

Tourism and Political Change



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Political Change and Tourism in Arctic Canada

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7 Political Change and Tourism in Arctic Canada

Emma J. Stewart and Dianne Draper

Introduction

I was walking to the airport with my host in Pond Inlet and I was curious to learn more about a conversation we'd started the previous evening. During that conversation I had asked her why I had experienced a sense of resignation toward tourism among some of the people I had been interviewing that week. She drew a parallel to welfare programs where she said Inuit had become "passive recipients" rather than "active participants" in the system. This was a consequence, she said, "thrust upon Inuit" and which had become a "learned response" over the generations since the tuberculosis/influenza outbreaks prompted the movement of Inuit into settlements. On our walk to the airport I quizzed her on what it felt like, as a people, to be passive recipients. Her response was: "dehumanizing". She went on to say that there seems to be an opportunity to make a shift from this condition, that the new generation has the power to change things so that Inuit become active participants, or at least have the "choice to do so".

(Stewart, field journal, Pond Inlet, June 2007)

In-gathering of Inuit into settlements occurred across the Canadian Arctic in the 1950s, a period known as the settlement era (Damas, 2002). The switch from a traditional transitory to a largely community-based lifestyle has been extraordinarily rapid in Arctic Canada. The inter-generational shock of this transitional period has manifested itself in many ways with socio-economic problems lingering in communities of Arctic Canada (Einarsson *et al.*, 2004). But out of social, economic and spiritual changes to Inuit culture during the settlement era came a realization by the 1960s that Inuit were no longer willing to defer to *qallunaat* (the Inuit term for non-Inuit) and instead were "finding strong voices of their own" (Tester and Kulchyski, 1994: 204). Testament to this realization was the 1993 signing of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement (NLCA) which gave the Inuit of Nunavut rights of ownership and use of land (van Dam, 2005). The final agreement paved the way for the creation of a new Inuit-led political machine, the territory of Nunavut on 1st April 1999 (Bone, 2003) (see Figure 7.1).

Political change can affect many aspects of indigenous tourism (Butler and Hinch, 2007) such as the structure of public agencies responsible for indigenous tourism development, management, marketing and promotion, policy formulation and implementation and the development of tourism resources (Hall, 2007). To understand these aspects

of indigenous tourism, it is vital to understand the political processes from which they emerged (Hall, 2007). Nowhere is this more important than in Arctic Canada where a key concern for researchers and communities is to understand how individuals, families, culture, environment, and livelihoods might be affected by current political and economic development and wider global changes (Caine *et al.*, 2009).

The current attention given to the Canadian Arctic is unprecedented; issues such as climate change, sovereignty, contaminants, species depletion, natural resource development, and aboriginal well-being, are receiving broad media coverage (Fenge and Penikett, 2009; Shadian, 2009). However, within this wider milieu of change, tourism is rarely mentioned (Maher and Stewart, 2007), and even less is known about the linkages between tourism and political change following Nunavut's creation. This chapter provides a context for understanding how tourism developed in Nunavut during the lead up to partition, and how tourism has fared since the founding of Nunavut, at the regional and local scale. The chapter utilizes case study material from two Nunavut communities, Pond Inlet on Baffin Island and Cambridge Bay on Victoria Island drawn from a wider study of resident attitudes toward tourism development (see: Stewart, 2009).

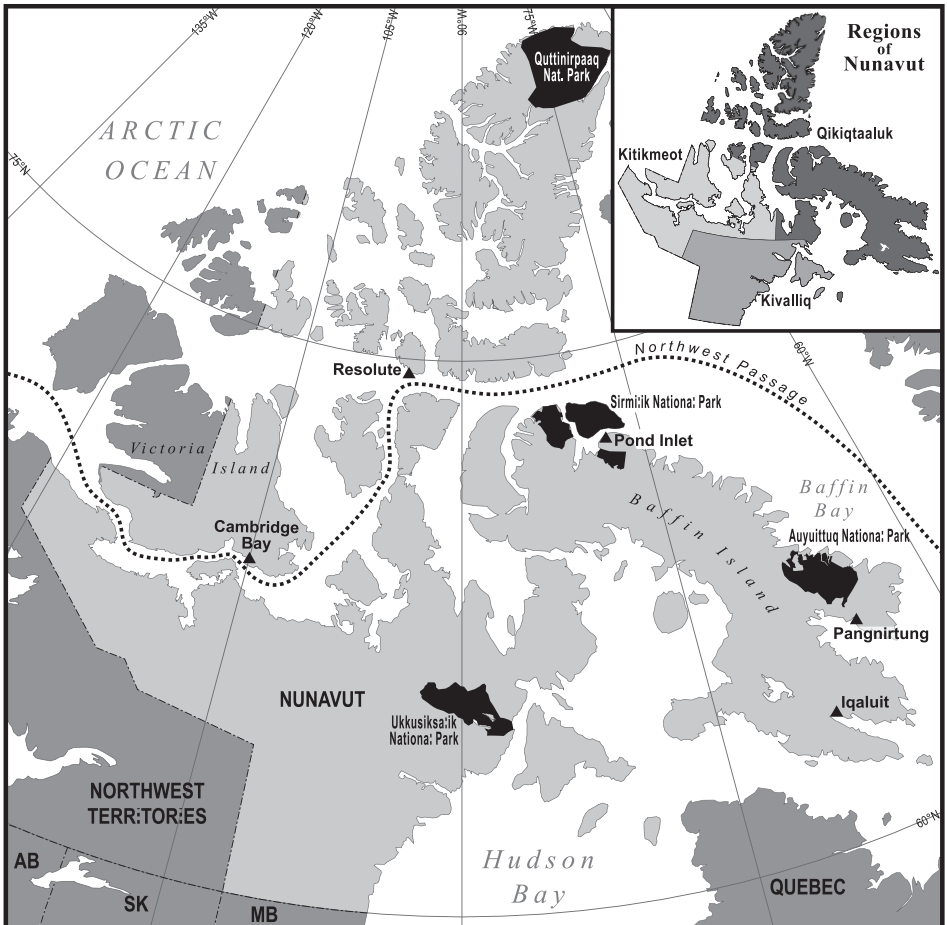


Figure 7.1: Map of Nunavut.

4 Part II: Increasing Autonomy

Political change in Arctic Canada

In the early 1970s, the Supreme Court of Canada recognized the existence of Aboriginal title, which paved the way for the signing of treaties or ‘comprehensive agreements’, which make explicit the nature of the arrangement between Aboriginal groups and the government of Canada under areas such as self-governing powers, control over social services, compensation payments, environmental assessment, land use regulations and the management of lands and resources (Berkes and Fast, 2005). The James Bay and Northern Quebec agreement was the first to be signed in 1975. The 1993 Nunavut Land Claims Agreement (NLCA) was the largest aboriginal land claim agreement in Canada’s history in terms of financial compensation and land (an area approximately one-fifth of Canada’s land mass) (Merritt, 1993; van Dam, 2005). It provided the terms and conditions of c\$1.173 billion in federal payments over 15 years (ending in 2007) and established land right uses specific to Inuit as beneficiaries of the agreement. In return Inuit surrendered their Aboriginal title and certain claims to lands and waters (Gregoire, 2009, Merritt (1993)). The signing of the agreement was a landmark for all indigenous peoples in Canada and changed the northern political landscape immeasurably (Merritt, 1993). The NLCA provided a new organizational structure including Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated (NTI) to administer, manage and invest the compensation funds on behalf of Inuit beneficiaries. Territorial and regional economic development organizations were charged with spreading wealth from the NLCA to Inuit (Gregoire, 2009).

The territory of Nunavut, meaning ‘our land’ or ‘Inuit homeland’ was established with the passing of the Nunavut Act on 1st April 1999. Carved out of the Northwest Territories (NWT), Nunavut’s jurisdiction extends over 2.1 million square kilometres, consisting of three regions (Kitikmeot, Kivalliq and Qikiqtaaluk) (see Figure 7.1). The Aboriginal population of these three regions is 29,325, representing approximately 95 percent of Nunavut’s total population (Statistics Canada, 2009). The young and rapidly growing population is one of the most prominent features of Nunavut’s demographic profile, with 80 per cent of the population aged between 20-29 years (Simeone, 2008). The youthful characteristic of Nunavut presents significant policy implications such as the challenge to find meaningful employment opportunities (Simeone, 2008). Tourism, with opportunities to showcase the northern environment and culture, as well as the potential to stimulate economic activity in remote areas, has long been regarded as an important source of supplementary income for residents of northern Canada, particularly for Nunavut’s youth (Hinch and Swinnerton, 1993).

Tourism before partition

In the 1980s, before the partition of Nunavut, tourism consisted mainly of remote fishing and hunting camps, and adventure tourism operations, largely owned and operated by non-Inuit (Robbins, 2007). The first Canadian Arctic cruise took place in 1984, when the MS *Explorer* made the first successful passenger transit of the Northwest Passage (Stewart *et al.*, 2007). The success of community-based tourism planning activities in Pangnirtung (Baffin Island) confirmed the Government of Northwest Territories’ (GNWT) commitment to tourism as an important form of community economic development and resulted in increased numbers of licensed outfitters and the establishment

Chapter extract

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