relatives to work on one ship (Atlas of mankind, p. 60).

##### Alaska

In 1867 the Russian Empire sold the Alaska to the USA and it remained in a status of a colony until 1959 when it became a state. After the purchase of the Alaska, Protestants and Catholics entered the field and in 1880's the federal money was allocated to the Alaskan missions for "the establishment of the schools as means of isolating the young and bringing them under the influence of Christian work ethics" (Fienup -Riordan, p. 14). The decrease of the population due to the epidemics and the establishment of boarding grammar schools but also whaling activities in the N have facilitated the transition of traditionally dispersed and seasonally mobile population into a more stable and concentrated one.

The direct federal government involvement began in the late 20's by establishing first federal schools in major, now permanently settled Inupiat and Yupiit

villages. They were soon replacing the missionary schools, while the Bureau of Indian Affairs took over the education of the Inuit communities from the Office of Education in 1931. The decreasing amount of knowledge which the local people had of the many factors of importance to them, was parallel to a shift in governmental affairs from relative local autonomy and self-reliance to dependence on a higher authority.

### Canada

In 1870 The Northwestern Territories were transferred from the Hudson Bay Company to the Canadian government and in 1876 Canadian Parliament issued the Indian Act by which it assumed responsibility over the Original populations. As elsewhere in Alaska and Greenland, the missionaries in Canada translated their holy texts into the local languages, what not only facilitated Christianization, but also provided a basis for literary creation of the Inuit.

The Inuit came under The Indian act only in 1939. The WW II brought development that affected the whole of Arctic and resulted in a creation of the present-day urban like communication infrastructure, which somehow reflects the integration of the Arctic into the main population centers of the region. This was expressed in two ways. Land and air route infrastructure was built and federal social policy was beginning to be implemented. From late 40's onwards schools and nursing stations were built and government-housing programs were adopted. A typical example would be the 1961 construction of a new arctic town of Inuvik in the Mackenzie delta, which was to serve as a base for development and administration of the region. The combination of bottle-feeding, improved medical services and increased economic security led to an overall increase in the family size throughout the arctic regions. The availability of government subsidized housing, wage employment, government assistance and child allowances now permit families to provide for a larger number of offspring than in the pre-settlement period (Condon, p. 36). As a result of centralized social services and schooling provided a trend of centralized settlement was strengthened, so that in 1966-71 the number of out-lying villages in NW territories fell by 87 or almost half (Blackwell and Sugden, p. 306). As in Alaska, the discovery of oil in the late 60's brought new issues for the Inuit: employment, pollution, land rights, land use and native rights.

With the processes of permanent settlement gaining momentum after the late 40's with the increased presence of governmental agencies, such as the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources, the state felt increasing need to institutionalize a system of communication between the Administration and the Inuit. Only later came the development of the inter-Inuit organizations.

During the 50's numerous new employment opportunities arose in most Inuit communities over the arctic regions and two main occupational groups appeared: wage laborers and subsistence practitioners. The already loose character of the headman-group was further loosened by a wage economy in which a headman, though still with a prestige due to the supremacy in hunting, found himself to be just another laborer.

In 1971 the Department of Local Government established village and settlement councils in Inuit areas. The settlement council maintained roads, airports and municipal services, but were not collecting its own taxes, since all the funding were still received from the territorial government. The settlement council also didn't have direct control over education, economic development, health care or welfare and was consulted in these areas. As seen on the Holman Island (Condon, p. 49) even though the structure of the council is antithetical to traditional values and behaviors, like discussing items until consensus is attained, Inuit are present at the meetings. But at this stage, all over the American Arctic, the Inuit were beginning to be increasingly involved in the political activities in the framework of Inuit national organizations and associations.

## 5. GROWTH OF THE INUIT POLITICAL ORGANIZATION AND THE PROCESSES OF SELF-DETERMINATION

### Greenland - Kalaallit Nunaat

Even though the Inuit culture and the way of life in Greenland as in Alaska, Canada or Siberia hasn't drastically changed until the end of the 19th century, the Greenlandic Inuit were quite quickly included in the web of power relations with Danish state with a rapid spread of Danish colonial administration. The Danish colonial policy in Greenland was, since 1782, when the colonization was taken over by the Crown, a constant mixture of assimilation and protection of the indigenous culture. Even though there was a period of starvation in 1840's due to the decrease of game that was hunted (Hertling, p. 130), the Inuit population rose from an estimated 7-9,000 in 1800 to a 23,000 in 1950 and 40,000 in 1970 (Kienerz, 1987, p. 247).

In 1850 several influential reforms were introduced in Greenland. Elected Advisory Councils of best hunters or sometimes government officials were formed in major communities. They performed financing and administration of social welfare and served as local courts of law. This local democratic government was accompanied by standardization of the Inuit as a written language, setting up the printing press and the first Inuit newspaper, in print until today. Two training

colleges for Inuit teachers were set in local language and the one in Nuuk - Gothaab served as a center of literary activity (Hertling, p. 132).

In 1900 have in accordance with the administrative decentralization the Danish authorities established councils in each small settlement, while Inuit started to be employed on administrative posts. But these processes were until this period limited only to the western and southern areas of Greenland, since the first contact with the E Greenlandic Inuit in Angamagssalik was established only in 1884, while the Thule - Polar Inuit, received a first trading post only in 1910, several years after the contact (Hertling, p. 137).

In 1912 Greenland became responsible for education and other internal matters (Kienetz, 1987, p.247), the system of school expanded and after 1920 Danish became compulsory in primary schools. Increases availability of wage labor and compulsory schooling only facilitated, as in other Arctic areas, the transition to permanent settlement in which smaller out-lying villages and camps were abandoned and earlier subsistence activities based on seasonal migrations, hunting camps and winter communities, radically changed.

Extensive change started to occur with the WWII when the US military presence ended long isolation of the island. Greenland's quarantine from the outside was officially ended in 1953, when it became an integral part of the Danish realm. The integration required enormous Danish investment in the infrastructure including the availability of government services, like education, health care and welfare. This further increased demographic centralization and the exposure of the Inuit to the Danish culture. The Danicization of Greenland was accompanied, due to the lack of local highly skilled professionals, with larger Danish immigration and in late 1980's they already number around 10,000 (Kienetz, 1987, p.250). The economic development, like the economic rationalization of fisheries, has benefited the local population, but the Greenlanders resented the overwhelming Danish influence and in particular the increased importance of the Danish language.

Greenland Mineral Resources Act of 1965 stated that "all mineral resources in Greenland belong to the State", what was by the Greenlanders interpreted as Denmark. Additional fuel was added to the grievances with Danish intentions to join the EEC with which only 28,4 % of the Greenlanders on the referendum, held on the question in 1972, agreed (Foighel, p. 86). But since Greenland was an integral part of Denmark, not like the Faroe Islands that have a Home Rule since 1948, the votes were counted together with the Danish and Greenland became EEC member in 01/01/1973. These grievances gave rise to the Home Rule nationalist movement, whose primary supporters were the young Greenlanders (Kienetz, 1987, p. 249).

In 1972 the Greenlandic Provincial Council informed the Minister for Greenland that it is the time for a commission to study the issue of Greenlandic self-responsibility. In 1973 a Committee was named and it issued a report for suggestions, which, due to the wish of political cooperation between the Greenlandic and Danish politicians, resulted in 1975 establishment of the Commission on Home Rule in Greenland. Its work concluded in 1978 and was approved by the Danish Parliament. In 1979 a referendum was held in Greenland and 70,1 % of the votes approved the Home Rule Act.

The main purpose of the home rule was to transfer powers and responsibility from Denmark to Greenlandic political authorities, "which shall not only administer communities but also establish rules to be applied in administration and have an independent financial responsibility for solving different tasks" (Foighel, p. 91). According to the Act, Greenland remained a part of the Danish realm, as it retained control over currency, defense and foreign policy, but in the areas not conflicting with the constitution, the Greenland Assembly and Greenland Administration became the institutions with full administrative and legislative powers. The right of taxation bestowed upon the Home Rule Authorities provided the independent financing of these areas. Denmark continued presenting annual grants for public services previously paid and managed by Denmark, predominately due to the low Greenlandic budget. The Greenlandic Home Rule government consisted in 1994 of a premier and 6 ministers and the 27 members Assembly (Harhoff, p. 249), while in 1995 the Assembly expanded to 31 members (Fischer 98, p. 164).

As response to the 1975 Danish granting of oil-exploration concessions off western Greenland, in the same year Greenlandic Provincial Council issued a resolution claiming, "mineral resources belong to the permanent population of Greenland" (Foighel, p. 96). This was incorporated into the Home Rule Act, even though there are no present mineral exploitation projects in Greenland. However, because of the European Community membership, Home Rule Act did not involve control of the fisheries policy, the main industry of Greenland. In principle, the Home Rule government has no power to conclude international treaties, but in practice has concluded agreements with neighboring countries that fall exclusively within the Home Rule powers (Harhoff, p. 252). In 1982 on the issue of fisheries control, the Greenland Assembly decided to commence negotiations for withdrawal from the EEC. After a referendum in 1982, in which most of the population favored withdrawal, Greenland left the EEC on 01/01/1985 and then acquired a status of an associated Overseas Country and Territory with the European Community under part 4 of the Treaty of Rome (Harhoff, p. 252). But even today, due to the financial funding issues, Greenland's fisheries policy is influenced by the EU policy on the issue and due to

Greenland's insufficient economic foundation, it seems that Greenland shall prefer to stay within the Danish Monarchy.

### Alaska

Even though the Alaskan situation has many similarities with Canada, the differences are quite considerable. But even with the more rapid economic development and greater influx of the non-Natives, the areas of the Inuit and Aleut are largely uninhabited by the non-Natives as in the example of Nunavut Territory in Canada. With this, the USA colonial policy reflected the 'national' feelings of the settlers, while the Canadian or rather British, promoted an imperial view, including both settlers and the original inhabitants (Kienez, 1986, p. 66). The American assimilationist view underlines the principle of termination of original people's special status in the 1971 Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) (Kienez, 1986, p. 66).

In 1966 eight separate native organizations united in the Alaskan Federation of Natives (AFN) to put forward a claim by right of aboriginal use of vast areas of Alaska (Blackwell & Sugden, p. 348). The AFN also demanded expansion of the definition of the Native, which resulted that in the ANCSA a Native is already considered anyone with at least 1/4 of Native ancestry. The American Congress accepted most of their demands and the ANCSA was in effect an act of statehood for the Alaskan Natives (Blackwell & Sugden, p. 348). 200 village corporations selected large blocks of federal public domain in amount of 89,000 km<sup>2</sup>. Then the 12 (later 13) regional corporations selected additional 65,000 km<sup>2</sup> and 8,000 km<sup>2</sup> for Native communities "too small to qualify as villages" (Kienez, 1986, note 72). Altogether the Natives received 162,000 km<sup>2</sup> of lands with full title and sub-surface rights. In addition, they received 962 million dollars, which were to be distributed on per-capita basis to 13 regional corporations, to be organized as American business corporations. The ANCSA was therefore essentially economic in focus, but since mostly Natives populate several of the regions, the Act indeed proposes political consequences. According to the ANCSA, the 15,727 Natives, predominately Inupiat, of the Arctic Slope Regional Corporation, Nana Reg. Corp. and Bering Straits Native Corp., represent 85,6 % of the total population of the area. The biggest Yupik Corporation, out of four, the Calista Corporation has 13,441 stockholders, which represent 91,6 % of the area residents (Armstrong et al., p. 66). Though, only some of the regions established some form of ethnic self-government, like the Arctic Slope Region when in 1972 they incorporated themselves into a North Slope Borough. It was here that Inupiat high schools were established and also The Inupiat University. In 1977 the borough organized the First Inuit Circumpolar Conference (Kienez, 1986, p. 69). Elsewhere in Alaska the

Natives haven't seized such a level of control, but their influence over school curriculum and the development of their land has dramatically risen.

### Canada

The discovery of the oil on the northern coast of Alaska and in Beaufort Sea in late 1960's prompted the Inuit of the W Canadian Arctic in 1969 to form a political organization to defend their rights in the area; The Committee for Original Peoples Entitlement (COPE). Already in 1971 national Inuit organization called *Inuit Tapirisat of Canada* (ITC) was formed. They quickly started to formulate a land claims proposal, based on the principle of aboriginal rights, which the Canadian government in 1969 refused to recognize (Creery, p. 11).

Since then several settlement acts were introduced and some even implemented, while the only Inuit settlement area remaining with no agreement concluded is Labrador, where from 1990, when the federal and the Newfoundland government worked out an agreement on how to handle a claim presented by Labrador Inuit Association (Creery, p. 15), the negotiations are proceeding.

The first agreement signed was The James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement in 1975 and was influenced by the Alaska Native CSA. They both extinguish aboriginal rights in return for land, money, hunting rights and social programs (Creery, p. 13). The aboriginal rights were recognized but did not include political power. James Bay Agreement allotted 5,200 km<sup>2</sup> of land to Cree American Natives and 8,300 km<sup>2</sup> for the Inuit with an addition of 155,000 km<sup>2</sup> of land with exclusive hunting-trapping-fishing rights for the 6,000 Cree and the 4,000 Inuit (Kienerz, 1986, p. 58). The Agreement was signed on the basis of a Canadian intention to build a hydro-electrical plant on the native land and was therefore signed in hurry. Not all the articles were clarified, several groups were not included and the conflict over the use of French in Quebec Inuit area, where people were educated in federal schools until 1963 in English, evolved in 1976, due to the Quebec nationalist government. A committee of the Canadian Parliament in 1981 decided to review the Agreement while in 1989 a committee was established to prepare the area for self-government. In 1991 people voted on a referendum for a regional assembly and a constitution in northern Quebec (Creery, p. 12).

The Inuvialuit (Inupiat in Alaska) of the Mackenzie delta area and the surrounding coast were the group that organized the COPE, which intensively cooperated with the national ITC until 1979, when they ratified a document called Nunavut at a General Assembly, in which they expressed a wish to negotiate a new territory along the Inuit settlement lines (Creery, p. 13). The COPE submitted a land claims proposal for the Western Arctic, a part of the NW Territories in 1977,

where Inuit, American Natives and Metis still form a majority of population. COPE reached an agreement granting the 2,500 Inuvialuit title to 95,000 km<sup>2</sup> of land (Kienetz, 1986, p. 61) and mineral rights in one seventh of the area. In addition they received 170 million dollars in compensation for other land and investment in economic development, social programs, such as housing and health. COPE recreated itself as The Inuvialuit Regional Corporation (IRC) to fit the character of the agreement. Today, Inuit money is the most significant player in the regional economy (Creery, p. 18).

The other two claims in NW Territories, the one of Dene Nation for a Denedeh Homeland and the one of the ITC, and later Tungavik Federation of Nunavut (TFN) to establish a new territorial unit Nunavut, are unprecedented. Both combine aboriginal land-claims and political autonomy in the respective sections of NWT. Several proposals were suggested in 1976, 1978 and in 1983 (Kienetz, 1986, p. 63), but in 1992 an agreement was signed between the Canadian Government and TFN, which promised the creation of Nunavut Territory in 1999 (Creery, p. 26).

The Nunavut Land Claim Agreement is providing to the Nunavut Inuit title over 350,000 km<sup>2</sup> of Nunavut Settlement Area; of which 35,250 km<sup>2</sup> include mineral rights and the right to harvest wildlife on all the 1,900,000 km<sup>2</sup> of the Nunavut Territory. They also received 1,15 billion dollars over 14 years and the right of a veto over development in the region. The government of Nunavut clearly is an Inuit government, since besides the political guarantees, the Inuit according to the 1996 census represent 83 % of the territory's population. The transfer of responsibilities from the government of the NW Territories shall continue until the year 2009. The Territory of Nunavut is made up of three different regions and 28 communities. Accordingly the Nunavut government is decentralized, and government departments and agencies are set up in communities as according to the regional needs. The official languages are Inuktitut and English (Nunavut website).

## 6. CONCLUSION

A general history of indigenous communities across the Arctic regions in general and of the Inuit in particular can be very broadly divided into three somehow distinct periods. The first period is the pre-contact period in which traditional subsistence patterns were followed, accompanied by seasonal migrations. Interregional trade is proven, but existed on a small scale.



With the coming of the Europeans (or in case of Saami of the Southerners) the diseases and depopulation characterize these groups. Fur trade and/or whaling fostered the dependence of the native communities on the outside products and the transition to cash economy on one side, and in several cases, serious depletion of resources, on which the native survival depended. Trade stations and missionary boarding schools were introduced, while the number of European settlers started to increase.

The third stage began with the period in which the modern state succeeded in penetrating its direct control apparatus into all of the native communities with the establishment of village councils/ soviets. Later on, extensive programs of health care, welfare and education were implemented by the different states in the area, while increasing number of natives began to be employed as wage-laborers. In all areas, intermarriage, loss of language and cultural distinctiveness with the addition of social problems, have only increased.

With the discovery of oil and other minerals all over the Arctic in the 1960's the pressures on the indigenous lands only increased. The same years saw also the creation of first organizations representing their interests and legal land claims were beginning to be presented. In all, a kind of ethno-nationalism, cultural renaissance and population increase has over the last 20 years spread over all of the indigenous groups of the North. Of all the areas, the process of decolonization, demographically working in favor of indigenous peoples, can perhaps be noted only in Russian North, where thousands of non-indigenous people departed in last few years (Fondahl, p. 218). The process of decolonialization, though, in which the government structures are beginning to be transferred to the indigenous groups, has begun all over the Arctic in 1970's and hasn't been concluded yet. The cooperation between different organizations has appeared first with the groups spread over several countries. In 1953 a Nordic Saami Council was formed and in 1977 Inuit Circumpolar Conference (ICC), that in 1992 finally accepted the Siberian Yupiit as full members (Creery, p. 27) and in Russia a Congress of the Peoples of the North was established. Native groups cooperated on issues connected to land claims and environmental issues primarily. The level to which these claims were accepted differs from area to area and there even are significant differences between the status of the Inuit groups.

The Siberian Yupiit possess no legal sovereignty, the Labrador Inuit are still negotiating the final agreement on their political and legal status, but the rest of the Inuit groups, as defined according to the political borders, already have achieved some level of recognized sovereignty over their homelands. In Alaska they gave up their immemorial rights as have done the Inuit of Quebec or those of the Western Arctic, but due to the structure of ANCSA were the inhabitants of the today Northern Slope Borough able to exercise their sovereignty claim. The

Inuit of Greenland and of Nunavut Territory of Canada though can be seen as the ones that succeeded in establishing an administration that governs these areas that is definitely considered as Native. Even though it may be exaggerated to state that these two territories may be examples of Inuit proto-state, the possibility and the legal right of the residents of these two separate territorial units to eventually demand or proclaim political independence from the metropolitan state do exist, especially since they now do possess the legal right for self-determination. In Greenland, a separate unit of the Danish Realm, the question may seem to be connected to the issues of budget in the high Danish participation in the financing of the Greenlandic administration. In Nunavut case, though the question really becomes tied to the developments connected to the demands of the Quebecois for a separate state, that may, if they become realized, turn into a factor that has caused the termination of the Canadian federal political structure. In such a case, there certainly exists a possibility of the establishment of a first Inuit state, not to say nation-state. But even in its present position Nunavut Territory remains a real precedent in the sense of the only constituent unit of any country in the Americas in which the political sovereignty was transferred to the people that inhabited these areas prior to the European colonization and colonialization.

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#### POVZETEK

#### SAMOODLOČBA INUITOV

Članek poskuša predstaviti vprašanje politične in legalne samoopredelitve staroselskih populacij kot kategorije na splošno, posebej pa še glede na različne inuitske skupine, ki poseljujejo arktične predele zahodno od Sibirije. Besedilo predstavlja glavne narativne smernice zgodovinskega razvoja Inuitov in njihove socialnoekonomske organizacije do stika z Evropejci, in se nato osredotoči na razlike med področji, na katerih so različne kolonialne sile uveljavljale svojo suverenost; od samozadostnih klanskih socialnih struktur preko ekonomske odvisnosti, najprej od evropskih trgovcev in nato od različnih državnih agencij, vse do popolne vključitve v moderno nacionalno državo zahodnega tipa. Upoštevan je tudi razvoj zadnjih nekaj desetletij, ko so se pojavile regijske, nacionalne in transnacionalne ekološke, kulturne, etnične in druge nevladne organizacije, kot npr. *Circumpolar Inuit Conference*, ki z različnimi zahtevami zastopajo interese staroselskega avtohtonega prebivalstva. Hkrati s tem razprava ocenjuje raven njihovih dosežkov v zahtevah po ekonomski, kulturni, teritorialni ali drugačni samoopredelitvi glede na njihov odnos do matične, kolonialne države v postkolonialnem obdobju. Ti dosežki se odražajo na različnih geopolitičnih območjih, kot sta Grenlandija in Nunavut, kjer je težnja po samoopredelitvi prišla do največjega izraza, drugih kanadskih zveznih enotah (Severozahodni teritoriji, Quebec in Nova Funlandija), na Aljaski, ZDA in na Čukotskem polotoku v Sibiriji, delu Ruske Federacije.