

International Policy Institute Arctic Fellows Fall 2016
JSIS 578 Special Topics (3 credits):
Arctic Indigenous Economies in Inuit Nunangat (Canada) and the Circumpolar World
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Description

The Inuit in Canada and Arctic Indigenous peoples internationally have long histories of being self-reliant and self-sufficient “sustained through generations of traditional economies and cultural practices.”¹ Beginning in the 1970s in Canada and Alaska, Arctic peoples began negotiating and settling land claims resulting in the development of Indigenous-owned businesses and corporations including airlines, cruise lines, Arctic teas, fashions, films, and more. In addition, while there has been a global economy in the Arctic for centuries including whaling, the fur trade and even Inuit art, most recently the region is “opening” to outside interest as a result of global warming and the accessibility of natural resources and shipping. Oran Young, renowned Arctic scholar, has long conceptualized the Arctic region as distinct including with its own unique approach to global stewardship. In one of his most recent articles (2012) Young laid out the argument for a distinctive “voice of the Arctic”² on the world stage. How do we understand the “voice of the Arctic” in its definition of an Arctic regional economy(ies)?

In August of 2016 Mary Simon – former head of the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (national Inuit association in Canada) and Inuit Circumpolar Council (international Inuit association) – was appointed Special Representative for the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs responsible for providing advice to the Government of Canada on the development of a new Shared Arctic Leadership Model. Simon’s work will reflect a renewed Inuit-to-Crown and Nation-to-Nation relationship “grounded in the vision of sustainable development in the Arctic.”³ This appointment reaffirms the commitment made by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and President Barack Obama on 10 March 2016 in the U.S.-Canada Joint Statement on Climate, Energy and Arctic Leadership. There is no question that this appointment will raise the visibility and effectiveness of the Inuit “voice” in national and even international decision-making. How will this renewed Arctic leadership provide a vision for a sustainable region, conservation, benefits and jobs that will influence the region and beyond?

The International Policy Institute Arctic Fellows and students in this course will be encouraged to focus on traditional and more recently developed livelihoods/economies in the Arctic – whether the arts, film, media, hunting, telecommunications, social media, transportation, tourism, fisheries or fashion – to better understand the Arctic economy and what this means for those outside the region. Students will be encouraged to adapt research projects from other courses or to follow their unique areas of interest to come up with policy-relevant thinking on Arctic economies and the relation of those economies to the “outside” world. Students will have the opportunity to attend an evening reception and all-day workshop with a number of Inuit and Inupiat business leaders from Canada and Alaska including representatives from Tourism Nunatsiavut, Ryan Air, Cape Dorset Studios, and more (November 9th and 10th). Students will present their final projects to key Arctic decision-makers in the Seattle community on the last day of class.

¹ Arctic Council. (2015). *Keeping Our Traditions Alive: Compendium of Best Practices in Promoting the Traditional Ways of Life of Arctic Indigenous Peoples*. Tromsø, Norway; Arctic Council Secretariat, pg. 4.

² Young, O. (2012). Arctic stewardship: Maintaining regional resilience in an era of global change, *Ethics and International Affairs* 26(4): p. 418.

³ Government of Canada. (2016, August 5). Mary Simon to lead engagement on a New Shared Arctic Leadership Model as the Minister’s Special Representative [Press Release], para. 4.