

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

Re: The Lakehead Manifesto

*Arctic* recently published a manifesto on research and development in the North (Morris et al., 2013). This manifesto was co-authored by nine southern university-based academics, including six from Lakehead University, during a recent symposium on rapid change and the future of Canada's North, and was "designed to serve the collective interest of all peoples" with the hope of gaining "wide acceptance and use by governments, agencies, industry, researchers, and others working and living in the North" (p. iii).

In our role as science advisors to the Government of Yukon and Government of Nunavut, we are compelled to agree with the importance of improving access and use of science and knowledge, in all its forms, as a basis for decision making. However, we would like to take this opportunity to suggest a few areas for further consideration.

1. Process matters! Northerners have long advocated for the right to be not subjects or passive observers of research, but actively involved. The outcome of not including Northerners in the authorship of these principles is to reduce the likelihood of adoption by those to whom this manifesto is directed. Participatory methods, while requiring time and effort, lead not only to better outcomes, but to better products as well.
2. Who is a "qualified advisor"? Principle 3 states that "proposed actions and decisions about the North must be informed by independent councils of qualified advisors..." (p. iii). This statement begs the question of who is a qualified advisor. Recently, the Council of Canadian Academies (2013) convened an Expert Panel to assess the State of Knowledge on Food Security in northern Canada. Like the manifesto author team, this Expert Panel did not include northern residents. Without local and Aboriginal representation, can this panel fully reflect the state of knowledge? Without this expertise, can the panel accurately inform the development of public policy? Those living and working in the North have learned many lessons over the years about the importance of developing a mutual understanding among local, Aboriginal, and scientific knowledge and expertise to fully reflect the state of knowledge on a particular topic. Therefore, a definition of northern expertise must reflect the many ways in which an individual acquires expertise, including, for example, expert knowledge gained from a life lived on the land and a career worked as a science practitioner in the North.
3. The policy-making process. Principle 3 also states that "proposed actions and decisions about the North... must

be based on science and knowledge rather than socio-political ideology, economic expediency, or national self-interest, and with respect for diverse worldviews" (p. iii). Those who work at the interface of science and policy are well aware that science is only one factor considered by decision makers. Sometimes, and for good reasons, social and economic interests as well as national and international interests do influence policy options, and ultimately, policy choices. It is important to remember that Northerners have long sought the right to make decisions on their own behalf. This right is of such importance that the Arctic Social Indicators Project, endorsed by the Arctic Council, has recognized fate control as a metric of well-being.

4. Sensitive data. Principle 7 argues that "data collected in the public domain, in the context of public good, through common resources, on public land, or with public funds must...be made freely available..." (p. iii). A few important exceptions to this principle are not noted, including the responsibility of public and Aboriginal governments to protect sensitive data (such as personal health information, precise locations of sensitive cultural sites, and proprietary data) and the rights of Aboriginal governments and peoples to set guidelines regarding ownership of, access to, and use of their traditional knowledge.
5. What knowledge is needed? What gets funded and who decides what research will take place strongly influences what scientific information is available. The vast majority of funding for science in northern Canada comes from agencies south of 60°. The upside is that Northerners benefit from a level of investment in knowledge acquisition that is beyond the investment potential of northern agencies. However, the downside is that Northerners often have limited opportunity to influence policy and investment decisions regarding science. We would like to suggest an additional principle: Northerners need to be given the opportunity to influence science-funding priorities.

## REFERENCES

- Council of Canadian Academies. 2013. The state of knowledge of food security in northern Canada. <http://www.scienceadvice.ca/en/assessments/in-progress/food-security.aspx>.
- Morris, D.W., Beaulieu, M.S., Hamilton, S., Hik, D.S., Lemelin, R.H., Moses, M.M., Müller, D.K., Smith, M.A., and Smol, J.P. 2013. The Lakehead Manifesto: Principles for research and development in the North. *Arctic* 66(2):iii-iv.

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