

Shifting Stories, Changing Places: *Being Caribou* and Narratives of Transformational  
Climate Change in Northwestern North America

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## Abstract

### **Shifting Stories, Changing Places: *Being Caribou* and Narratives of Transformational Climate Change in Northwestern North America**

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In April of 2003, Leanne Allison and Karsten Heuer set out on skis, from north of the Gwich'in village of Old Crow in the Canadian Arctic, to follow the Porcupine caribou herd on its annual migration. The goal of their expedition was to tell the story of the caribou, so that policy makers and ordinary people would understand the importance of protecting their calving grounds, which President George W. Bush had vowed to open to oil and gas leasing. This dissertation traces the *Being Caribou* expedition story, as told through the *Being Caribou* film, book, children's book, website, blog posts, slideshows, and speaking presentations, to analyse its impact in promoting calving grounds protection.

The research builds upon established forms of film and media analysis by situating the *Being Caribou* stories within a thousands of years long relationship between caribou and Gwich'in and Inuvialuit people. Taking this long view brings forward the vital role of northern indigenous communities in shaping all aspects of the *Being Caribou* journey, from the parks and protected areas Allison and Heuer passed through, to the tenor of the expedition's media products and outreach.

In the 2004-6 period, the *Being Caribou* film was systematically used by the Alaska Coalition to build participation and leadership in a broad-based movement to influence crucial Congressional votes on the fate of the Arctic Refuge calving grounds. Through an analysis that combines film and participatory culture research frames with

insights from civic engagement literature, this dissertation demonstrates how the storywork of *Being Caribou* house party and community screenings not only educated individuals about the calving grounds, but moved individuals up an “activist ladder” (Hahn 34) of social movement participation. Hundreds of thousands of North Americans who attended Arctic Action Day *Being Caribou* screenings wrote letters, signed petitions, attended demonstrations, met with their elected officials, and otherwise took leadership to oppose development within the Arctic Refuge. Over time, the *Being Caribou* film, books, blog posts, slideshows and speaking presentations helped to challenge the dominant values of North American petroculture, growing an ‘ecology of story’ in which the caribou, and their calving grounds, have flourished.



## RÉSUMÉ

### **Récits en mouvement, lieux changeant: *Being Caribou* et les récits de changements climatiques transformationnels dans le nord-ouest de l'Amérique du Nord**

Shirley Roburn, Ph.D.  
Université Concordia, 2015

En avril 2003, Leanne Allison et Karsten Heuer se sont mises en route par ski, partant du nord du village Gwich'in de Old Crow dans l'Arctique canadien, pour suivre la harde de caribous de la Porcupine pendant sa migration annuelle. Le but de leur expédition était de raconter l'histoire des caribous, afin que les décideurs politiques et les gens ordinaires puissent comprendre l'importance de protéger leurs terrains de mise bas, que le président George W. Bush avait promis d'ouvrir aux concessions gazières et pétrolières. Cette thèse retrace l'histoire de l'expédition *Being Caribou*, comme décrite par l'oeuvre *Being Caribou* (y compris le livre, le livre pour enfants, le site web, le blogue, et les diaporamas et présentations orales) à fin d'analyser son impact sur la promotion de la protection des aires de mise bas.

La recherche s'appuie sur des formes établies d'analyse de film et de médias en situant le projet *Being Caribou* dans le contexte d'une histoire de mille ans de relations entre les caribous et les peuples Gwich'in et Inuvialuit. Cette vision à long terme soulève le rôle essentiel des communautés autochtones du Nord dans l'élaboration de tous les aspects du voyage *Being Caribou*, dont les parcs et zones protégées qu'Allison et Heuer ont traversés, jusqu'à la teneur du rayonnement et des produits médiatiques de l'expédition.

Pendant la période 2004-6, le film, *Being Caribou*, a été systématiquement utilisé

par la Coalition de l'Alaska pour encourager la participation, le leadership et l'appui d'un mouvement social de base élargie cherchant à influencer les votes critiques du Congrès, qui détermineraient le futur des terrains de mise bas des caribous au Refuge Arctique.

Grâce à une analyse qui fusionne des cadres de recherches cinématographiques et de cultures participatives avec des perspectives tirées de la littérature de l'engagement civique, cette thèse montre comment le travail de transmission des récits de l'expédition *Being Caribou*, par des projections communautaires et privées, a non seulement instruit le public au sujet des terrains de mise bas, mais a amené des individus à grimper «l'échelle militante» (Hahn 34) de la participation aux mouvements sociaux. Des centaines de milliers de nord-américains qui ont assisté aux projections de *Being Caribou* pendant la «Journée d'action pour l'Arctique» ont écrit des lettres, signé des pétitions, assisté à des manifestations, rencontré leurs élus, et par autres manières ont pris de l'initiative en s'opposant au développement dans le Refuge Arctique. Au fil du temps, *Being Caribou* - le film, les livres, le blogue, les diaporamas et les présentations orales -- ont contribué à remettre en question les valeurs dominantes de la pétroculture nord-américaine, et ont contribué à la croissance d'une «écologie de récit » dans laquelle les caribous et leurs aires de mise bas, ont prospéré.

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## **Glossary/List of Acronyms**

**AAAS:** American Association for the Advancement of Science

**AC:** Alaska Coalition

**ACIA:** Arctic Climate Impact Assessment

**AFA:** American Forestry Association

**ANCSA:** Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act

**ANILCA:** Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act

**ANWR:** Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (prior to 1980 it was the Arctic National Wildlife Range)

**APECS:** Association of Polar Early Career Scientists

**ARAC:** Arctic Refuge Action Coalition

**AWL:** Alaska Wilderness League

**AWW:** Alaska Wilderness Week

**BMFF World Tour:** Banff Mountain Film Festival World Tour

**CBC:** Canadian Broadcasting Corporation

**CEAA:** Canadian Environmental Assessment Act

**COP 11:** 11<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Climate Change Conference (in UN language, COP refers to the Conference of the Parties for any convention, but in the context of this dissertation COP refer to the UN climate change governance processes.)

**CPAWS:** Canadian Parks And Wilderness Society

**CS:** CitizenShift

**CWS:** Canadian Wildlife Service

**DFAIT:** Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (Canada)

**DSF:** David Suzuki Foundation

ENGO: environmental nongovernmental organization

GIFTS: Gulf Islands Film and Television School

GBR: Great Bear Rainforest

GRRB: Gwich'in Renewable Resource Board

GRRC: Gwich'in Renewable Resource Council

GSC: Gwich'in Steering Committee

ICC: Inuit Circumpolar Council

IFA: Inuvialuit Final Agreement

IGA: Inuvialuit Game Council

IPCC: Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

IPY: International Polar Year

IQ: Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (Inuit knowledge or Inuit traditional knowledge)

IUCN: International Union for Conservation of Nature

MEC: Mountain Equipment Co-op

NEB: National Energy Board (of Canada)

NFB: National Film Board (of Canada)

NOAA: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (U.S.)

NPLA: National Purpose Local Action (NPLA) project, a leadership initiative of the Sierra Club

NWT: Northwest Territories

NYRRC: North Yukon Renewable Resource Council

OCOB: One Campus One Book

PC: Parole Citoyenne

PCMB: Porcupine Caribou Management Board

PIRG: Public Interest Research Group

QRS: Canadian Media Quality Research Survey

TREC: Training Resources for the Environmental Community

VGFN: Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation or Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Government

WMACNS: Wildlife Management Advisory Council (North Slope)

UFA: Umbrella Final Agreement (between Yukon First Nations, the Yukon Territorial Government, and the Government of Canada)

UNCLOS: United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea

UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization

Y2Y: Yellowstone to Yukon. This may refer to the geographic region and landscape vision of the Y2Y area as a contiguous biological corridor, or to the formalized initiative to promote the corridor, which works under the aegis of the Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative, a non-profit registered in both Canada and the United States.

YCS: Yukon Conservation Society

YESAA: Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act

YESAB: Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board

## **Note on Terminology**

Researching in a cross-cultural context, I have had to choose between conflicting conventions in my use of terminology and associated stylistic conventions. In the spirit of respecting people's rights to self-determination, rather than standardize spellings, I have used the names that individual groups use to represent themselves. This sometimes creates inconsistencies in the text. For example, I have used "Gwich'in" when referring to the Gwich'in Steering Committee, but "Gwitchin" when referencing the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation. Another example is that "Yukon" and "the Yukon" refer to the same territory; the official designation changed from "the Yukon Territory" to "Yukon" on April 1, 2003. I have used "Yukon" to refer to the territory in modern times, but kept "the Yukon" within historical references.

The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) is the official designation for the lands in which the Porcupine caribou calving grounds are located. However, the conservation community prefers "Arctic Refuge" to "ANWR" as the term for use in public debate, as Arctic Refuge is considered to be a phrase more evocative of the landscape. I have used Arctic Refuge as the term of choice in the context of discussing public awareness raising about the calving grounds.

The use of different terminology to distinguish First Peoples is especially fraught. Different people and communities have different preferred terminology. This is made more complex by the fact that, within Canada, words such as First Nation and Aboriginal have particular legal meanings. Many northerners do not like the term 'aboriginal,' viewing it as an imposed category from the federal government. I have used aboriginal in some discussions, as the term is often used in academic theory, but I have not capitalized

aboriginal as Aboriginal refers to an official designation made by the Government of Canada. Similarly, I have not capitalized Northerners or North when it is used as a general designation; what and whom are encompassed by ‘north’ is fluid and contextual. Western, when referring to Western civilization is capitalized in keeping with convention; Arctic, which I view as a corresponding category/designation is also capitalized. My preference has been to refer to individual Nations where possible rather than using broad terms such as ‘indigenous’ that elide together many different communities and cultures. In using the term First Nations (and Inuit/Inuvialuit), I recognize that such First Nations are often transboundary—as is the Gwich’in Nation—and the term in these contexts includes people living in both the U.S. (who might be referred to as “Native Americans” in other contexts) and Canada.

In using acronyms, I have strived for clarity. Thus, names are written out in full the first time they appear in the text after an absence, whether or not the reappearance is in a new chapter or section. A glossary is also provided to help the reader keep track of acronyms.

I have chosen an in-text citation style for personal interviews similar to the style for published interviews and other written texts, rather than citing oral interviews as ‘personal communications’ which are not included in the bibliography. This choice was made in order to give equal textual weight and authority to knowledge whether transmitted orally or in writing. For clarity, personal interviews are listed separately at the beginning of the Works Cited list, and location of interview is listed. Both Erica Heuer and Karsten Heuer are frequently cited. “Heuer” refers to Karsten Heuer, who is most frequently quoted, while Erica Heuer is referred to by her full name.

Although MLA style usually double-spaces both between and within entries on a works-cited list, I have single-spaced within entries in order to save space, a style that is commonly acceptable in other formats such as the Chicago Style.

The 7<sup>th</sup> edition of the MLA Handbook emphasizes that MLA style is flexible, there is more than one correct way to cite a source, and that researchers must use their best judgment in including pertinent information for their readers about an electronic source. My guiding principle has been to provide the information necessary for a researcher to locate the source. The style modifications have been made to sources are as follows.

I have included URLs for works that exist or existed primarily as web pages. If the information provided on the page is dated, that date is included. Date accessed is not.

Sites accessed through the Internet Archive are noted as such. In the case of larger campaign websites or non-governmental organizational websites accessed via the Internet Archive, the main URL for the overall domain is referenced, with a date indicating the year or other general time period in which this incarnation of the site was active.

In the case of Internet Archive accessed pages, if a particular page is cited from a particular date, the URL is given to access that page, and date information is included if available.

Many sources had multiple forms of access, such as books that exist both in hard copy and as identically laid out ebooks. I have not indicated a format in these instances, as both electronic and hard copy may have been accessed and there is no relevant difference. Films and multimedia works are listed by director, in order to be consistent with the principle of listing a work by its author. In the case of newspaper articles that

appear in multiple online databases, I have not cited the specific database used. Rather than indicate print or web for every title, I have provided URLs for titles that exist exclusively online or that might not be easily accessible through archives, for example in the case of community newspapers not included in major databases.



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## Prologue

If this were a story, it would start with images:

*The broken remnants of a beader's sewing box, each plastic drawer labeled with tape, lying in a jumbled mess of wires, a lampshade, woody debris, rock, pieces of plastic and aluminum siding, broken furniture, even a spatula. This detritus, baking in the August sun not two hundred meters from the Yukon River, is all that remains of the lower village of Eagle, completely obliterated by ice not four months prior.*

*Norma Kassi and I, sitting on a picnic bench near the Yukon River, as she describes arriving with her extended family at their traditional summer camp on Zelma Lake in the Old Crow Flats—only to find the lake completely drained, the muskrat and fish gone, replaced with mile after mile of drying, cracked mud.*

If this were a public talk, it would start with a greeting, a calling forth to the listener, a mindfulness and appreciation of their ears, their time, their talents. An invitation to join with me, to set off on a journey together.

If this were a classroom, I would jump right into a conversation. After a few preliminaries (deadlines, reminder of the readings, introductory remarks), or even without

them, I would plunge in: turn to your neighbor and tell a story; turn to your neighbour and come up with three things; take a moment to draw out an image from the readings that strikes you most.

If this were a journal article, I would know the limitations of the form. I would accept the contours of the expected, embrace the productivity that delights in the structure of a defined container: abstract; introduction; literature review; methodology; results; discussion; conclusion.

But this is a dissertation.

It has no rehearsal. It does not have, as stories do, the benefit of a many thousand year old schema—that of narrative, which most scholars now believe to be hardwired in some formation into our individual and collective consciousness—to fall back on.

I cannot broach it backed by decades of personal experience, of play and permutations in workshops and classrooms. I cannot look up, as at a lecture or rally, to gauge interest. It is one thing to spark and sustain conversations with people who are present. It is another to weave a meeting of minds out of text.

There is no doubt that my formation shapes my intentions: as a campaigner, storyteller, and popular educator, my ambition is a text that touches, one that challenges and changes people: a conversation with beings and the world.

But a dissertation is a conversation mediated by text, and more specifically by academic texts. It is a form I am not yet practiced in. It is tempting to wander: to chase the stories that pop up in my path, to pitch the reader and myself into conversational dalliances, into dances with spaces and words that invite possibility, companion readers, newness into the world.<sup>1</sup>

Yet this may do a disservice to the form. It is more natural to tell a story than to struggle with an unfamiliar craft—but I do not want to turn away from a dissertation's possibilities because I am not practiced in its logic, its layout, the strictures meant not to constrain but to catalyse.

A central theme of my project has been listening. Listening for possibility, listening against type, listening as a first step in forging new relationships. But the work of listening differently requires changing bodily schema, and crossing the cultural specificities that contain (and constrain) our consciousness. It is a learning that involves struggle. I must wrestle—either skillfully or stubbornly—with my inexperience, my biases, and the constraints of an exercise so wholly unfamiliar. This holds equally for my putative problematic of listening/perceiving how a particular set of stories has circulated

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<sup>1</sup> See Bhabha.

in the body politic, and for listening to the landscape of language that has accreted in academia, defining and detailing what a dissertation is.

In so much as this is a conventionally structured dissertation—run through with story, and conversation as cross-current—it is an attempt to listen to the terrain, to carefully, thoughtfully explore not just my subject matter but also what a dissertation is. Or, put another way, this prologue presages the problematic. Whether and how stories spill into public conversations, public culture, and public governance on questions of northern climate change cannot be fully unspun from how stories spool into the lattice of language in which this dissertation itself is imbricated.

There are other possibilities to explore this warp and weft: a more skilled craftsperson would easily weave story and song, conversation and conventional text, into one smooth composite. However, I have chosen to start with possibility at its most rudimentary, with a structure that is standard, hoping that this frame will be flexible enough to admit free spirits (such as story and song) yet firm enough a foundation to cultivate discipline in its the best sense: as solid, steady practice, as the experience and expertise that allows ideas to flow.

## **Introduction**

In April of 2003, Leanne Allison and Karsten Heuer set out on skis, from north of the Gwich'in village of Old Crow in the Canadian arctic, to follow the Porcupine caribou herd on its annual migration. The goal of their expedition was to tell the story of the caribou, so that policy makers and ordinary people would understand the importance of protecting their calving grounds, which President George W. Bush had vowed to open to oil and gas leasing.

The epic journey of the caribou to the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR)—the longest migration of any land mammal—was and is part of the day-to-day lived experience of many northern indigenous communities. For thousands of years, Gwich'in, Inuvialuit, and other northern indigenous peoples have depended on the Porcupine caribou for sustenance. They have, in turn, stewarded the herd and advocated in its interests. Plans to protect the Porcupine caribou through creating parks and joint management bodies were part of land claims negotiations with Canada and the United States. However, in the 1979 bill that created the Alaskan protected area designation system, the US Congress deferred any final designation of the calving grounds on the coastal plain, instead retaining the power to decide on oil and gas leases by future vote.

For decades, Gwich'in, Inuvialuit, and the conservation community have collaborated to stave off development in the calving grounds. Votes were won on the slimmest of margins, and even lost – though redoubled effort has always managed to keep provisions allowing drilling out of the final texts of any law. By the time Allison and Heuer set out on their journey to the calving grounds, this pan-continental coalition



building and public storytelling effort had been underway for more than a generation. Yet, with Republican majorities in both the Senate and Congress to support President Bush's plan to open the Arctic Refuge to development, the calving grounds were entering a period of tremendous threat.

Beginning in 2002, Allison and Heuer worked with Gwich'in, Inuvialuit, conservation organizations, and the National Film Board of Canada (NFB) to reach as many people as possible through the story of their journey. From 2004-6, as the calving grounds came under increasing jeopardy, the *Being Caribou* film was systematically used in campaigning and awareness raising. American conservation organizations distributed thousands of copies of the film with Video Activist kits that encouraged people to take part in Arctic Action Days and lobby politicians before key Congressional votes. Well over one million people watched *Being Caribou* in the 2004-6 period, with hundreds of thousands of people seeing the film at community screenings where they were immediately asked to take specific actions in support of the Arctic Refuge. These actions helped sway politicians on a number of close Congressional votes. The coastal plain was not opened to oil and gas leasing. The Porcupine caribou did not see their numbers dwindle due to industrial development, and the northern communities and cultures that depended on the caribou did not dwindle either.

The subject of this dissertation is the story of the caribou, as told in the *Being Caribou* film, book, children's book, website, blog posts, slideshows, and speaking presentations. The Being Caribou expedition's storytelling made a difference. But what difference? And how? Why was the Being Caribou project effective? How did it figure into larger social processes of storytelling and movement building concerning the fate of

the Arctic Refuge? How did it contribute to small northern communities, thousands of miles removed from Washington, influencing not only the decision making of elected officials, but the public consciousness of a broad cross-section of North Americans? What does it take for northern stories to bridge vast distances and reach lawmakers and publics effectively?

## **The Bigger Picture**

The Arctic Refuge calving grounds debate offers a very rare example of civil society and indigenous communities working together, over the long term, in ways that raise deeper questions about North American petroculture. These questions include: How far will governments and societies go to support North American oil and gas dependence? What will be sacrificed and who will suffer? As northern communities face significant consequences from a changing climate, what balance will be struck between mitigating these impacts and simply requiring that plant, animal, and human communities adapt? Perhaps most importantly, who will decide?

With the fourth and fifth rounds of Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reports<sup>2</sup> raising ever more alarming predictions about the consequences of unchecked carbon emissions, and with North American publics and politicians increasingly facing tough choices about oil and gas development and infrastructure, such

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<sup>2</sup> All IPCC reports are available in full at <http://www.ipcc.ch>. The IPCC reports are certainly not the only scientific studies raising alarm about climate change. I am citing them here simply because they are both comprehensive (involving sweeping reviews of other scientific research) and a part of the process of global climate change governance. In the case of Arctic climate change, perhaps the most groundbreaking report is the 2004 Arctic Climate Impact Assessment (ACIA) Scientific Report, available online at <http://www.acia.uaf.edu/pages/scientific.html>.

questions are increasingly coming to the fore. Concomitantly, those frustrated by the lack of action on climate change through official channels, such as at the various Conference of the Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, are increasingly calling on civil society, grassroots movements, and indigenous communities to provide leadership. In the last five years, hundreds of thousands of North Americans have answered these calls, participating in mass mobilizations of both First Nations and non-indigenous civil society with respect to fracking, pipelines, and oil sands development<sup>3</sup>. Such actions reach towards a future where

the urgency of the climate crisis could form the basis of a powerful mass movement, one that would weave all these seemingly disparate issues into a coherent narrative about how to protect humanity from the ravages of both a savagely unjust economic system and a destabilized climate system (N. Klein 8).

As yet, however, civil society is not playing a decisive role in altering the policies that contribute to fossil fuel dependence and climate change. Basic questions about how to take on such a task remain unanswered: how does one build a strong mass movement to

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<sup>3</sup> Recent examples include Canada wide anti-fracking protests in support of the Elsipogtog First Nation in the fall of 2014, which contributed to a moratorium on fracking in New Brunswick; numerous protests in the last three years of the Kinder Morgan, Enbridge Northern Gateway, and Keystone XL pipelines, including massive rallies in Washington where prominent North Americans such as former NASA climatologist James Hansen were arrested; and the annual tar sands healing walks held from 2010-2014 in northern Alberta. Many of these actions are affiliated with larger umbrella movements such as Idle No More or 350.org.

address climate change, and what role does ‘weaving a coherent narrative’ play in movement building?<sup>4</sup>

At a bigger picture level, this dissertation aims to contribute to climate justice discussions through a sustained consideration of how storytelling and movement building were intertwined in the ways that one set of stories, the Being Caribou expedition narratives, were put into play to influence a particular ‘petroculture’ conflict over oil and gas development in ANWR. The analysis is multi-scalar, presenting a long view that examines the Being Caribou expedition as nested within a series of economic, social, political, and cultural relationships. Building on Balides’ insights into the ‘anthropology of consumption’ (140), in which popular films are marketed as vehicles of a chain of related media products connected through mutually reinforcing circuits of exchange, this research documents the expedition’s narratives as an interlinked chain of stories that circulated within mainstream media, alternative networks, and community and social movements. Through paying careful attention to the contexts and ways in which Being Caribou stories were adopted within broad-based coalitions of indigenous organizations and governments, faith communities, conservation and environmental groups, and community organizations (such as Kiwanis Clubs), the dissertation develops a model of how social movement storytelling can build movement leadership and encourage “Métissage” (Donald), a decolonizing practice in which individuals challenge received wisdom about North American history, recalibrating their understandings of colonialism’s past and present effects. Processes of métissage, or something like it, are

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<sup>4</sup> Certainly, civil society movements such as 350.org, work in-practice on these questions everyday.

essential to building strong grassroots alliances between indigenous and non-indigenous people. In telling the story of my research, I have tried to create a process of *métissage*, in which the reader can participate, within the dissertation.

## **Chapter Outline**

Following this introduction, Chapter 1 opens by exploring the context for my personal interest in northern stories of climate change. It then goes on to survey current science studies and communication literature on the relative ineffectiveness of science-based communication strategies in communicating climate change risk, before exploring research into the promise of storytelling as a tool for better communicating such risk, and for encouraging effective citizen action. Chapter 1 closes by introducing the concept of trajectories as part of a broader focus on the potential of northern stories to transform approaches to climate change, and by explaining my choice to explore the Being Caribou expedition set of stories.

Chapter 2 provides a background to some of the complexities of “north” as a research site for storytelling. It includes a brief survey of the “imaginaries” that freight northern landscapes and communities with specific cultural connotations; some remarks concerning indigenous traditional knowledge; a summary of the history of the evolution of governance in my study region, as it pertains to jurisdiction over the lands that encompass the range of the Porcupine caribou herd; and a review of approaches taken by northern governance scholars contemplating shifting power balances in the region, especially as they relate to relations between indigenous communities and state actors.

Chapter 3 reviews my research methods. The first section, “Unknowing” focuses on various indigenous, anthropological, and ethnographic research methods that I explored in order to better work within the cross-cultural contexts that informed my inquiry. “Knowing” offers a more linear narrative of how the research was structured, before Chapter 4 turns in earnest to the Being Caribou expedition. “Taking the Long View” starts to concretely map the pathways of the expedition and its stories, beginning with the trajectories that first brought Heuer and Allison into contact with the caribou and with Gwich’in and Inuvialuit communities. These are anchored in the broader story of caribou/human interaction in the north Yukon/Alaska/NWT region over the past several thousand years, before Chapter 5 broaches the nearer term history of how the Porcupine caribou calving grounds in the Arctic Refuge came under threat of oil and gas leasing.

Gwich’in communities responded to threats to the calving grounds by reaching out to tell their story to new constituencies and in novel ways. “A Storied Network” explores how Gwich’in and the conservation community, separately and later together, worked to reach broad swathes of the North American public and key government decision makers. Storytelling, whether in the form of coffee-table format picture books, or of touring slideshow and speaker tours, played a significant role in building this social movement. The examples of Caribou Commons and Lenny Kohm’s Last Great Wilderness slideshow tours are drawn upon to sketch the growth of community-based storytelling as a major campaigning tool within the Alaska Coalition. In the 2004-6 period, the *Being Caribou* film picked up where such previous public storytelling efforts had left off, offering a compelling story that could be used by campaigners as a call to action.

The *Being Caribou* expedition took place on the cusp of technological changes in which platforms and circuits of communication were rapidly proliferating. Both the structures of film financing and book publishing, and the pace, forms, and networks in which public storytelling about the Arctic Refuge were taking place were undergoing significant change. Chapter 6, “*Being Caribou, Being Part of a Social Movement*” first turns to recent developments in media theory and participatory culture in order to account for these changing patterns of story circulation within the ‘life-cycle’ analysis frame. The chapter then takes up how, as Allison and Heuer were out on the land following the caribou, the *Being Caribou* expedition took advantage of these multiplying means of communication to reach more people with their story. Simultaneously, in the wake of bold moves by the Bush administration to open up the Arctic Refuge to oil and gas leasing, Gwich’in and other members of the Alaska Coalition were also ramping up efforts to raise awareness about the calving grounds. Allison and Heuer connected powerfully with these efforts in the fall of 2003, when they brought the film rushes from their journey to Alaska Wilderness Week (AWW). The closing pages of Chapter 6 describe how two-way exchanges with audiences, campaigners and government officials at AWW, as well as their dialogs with northerners on a subsequent northern communities tour greatly influenced Allison and Heuer and the *Being Caribou* film and books that they came to produce.

The *Being Caribou* film came out in North America just as the calving grounds were entering a period of tremendous threat. Chapter 7 walks through the release of the film through broadcast television, mainstream theatres, film festivals, and the National Film Board (NFB) of Canada’s distribution networks in the lead up to crucial

Congressional votes on opening the 1002 lands<sup>5</sup> to oil and gas leasing. After introducing some relevant research into film impact assessment, web 2.0 community organizing, and civil society engagement, the chapter shifts emphasis towards tracing the trajectories of *Being Caribou* through the networks of the Alaska Wilderness League (AWL) and Alaska Coalition (AC) as they systematically incorporated screenings of the film into their grassroots campaigning leading up to a series of Arctic Action Days in 2005. The effectiveness of *Being Caribou* stories in this peak period is evaluated through two frames. Firstly, *Being Caribou* video parties and screenings are examined as sites of movement leadership and capacity building, with the example of local organizing in Whitehorse, Yukon, demonstrating such work “in-practice”. Next, *Being Caribou* screenings are quantified as campaigning sites where hundreds of thousands of people were asked to take targeted actions to influence specific upcoming Congressional votes. Finally, the chapter ends with a focus on the *Being Caribou* book tour. This tour took place as immediate threats to the Arctic Refuge were tailing off. It augured a shift in the lifecycle of the *Being Caribou* project from a ‘peak’ period of campaign storytelling to a longer-term educational effort.

Chapter 8 turns to educational and social change theory to propose Indigenous Métissage as a methodology for considering the long-term trajectories of the *Being Caribou* project as leading to transformational change. It then returns to Allison and Heuer’s experiences of “thrumming” on the tundra, which they locate as the source of their transformational insights about caribou-human relations. Thrumming is examined in

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<sup>5</sup> The 1002 lands are lands within the Arctic Refuge on which Congress must still decide whether or not to allow oil and gas leasing



the light of Gwich'in cosmologies, to further explore and explain the transformational power that Allison and Heuer, after their journey, have tried to communicate in their speeches, films, and writings.

With tools for both short and longer-term evaluations of the Being Caribou project's effectiveness, Chapter 9 moves to consider the expedition's lasting contributions to public life and to caribou conservation. The chapter first assesses the place of Being Caribou media products within the cultural cannon. Next, it turns to the further works of Allison and Heuer, to examine how their personal trajectories have continued to communicate their transformational insights about the caribou in order to improve human/animal cohabitation and support the health of ecosystems at a landscape level. Finally, returning to the north Yukon and NWT, the Being Caribou project is situated within a broader trajectory, beginning with the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry and ending with the Peel case, of public storytelling being put to work in efforts to increase the say of northern communities in land management and caribou governance as part of public dialog promoting effective caribou governance.

The concluding chapter returns to the dissertation's key finding to propose that storytelling—whether in First Nations contexts or in the broader public sphere—plays a crucial role in rebalancing relations between humans and the more-than-human world. If social movements are to succeed in challenging the norms of petroculture, they must challenge the constellation of stories and shared values that promote those norms. Put succinctly, the ecology of story is vital to ecology itself.

# **Chapter 1**

## **Storytelling in a Cold Climate**

### **A Story of Origins**

My first tug towards the line of inquiry that informs this dissertation began in 2006. It arose from a quandary I was facing at work. At the time, I was the Executive Director of the Yukon Conservation Society (YCS), the main locally-based environmental group in Canada's Yukon Territory. In addition to supporting YCS's ongoing educational efforts, fundraising, community programming, and watchdog role with respect to resource extraction projects and legislation, a significant part of my work involved helping to rebuild YCS's relationships with its members and the broader community, as the year before my hiring, significant internal conflict had led to a number of staff and volunteer departures.

Innumerable hours of staff and volunteer time were devoted to developing an aware and engaged supporter base, building a strong community mandate, ensuring the organization's good governance, and fostering volunteer interest and leadership on emerging issues. These were core activities, constitutive of YCS as a grassroots, community based organization. They nurtured a strong core of passionate, committed people, who could weather the kind of long-haul engagement that is actually behind most significant environmental gains (M. Ganz, *Why David*).<sup>6</sup> YCS cultivated this environmental leadership through public outreach and campaign work with other community organizations and constituencies; by always being in the media explaining the

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<sup>6</sup> Ganz is discussing social movement "wins" more broadly, but the logic applies to environmental gains.

latest issue; by running educational events and open houses; by coordinating numerous participatory programs, such as the YCS summer hikes; and by taking part in citizen environmental monitoring programs like Plantwatch and annual migratory bird counts.

To maintain a vibrant, active social movement requires a sustained focus of organizational resources. But much of the most crucial work—especially the kind of consciousness-raising necessary at the beginning of campaigns — simply didn't fit into the logic of key grantmakers.<sup>7</sup> In a post-9/11 world in which stock market losses had dramatically diminished endowments, philanthropists were increasingly applying results-driven metrics to the business of grantmaking.<sup>8</sup> Granting agencies wanted “deliverables”; in their terms, the effective grant produced measurable outcomes, whether in the form of a reduction in tonnes of carbon emitted, in particular policy changes enacted, or in other quantifiable criteria.

A small number recognized the need for grants for "core support" to go towards basic office expenses and staff salaries. But the intangible organizational core— the

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<sup>7</sup> To some extent, there were work-arounds. For example, a community-building activity such as a bird count could be incorporated or subsumed within “results-based” criteria by setting a numeric goal for participation, which enhanced the reach of the bird count.

<sup>8</sup> Post September 11, 2001, the value of the endowments of many large American foundations, often comprised of shares in publicly traded American companies and particularly in "tech bubble" companies, plummeted. These foundations had financed much non-profit conservation work through their grantmaking. Henderson offers one example of the case of the Packard Foundation. In my personal experience working with larger environmental grant-making foundations as an ENGO representative, through both conversations and in confidential data shared with me, it was apparent that for many environmental grant makers that served the Alaska/Yukon, grantmaking activity dropped between 30-50% in the years immediately following 9/11. As TREC (Training Resources for the Environmental Community)'s 2005 report *Conservation Fundraising at a Crossroads* underlines, environmental non-profits were forced to become much more savvy at grassroots fundraising and building an individual donor base.

impassioned, creative matrix of individuals charged by working towards a common vision— required a different kind of nurturing that began with capturing people's imagination and cultivating a “story of us” (M. Ganz, “Leading Change”). Many of the activities that Northern environmentalists intuitively turned to to build public support — such as taking artists to at risk landscapes to create works that would be shared with the public — were very difficult to fund. Their value, which lay in building community backing by offering a compelling vision and story, could not be articulated within the assessment frameworks use by grantmakers. Although I believed such work to be essential to shifting political landscapes, the context I was working within lacked a language and a set of concepts to support local groups engaging with these kinds of public narrative exercises.<sup>9</sup>

Julie Cruickshank's *Do Glaciers Listen: Local Knowledge, Colonial Encounters, and Social Imagination*, which I read while engaged in yet another round of grant-writing and grant-reporting, helped me put my finger on the problem. The book was ostensibly concerned with historical events, such as European explorer voyages and a gold rush murder. Yet Cruickshank's descriptions of the colonial narratives that circumscribed official (and real) life in Alaska and Yukon Territory during the Little Ice Age spoke clearly to the kinds of public perceptions that YCS regularly confronted within the public sphere. Conversations about mining, energy use, forestry, and other forms of industrial development in the north were bound up with a public history of the Yukon as a northern

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<sup>9</sup> In my experience, foundation funders tend to support only limited kinds of public narrative exercises, usually those run by larger organizations and with very clear and specific goals that respond specifically to a political opportunity such as an election or an upcoming government decision.

frontier, a “gold rush” society, and a pristine and relatively empty land rich in natural resources. Cruikshank provided a historical analysis of the power dynamics which had resulted in these particular animating myths gaining prominence in public discourse, subsuming the Athapascan narratives which cast the same history in a very different light.

Cruikshank's book crystallized for me that "it is worth paying attention to what such stories accomplish, how they move, and why they persist" (9). It hinted at the kinds of vocabularies and frameworks that could help in arriving at a new understanding of the work of stories in shifting the focus of public dialogues on northern development. Finally, it convinced me of something that had been becoming increasingly apparent to me the longer I lived in the Canadian north: that experiences from northwestern North America, where climate volatility had been at play in social development for centuries, had something of value to offer a global community struggling to come to grips with climate change governance.

## **Paying Attention to Stories: a Chapter Guide**

My study of the Being Caribou expedition and its stories arose from a desire to better understand the power and potential of northern stories to shape how northerners and non-northerners come to grips with climate change. This chapter begins by briefly delving into science communications research from the last five years that has attempted to understand why the enormous threats posed by global climate change have not translated into concerted global action. Following up on these studies' conclusions that fact and theory-laden scientific communication has been insufficient in translating the risk of anthropogenic climate change effectively to the general public, and that narrative

strategies offer an important way forward, it returns to the contexts of indigenous and social movement storytelling to provide an overview of theory and research exploring how such storytelling can help to shape individual choices and communal and cultural values, creating conditions for social action and change. Finally, I focus on why northern stories are particularly fruitful to study in this regard, and why the Being Caribou expedition offers a suitable avenue for engaging with such stories.

### **As the Stakes Heat Up: the Science of Storytelling**

Since I first read *Do Glaciers Listen*, the need for the global community to come together to address climate change has become more urgent. The increasing frequency and intensity of extreme weather events such as Typhoon Haiyan, which killed more than seven thousand and displaced over four million people, have underlined the enormous costs of failing to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Yet emissions continue to grow at an alarming rate (Harvey). Little progress has been made in developing road maps of implementable and enforceable standards and targets capable of reducing emissions on a global scale. Concrete actions to limit greenhouse gas emissions are coming on-stream in too haphazard and gradual a fashion to prevent the significant climate forcings that could alter weather patterns faster than species, including human beings, may effectively adapt (Hassol).<sup>10</sup> This comes despite a near irrefutable scientific consensus that anthropogenic

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<sup>10</sup> Media coverage of the May 2013 surpassing of the symbolic 400ppm threshold for atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> is a good example of the circulation of expert discourses suggesting rapid climate change may have catastrophic implications, and that countries are not doing enough to limit emissions and put in place adaptation measures.

climate change poses a significant risk to humanity and to the health of the planet,<sup>11</sup> and that coordinated global action is necessary to avert catastrophic losses to the economy, the biosphere, and to human populations.<sup>12</sup>

A growing literature tackles this multifaceted quandary. Entire academic journals are devoted not just to climate change science, but also to climate change policy, climate and energy law, climate change strategies and management, and climate and development.<sup>13</sup> This dissertation concerns one particular, but crucial, aspect of the climate change predicament, which communications and cultural studies are uniquely suited to consider: how can the threats and opportunities of a changing climate enter robustly into public discourse in ways that prompt government decision making and action? What role can story, or rather practices of public storytelling, play in this process?

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<sup>11</sup> Cook et al.'s recent efforts to quantify the strength of this consensus within the scientific peer reviewed literature suggest that this consensus is robust among scientists who express an opinion on anthropogenic climate change. The consensus is also clear among scientific agencies with responsibilities for monitoring atmosphere and climate, such as the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), whose scientists have coordinated research explaining some extreme weather events as climate change related (Peterson et al.).

<sup>12</sup> While the Assessment Reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (in 1990, 1992, 1995, 2001, and 2007, with a new report expected to be finalized in 2014) have been increasingly unequivocal in their findings of profound anthropogenic climate change, the Arctic Council's 2004 Arctic Climate Impact Assessment is widely considered the watershed document on arctic climate change. The ACIA report models biological, biophysical, and human impacts of climate change scenarios in the various sub-regions of the arctic. The subregion which includes Alaska and the Western Canadian Arctic has experienced the most dramatic warming of all the Arctic subregions. (Hassol, 2004: 118).

<sup>13</sup> See for example, the *British Journal of Environment and Climate Change*, *Climate and Development*, *Climate Law*, *Climate Policy*, and the *International Journal of Climate Change Strategies and Management*, to name a few.

An expanding body of research<sup>14</sup> addresses and attempts to understand the aforementioned large disconnect between the level of threat attached to climate change within the significant professional/expert discursive fields that address the issue,<sup>15</sup> and the threat level as taken up in mainstream public discourse. Almost all frame the issue as a communication problem/failure on the part of those who understand catastrophic climate change (variously scientists, policy makers, and environmental campaigners) to convey the threats in such a way as to generate sustained and significant public pressure and political will to act. During COP 17<sup>16</sup> in Durban, journalist and climate campaigner George Monbiot succinctly encapsulated the “lack of political will” frame in a piece entitled “ Why Is It so Easy to Save the Banks, but so Hard to Save the Biosphere?” In the same time period as, in response to a global fiscal crisis, the U.S. Federal Reserve quickly committed 7.7 trillion to bail out American banks, negotiators at COP 17 negotiations could not reach consensus on obtaining less than one tenth of that amount — estimated at about 1% of global GDP, or roughly \$630 billion —to avert catastrophic climate change. Monbiot's subtext was clear: money can be found and policies enacted quickly if those with power have the will to act. Lack of political will is the true obstacle

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<sup>14</sup> Somerville and Hassol, Sterman, Klockner, and Frank offer a sampling of such analyses.

<sup>15</sup> I would include indigenous knowledge and traditional and on-the-land ecological knowledge in the category of “expert”, recognizing that in this case the expertise is in local observation of climatic changes, and that indigenous peoples' understandings and explanations of these changes may not square with other expert conclusions.

<sup>16</sup> COP stands for the Conference of the Parties and is an acronym used for the international UN conferences where climate change negotiations take place.



to an effective global treaty on climate, not money or various intricacies of policy implementation.<sup>17</sup>

Generating political will, however, involves far more complex processes than simply providing individuals with accurate information about climate change. In recent years, significant strides have been made in improving the communication of climate change risks by clarifying what these risks are, their likelihood, and how they result from anthropogenic changes to earth's energy balance. This work is crucial: as Somerville and Hassol (49) point out, recent polling data shows that many Americans “would most like to have an expert explain how experts know that global warming is happening and is caused by human activities.” However, better risk communication addresses only part of the “political will” issue.

After COP 13 in Bali, veteran environmental campaigner Tzerporah Berman fell into a deep depression. Rather than spurring her to action, she experienced her more complete understanding of climate change and its potentially dire consequences as completely overwhelming. It took weeks for Berman, a highly skilled movement leader, to overcome her feelings of self-doubt, isolation, fear, apathy, and inertia — feelings that Marshall Ganz (“Public Narrative” 276-7) describes as the major blocks to the building of successful mass movements (“Leading Change” 509). Compounding the fact that the scale of the problem seemed insurmountable, solutions to climate change issues were extremely difficult to grasp, even for someone with two university degrees and fifteen years of experience in successful, high-level, global environmental campaigns. In Berman's words, “If I couldn't figure out the environmental agenda, how could we expect

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<sup>17</sup> This line of argument is expounded upon at length in N. Klein (1-28).

a soccer mom who cares about global warming and has maybe fifteen minutes in her day between work and dinner and packing lunches to think about it and take action?” (210). Even if Berman's soccer mom understands that climate change poses a serious medium-term risk to her community, if she cannot decipher what would be effective political action for her to take (a common problem when proposed solutions such as carbon trading seem as complex as climate change itself), doesn't have a community of fellow concerned citizens to turn to, and has other more immediate demands competing for her time, then research suggests that she is unlikely to move from concern about climate change to concerted action.<sup>18</sup>

Moving individuals and publics towards taking political action is a complex and multi-faceted process in which many factors can play a role, ranging from people's level of comfort and knowledge about their governments and political processes, to how strongly they are connected into existing networks of actors (Corrigall-Brown, “From the Balconies”). Recent research on communicating climate change risks suggests that storytelling techniques are one key to moving North American publics towards understanding and action (Frank). Somerville and Hassol propose that “Narrative skills help reach people. Effective communication is usually not a lecture but a conversation that involves what people really care about” (49), and that scientists and educators should reframe climate change as a threat to basic human needs that will affect each and every

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<sup>18</sup> Chapter 6 delves in more detail into research on civic engagement. Corrigall-Brown offers a succinct summary of research that has identified the significant barriers to engagement that would be relevant in the ‘soccer mom’ example. For instance, not understanding what action to take fall under research done on political efficacy, which is “the belief that one is capable of the specific behaviors required to produce a desired outcome in a given situation” (Corrigall-Brown, “From the Balconies” 19).

person in essential ways such as access to food, water, safety, and security. The American Psychological Association, in its June 2014 report on the likely impacts of climate change on mental health and well-being, includes among its recommendations for climate educators that they “solicit people’s stories of being impacted by climate and/or taking action to help move toward solutions in order to evoke empathy and show others how they, too, can take action” (Clayton et al).

Within the last few years, North American social movements devoted specifically to slowing climate change have begun to develop storytelling frameworks for communication. For example, well known photographer and Alaskan conservation campaigner Subhankar Banerjee founded ClimateStoryTellers.org in 2011, while since 2011 360.org, Powershift Canada, Leadnow, and the David Suzuki Foundation (DSF) have all enthusiastically embraced workshops and toolkits that explicitly take up Marshall Ganz’s storytelling for social movement techniques in order to build climate leadership.<sup>19</sup> While Ganz has promoted and published on social movement storytelling and leadership in his role as a senior lecturer at Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government, the eager uptake of Ganz’s ideas by social movements owes much to his successes spearheading grassroots organizing for the 2008 Obama campaign, using a leadership model in which organizers learned to connect to voters through telling “new public stories: a story of self, a story of us, and a story of now” (M. Ganz, “Leading

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<sup>19</sup> See <http://workshops.350.org/toolkit/story/> for the 360.org climate storyteller toolkit. On October 27<sup>th</sup>, 2012, I attended a Powershift workshop on climate storytelling that followed Ganz’s model and was led by Leadnow staff. Through my personal networks I am also familiar with various educational initiatives on climate change storytelling undertaken in BC by a DSF staffer who worked on both Obama campaigns using Ganz’s techniques.

Change” 522). Little research has been done either to assess the effectiveness of such storytelling within the specific context of social movements addressing fossil fuel issues, or to examine more closely how such storytelling might work and what kinds of stories and techniques lend themselves to social movement storytelling. Before speaking to this lacuna through tracing the social movement storytelling of the Being Caribou expedition, it is worth returning to the frameworks developed in recent decades to explain processes of social movement and indigenous community storytelling.

### **What Might Stories Do?**

Recent academic research into First Nations and social movement storytelling hint at the potential of stories and storytelling— as text, as performance, as experience, as social process, as an intervention into language, and as seeds that are sown at specific places and times — to shift the discursive fields in which decisions take place which affect communities in northwestern North America which are grappling with climate change. In the discussion which follows, I do not mean to elide important distinctions between the narratives of indigenous peoples and communities and other narratives. The kinds of narratives that I am especially interested in are really two different sets of stories about climate change. One encompasses stories of Arctic indigenous peoples, communities, and leadership/governments, who are grappling with climate change adaptation both in long-range planning and for everyday life. A second set of narratives is the strategically seeded stories environmental and social justice NGOs (both northern based organizations and national organizations with a northern chapter or component) tell concerning Arctic climate change. These stories, particularly as they extend from the “local” north to other

fora, are told in contexts of movement building, to drive environmental and social justice interventions in civil society to mitigate climate change.

Since the 1990's, new scholarship has fleshed out the central role that storytelling plays in indigenous cultures in North America. Archibald, Basso, Brody, J. Cruikshank, King and Profeit-Leblanc, for example, have all written explicitly about native storytelling traditions.<sup>20</sup> These texts emphasize that such storytelling is an expression of very different epistemologies:

if one were to try to give the metaphorical description of some of the features of First Nations thought, one might say that [in order to acquire these thoughts one would] go to school in dreams, write in iconographic imagery, travel in Trickster's vehicle, talking metaphor, and always walk around (Akan, 1992: 213 in Archibald).

Rather than attempting to broach the full richness of story's contribution to indigenous culture and learning, I will focus here on certain functions of story that suggests its usefulness for understanding and adapting to rapid and unpredictable environmental and cultural change.

A great deal of scholarly research on native traditions of storytelling emphasizes that stories perform their functions — such as healing, offering moral instruction, and helping one comprehend one's identity — at least partially by helping listeners learn to

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<sup>20</sup> This sampling only addresses researchers who make storytelling as such their subject matter. A wide swath of researchers in many sub-disciplines of indigenous studies, ranging from health to elaborating indigenous research methods, also emphasize and describe the central role of storytelling in indigenous knowledge and cultural life. See for example S. Wilson.

deal with their emotions and approach upheavals and uncertainty with what Keith Basso (126-129), quoting Apache elder Dudley Patterson, describes as a smooth, resilient, and steady mind. Indigenous storyteller Louise Profeit-Leblanc describes the role of stories in changing the emotional orientation of listeners from fear towards a calm, action-orientation: “Storytellers do their best to temper disturbed reactions, by telling difficult stories (whether historical or mythological) in ways that promote emotional stability among their listeners - a stability that can be thought of as emerging from the true inner meaning of the stories themselves” (Profeit-Leblanc, “Stories Have Their Way”). She offers an example through presenting a story-within-a-story in which one of her mentors, Kitty Smith, shares a disturbing creation story in which a woman overcomes the terrible distress of having her husband kill their newborns three times in succession. Rescued from suicide by an old man who commands her to swallow a red-hot rock, the woman complies, believing the rock will allow her a quick death. Instead she falls asleep and awakens pregnant with Raven, and happy to be alive. Profeit-Leblanc situates this story within the context of other stories Kitty shared about the personal hardships she faced as a young woman:

In addition to this story, Kitty Smith also shared some of her personal stories with me. She told me about her struggle with tuberculosis, and how her first husband remarried, thinking that she had died in the sanitarium. As in the earlier creation story, Kitty too had been forced to swallow a hot rock, so that her life could go on despite the loss of her husband and the hardships of her sickness and separation from her community. After surviving all of these events, Kitty married her second husband, who

treated her kindly - unlike her previous husband, who had been cruel  
(Profeit-Leblanc, “Stories Have Their Way”).

In this passage, Profeit-Leblanc is translating a crucial aspect of oral storytelling into a written form: she demonstrates how a skilled storyteller chooses appropriate stories that can act as learning/healing moments for a particular listener. In this case, the story about Raven's mother is used to help other women—both Kitty and Louise—'work through' experiences of loss and hardship within marriage. The frame/boundaries of the story create a safe space in which these painful topics can be addressed with empathy and understanding, while maintaining a critical distance.<sup>21</sup> In this instance, the traditional story helps open up new possibilities, so that one can imagine different endings for one's own lifestories, recognizing that other pasts and thus other futures are possible.

*Life Lived Like a Story: Life Stories of Three Yukon Native Elders*, Julie Cruikshank's collaborative work with Angela Sidney, Kitty Smith, and Annie Ned, is particularly strong in illustrating, “in-practice”, how Yukon storytellers deploy traditional stories at particular points in listener's lives, so that these stories provide a scaffolding for sense-making and acting, even in the face of novel circumstances. In conducting her research, Cruickshank had quickly discovered that her collaborators had a very different understanding of the research task than her own (2). While she had expected that the narrative model for the elders' life histories would focus on the social impact of major historical events in the elders' lives in the southern Yukon, such as the Klondike gold rush and the building of the Alaska Highway, she found that

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<sup>21</sup> LaCapra stresses the importance of limits and boundedness for proper emotional functioning, and describes how 'working through' trauma is largely a process of establishing boundedness to traumatic experiences (142-143).

From the beginning, several of the oldest women responded to my questions about secular events by telling traditional stories. The more I persisted with my agenda, the more insistent each was about the direction our work should take. Each explained that these narratives were important to record as *part of* her life story. Their accounts, then, included not only personal reminiscences of the kind we normally associate with autobiography, but detailed narratives elaborating mythological themes (2).

Also embedded in the women's narratives were songs, genealogies and long lists of names and place names. For the many years in which Cruikshank recorded the elders' stories, she engaged in a personal project of sensemaking, attempting to puzzled out why the narratives were being presented to her as a vast jumble of seemingly unrelated recitations of place names, multi-generational genealogies, and stories about a variety of animal and human characters from sacred and mythic times. What made it all coherent?

Drawing on a breadth of anthropological scholarship, Cruikshank concluded that the key to understanding Yukon elders' stories lay in focusing on how the women *use* stories and the oral tradition (2-4). Cruikshank arranged each woman's personal stories so that they were nested within a constellation of traditional stories; this sets up for the reader a play between each elder's life experience and the stories that provided cultural information, knowledge, emotional connection, and inspiration and guidance as the women made their ways through various challenges and life transitions. By juxtaposing traditional stories appropriate to key life transitions (such as marriage) with relevant episodes in elders' life trajectories, Cruikshank, like Profeit-Leblanc, created oscillations that show how personal growth, maturity, acceptance of change, and the makings of one



consciousness (and thus better mastery of one's personal circumstances) are part of the life journeys of those who, in Ms. Sidney's words “live (my) life right, just like a story” (20).<sup>22</sup>

Taking up a lens of social movement analysis, this use of storytelling resonates strongly with Ganz’s intertwined focus on storytelling and relationship building as practices of personal leadership that build social movements. Ganz (“Leading Change” 516-19) introduces his work on storytelling and social movements by describing social movement storytelling as an effective link between values, emotions, and action precisely because stories can work to overcome feelings of inertia, apathy, fear, self-doubt, and isolation. Such inhibiting emotions must be surmounted for social movements to “assert new public values, form new relationships rooted in those values, and mobilize the political, economic, and cultural power to translate these values into action” (509).

Echoing indigenous perspectives that storytelling can cultivate emotional and mental stability in the face of challenges, Ganz argues that “narrative is how we learn to exercise agency — choice in the face of uncertainty” (516), and that leadership itself is “accepting responsibility to create conditions that enable others to achieve shared purpose in the face of uncertainty” (509). In a wide ranging discussion of the role of emotion in democratic politics, drawing on Marcus, Nussbaum, Bruner, Amsterdam, and Westen among other political philosophers, Ganz posits that within democratic politics, emotion is integral to decision making and action. Drawing on Marcus' neurobiological models (71-76), Ganz maintains that when we are confronted with some challenge or choice that

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<sup>22</sup> In using this technique, the authors are emulating how traditional storytellers carefully seed the stories they tell to correspond to the circumstances of the listener in a very conscious, embodied process that is heavily dependent on relationship.

is truly different, our emotional selves become activated and involved in the real choices that make us creators of our own lives, communities, and futures (M. Ganz, “Leading Change” 520). However, novelty activates our surveillance system, which tracks anomalies, producing anxiety. According to Ganz

If we link an experience of anxiety with despair, our fear kicks in, or our rage, or we freeze — none of which facilitates adaptive agency. On the other hand, if we are hopeful, our curiosity will be provoked to explore the novelty in ways that can facilitate learning, creative problem solving, and intentional action. Thus, our capacity to consider action, consider it well, and act on our consideration depends on what we feel. Social movement leaders mobilize the emotions that make agency possible (“Leading Change” 517).

Stories, which are constructed of characters and plots, are essentially narrative exercises in tackling “choice points”. Well chosen stories, which activate positive feelings such as hope, solidarity, and a sense of connection and purpose, can help listeners connect to their core values and approach challenges with a confident, action-oriented outlook and are thus “the discursive form through which we all translate our values into action” (519). Ganz devised a simple, three step process of storytelling focused on building leadership and actionable, shared purpose in social movements by anchoring shared stories in strong relationships. Social movement actors are taught to articulate their values (the story of “self”), connect those values to the values of others within the same movement (the story of “us”), and articulate the present moment as an urgent moment when those values are

being challenged, and therefore a choice must be made to support these values (the story of “now”) (522-27).

Just as aboriginal storytelling practice depends on an experienced storyteller ascertaining the appropriate story to share for a particular audience at a particular time, social movement storytelling must also be grounded in relationship-building exercises that support and encourage leadership, and unite individual listeners and tellers into a common community of concern. Ganz's writings on leadership and story suggest very concrete ways in which participatory and collective storytelling can strengthen ties within organizations and motivate people towards achieving political goals. In order to delineate what some of these ways are, and in particular to develop my argument concerning storytelling's potential to shape northern governance on climate change, I will draw from social change research done in the Great Bear Rainforest.

### **Social Movement Storytelling: Resonances from the Great Bear Rainforest**

Riddell, Page, Berman, and Davis all delineate in great detail the decades-long processes involved in building strategic political narratives in support of rainforest conservation along the BC coast, and how years of working sometimes in parallel and sometimes in conflict led to environmental groups and First Nations communities beginning joint processes of dialogue, visioning, capacity building, and financial support to plan a long-term ecologically, economically, and socially sustainable development process for a roughly 8.5 million hectares (21 million acres) area of temperate rainforest

along the British Columbia coast.<sup>23</sup> Page, Berman and Riddell all describe public narrative and storytelling strategies as key to creating a transformational shift in not only how British Columbia's coastal rainforests are perceived, but how they are governed.<sup>24</sup> Page describes the GBR itself as a story, using the term "to highlight the multiple forms that the GBR takes through its mobilization in media clips, maps, and the words of its key actors" (8).

Considerable discursive work went into environmentalists re-branding the "mid-coast timber supply area" as the Great Bear Rainforest. As Page (32-44) documents, a crucial factor in this re-branding gaining traction was the extensive effort spearheaded by Karen and Ian McAllister to bring video, pictures, and stories from the region to publics in North America and Europe through slideshows, talks, video, and a glossy, high-end coffee table book. Berman, one of the key players in the 'international markets' campaign, in which the environmental community gained negotiating leverage through organizing successful boycotts of companies sourcing forest products from the GBR, describes it as a crucial evolution in her thinking as a campaigner when she realized "we needed to think like storytellers. We needed to create a narrative to frame our work, to engage people, to capture interest and focus attention" (39). Storytelling proved an

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<sup>23</sup> In the official historical record, the signing of the Great Bear Rainforest Agreement in 2009 is the landmark moment for this change. However, in reality, the battles over the interpretation and implementation of the agreement are constant, and both preceded and followed the signing. For example, in February 2012 a consortium of environmental groups launched the "Take it Taller" campaign to push for more ecosystem protection in the GBR. Campaign materials can be viewed at <http://www.savethegreatbear.org/takeittaller>.

<sup>24</sup> Davis' research is the exception: it is specifically concerned with evaluating the relationship building between coastal First Nations and environmental groups that was a part of the process.

effective means of working across vast distances, generating interest and connection to the GBR among European and North American consumers by articulating their daily practices, such as buying lingerie, to ecosystem consequences along BC's coast<sup>25</sup>. As Riddell ("Multi-paradigm Perspectives" 27-59) lays out, in a number of social change theories, ranging from social innovation theory to resilience and institutional change theories, such cross-scalar interactions are a vital component of system transformation.

Nesting her discussion within a consideration of distributed agency and mutual reinforcement dynamics, Riddell goes to some length to emphasize personal transformation, arrived at as part of a process of "creating powerful personal narratives" (93), as having a cross-scalar effect in driving transformative change in regional governance in the GBR. Tjombo et al, Riddell, Berman and Page all credit personal transformation work, which environmentalists undertook as part of leadership training at the Hollyhock Leadership Institute, with changing the tenor of GBR negotiations. Riddell, a former forest campaigner, explains that:

During the years of intense conflict, we invested time to grow our capacities for personal leadership and authenticity, developing and sharing in spiritual and therapeutic practices. This commitment to personal development was grounded in the belief that our own state of being and consciousness was affecting the perspectives of our adversaries and the outcomes of our campaign efforts. We explored spiritual traditions, developed personal transformative practices, found new ways to dialogue

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<sup>25</sup> One of the most successful of the boycott campaigns was the campaign launched against the lingerie manufacturer Victoria's Secret for using old-growth trees to produce pulp for their catalogues (Berman 171-83).

with our adversaries, and worked with practices to shift our motivations or responses from anger and fear toward love and non-attachment. Several of the women campaigners who were in protracted negotiations began to practice loving-kindness meditations before entering into negotiations, and to visualize agreement in areas of difficulty (“Evolving Approaches” 74).

In their first-hand accounts of negotiations, Riddell (“Evolving Approaches” 74) and Berman describe how these practices had concrete impacts in improving relationships — especially with First Nations negotiators (Berman 156-7) — and setting the stage for joint solutions and the attainment of conservation objectives. Though the approach was not without challenges, bringing a more compassionate and less adversarial perspective helped to build a shared narrative in which all parties were invested; nicknamed “the love strategy” the approach both helped to calm and energize the affective tenor and physical disposition of those negotiating, and eased the way to finding points of common ground.

The evolution of the ‘love strategy’, from transforming activists’ personal “stories of self” to changing negotiating dynamics, offers a complex example of Ganz’s description of social movement storytelling as a process that moves beyond individual narratives through leaders bringing people together to interpret their common experiences and build shared stories.<sup>26</sup> Successful negotiations require that parties move away from

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<sup>26</sup> Another often cited example (Berman 145-157; Tjombo et al. 12) from the GBR is that of Karen Mahon, a Greenpeace campaigner out for a walk while on maternity leave, who bumped into her arch-nemesis Linda Coady of the forestry giant Macmillan Bloedel, also on maternity leave pushing an identical blue polka-dot stroller while out on a walk with her husband. This encounter triggered a series of informal coffees, walks, and talks across the playground in which Coady and Mahon engaged in a much deeper dialogue about their differences and the possibilities for change. This direct ‘backchannel’ led to the Joint Solutions Project, an informal forum in which environmentalists and forest

fixed positions and towards articulating shared values. Stories articulate values, and shared stories and experiences build trust and create affective bonds across disparate realities. Ganz describes widely shared practices of storying and relationship building as key to social movement effectiveness (“Leading Change” 513-5), and to developing identification and relational/social capital, and facilitating trust, motivation, commitment, and the learning of skills and sharing of information. These connections were succinctly described by a GBR ENGO campaigner who told Riddell that

what I am learning is that it is ‘as above, so below’ – everything is completely connected and we can’t pull things apart from each other. My personal process is mirrored back to me through this campaign, and the more that each of us does our personal work and integrates that into this broader campaign the more it becomes whole” (Anonymous qtd. in “Multi-paradigm Perspectives” 93).

## **A Resilient Whole**

The above quote puts the “multi-scalar interactions” that catalyse social change within a more holistic frame that encompasses a broader social-ecological vision of interconnection. This interpretation resonates with resilience theory, a framework for broaching questions of systemic change and rebalancing that is becoming widely used in

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company representatives attempted to jointly work out an ecologically and economically sustainable model for coastal forestry — a move that led to MacMillan Bloedel committing to ending all clear cutting in old growth coastal forests.

northern studies, particularly among biologists and geographers working with indigenous communities. Scholars such as Berkes stress the value of traditional knowledge—often manifested through elders’ stories—both for better understanding of seemingly novel developments in complex ecological systems, and for practical decision-making in such circumstances. For example, in "A Story of Caribou and Social Learning", Berkes describes how a well-timed elder's story, drawing on community knowledge of the last disappearance of the caribou more than half a century before,<sup>27</sup> catalyzed an important moment of community reckoning that shifted how younger hunters decided to manage their caribou hunts (117-138). Berkes argues that traditional knowledge is as much a process as it is a repository of data; its effective use depends upon “dynamic social learning process(es)” guided by the knowledge and stories of elders (134), and by the cultivation of particular ways of perceiving, understanding, and interpreting the environment (162). Berkes’ broader argument, supported by numerous examples from his research with indigenous communities, suggests that indigenous knowledge systems, which draw on narrative/story as a core component, offer flexible modalities to understand and 'manage' evolving, complex systems.

Berkes proposes that climate change, because it must be analyzed simultaneously at multiple scales while accounting for increasing future uncertainties, is a type of complex systems problem that indigenous knowledge tackles effectively in certain ways where conventional practices of science fall short. When calculations are required to process vast amounts of data related to numerous variables interrelating across scales,

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<sup>27</sup> The cycling of the George River Caribou herd, which takes place over a very long period of time—possibly decades or even hundreds of years—means that this particular community was only intermittently in the caribou’s range.



mathematical modeling collapses into its own aggregating margins of uncertainty, “until a threshold is reached beyond which precision and significance (or relevance) become almost mutually exclusive characteristics.”<sup>28</sup> Berkes observes that in such contexts, qualitative narrative data that focuses on general categories and few variables is actually far more useful for timely decision making in changing conditions (eg. (fur condition: mangy) + (animal body fat: low) + (liver: spotty with lesions) = do not eat), and functions analogously to computing “fuzzy logic”/expert systems. In other words, where increasing complexity makes it near impossible to discern meaningful patterns within huge volumes of variables and interrelationships, creating paralyzing “information overload,” traditional knowledge made up of succinct qualitative descriptors, chaining into narrative pathways, may provide far clearer conceptual conduits to action.

Especially as local impacts of climate change are difficult to predict from models, and “*actual impacts* of extreme weather occur on the ground, at regional and local scales” (176), Berkes concludes that local observations and traditional knowledge are crucial to building a better overall picture of climate change impacts. These knowledge forms “are not model driven but are culture specific, historically informed, and geographically rooted. They take scale into account” (180). Moreover, Berkes’ research suggests that traditional knowledge is a critical cultural resource for northern communities coping with climate change; in addition to including systems for observing, thinking about, and

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<sup>28</sup> Berkes explains his thesis using Zadeh's Principle of Incompatibility, which was specifically developed in the context of using fuzzy logic in developing computerized expert systems, which began as attempts to mimic human intelligence. It suggests, for example, that rather than precisely monitoring a variable to the greatest degree possible, the system will work better if the variable is monitored/categorized into a few discrete chunks, and the extra “computing power” is used to incorporate more “fuzzy”/low resolution variables.

comparing conditions to the past via stories, traditional knowledge includes cultural systems that create continuity in the face of novel circumstances, reinforcing cultural values that support complex adaptive strategies, such as shifting harvesting patterns based on what is available, and using traditional systems to share food (178). In such instances, storytelling acts as part of a broader social process of community self-regulation. It is promoting resilience, or the ability of a socio-ecological system to respond to disturbance by adapting/learning, self-organizing, and yet maintaining basic function, structure, and identity (Riddell, *Multi-paradigm Perspectives* 30-31).

### **Stories and Climate Change Governance: Why Study Northern Stories?**

Evidence from both the GBR and Berkes' socio-ecological research on indigenous traditional knowledge suggest that effectively seeded stories can prompt transformational change in local and regional governance and in regimes of ecosystem management. But why might the Arctic be a particularly fruitful region to focus on when studying climate change storytelling?

Pointing to a number of examples where northern indigenous peoples' observations of ecosystem change led to major scientific discoveries,<sup>29</sup> Berkes notes that "Northern peoples have a good record of noticing environmental change often before the science of it is known" (172). With the northwestern Arctic projected to experience the

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<sup>29</sup> For example, Berkes discusses Inuit observation of Arctic haze in the 1970s which led to research on aerosol pollution and long-range contaminant transport; Inuit observations in the 1990s that provided some of the first evidence of widespread northern climate change; and Cree information on changes to geese migratory routes and populations that revealed a complex chain of interactions between the James Bay hydroelectric projects and climate change effects.

most sweeping ecosystem changes on the planet (*Sciencedaily*; Hassol), stories and observations from the region will become ever more important indicators of what future climate effects could be. Arctic climate change stories illustrate the threats climate change can pose to survival and meeting basic needs, something that Somerville and Hassol (49) identify as crucial to creating the kinds of compelling social change stories that people pay attention to.

Northern aboriginal climate stories are a particularly rich and robust knowledge form as they have a longer history in my study region than anywhere else on the continent. Interior peoples have lived in northwestern North America since at least the last ice age and possibly for thirty thousand years,<sup>30</sup> and have adapted their lifestyles to enormous changes in climate and landscape; it is very likely that the tales of giant beavers, bears, and other creatures that animate Gwich'in, Han, and other regional oral tradition originate in a time when humans shared the Beringia with these creatures. Adaptation has been a crucial facet of Gwich'in, Han, and Inuvialuit life not just in terms of coping with changing environmental conditions, but adjusting to—and reshaping—changing forms of governance. The last several hundred years have seen shifting patterns of interaction as different constituencies, from Russian missionaries to fur trading companies to Russian, Canadian, and American governments, have attempted to assert jurisdiction over the region. Governance in the region has shifted often, including in the

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<sup>30</sup> The oldest known site of aboriginal habitation in North America, the Bluefish Caves, is located not far from the Vuntut Gwitchin community of Old Crow and includes artifacts that may date back thirty thousand years, but most certainly date back at least ten thousand years. Morlan (*Current Perspectives*) offers a concise summary of evidence suggesting a very ancient human presence in the Old Crow Basin.

present as land claims and self-government arrangements are both implemented and contested. At the same time, with “state” interests and decision making powers related to climate change drivers in the region often involving national publics and federal jurisdiction, and in some cases having a transboundary and/or international scope, northern communities have had to generate political will to address climate change among southern governments and publics. Their public storytelling on climate change issues is not just local but translocal.

The term translocal offers another framing in which to understand some of the cross-scalar interactions identified earlier as crucial to leveraging social change in a complex, globalized world. Extending the insights of geographer Doreen Massey—which will be returned to in later chapters—that places are dynamically constructed through social linkage and exchange, and “power in relation to flows and movements” (Massey in Grenier and Sakdapolrak), geographers have theorized the translocal in order to better characterize placemaking not as a hierarchy of fixed categories of local, national, and global, but as the active making and remaking of geographic experience through “processes that transgress boundaries on different scales, which results in the production and reproduction of spatial differences” (Grenier and Sakdapolrak, 375).

To effectively address northern climate change, it is essential that people and political systems outside the north recognize their “geography of responsibility” (Massey, *Space, Time, and Political Responsibility* 93) for what is, in fact, a translocal problem. Cameron argues that such reckonings are sorely missing from Arctic social science, which tends to focus questions of climate change adaptation and mitigation on how northern communities will adapt, without addressing how southern governments and

publics will take responsibility for curbing greenhouse gas emissions and prioritizing policy and lifestyle changes that slow northern climate change. According to Cameron the major strands of “human dimensions of climate change” Arctic research

share a remarkable oversight: they do not mention, let alone contend with, the importance of colonialism in shaping their research objects, subjects, findings, and research relations, and, relatedly, they largely overlook the importance of resource exploration, extraction and shipping as human dimensions of climatic change in the region (“Securing Indigenous Politics” 103).<sup>31</sup>

In excluding the major drivers of climate change from any serious scrutiny, Cameron argues that the current research paradigm fails to fully and accurately apprehend the problem, “eliding the persistence of the colonial, understood not just in cultural, social, or historical terms, but also as the organization and re-organization of political–economic relations . . . buttressing political and intellectual formations that underwrite a new round of dispossession and accumulation in the region” (104). Cameron is specifically emphasizing the absence of engagement with colonialism within northern climate change research. More broadly, Massey (*Space, Time, and Political Responsibility* 155-9) argues that such misattributions of “the local” are part of broader patterns that obscures the

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<sup>31</sup> There are, of course, many exceptions to this trend, such as the work of the GAPS (Gas, Arctic Peoples, and Security) project. However, much of the best funded academic arctic social science research, such as the CAVIAR (Community Adaptation and Vulnerability in Arctic Regions) and the projects of the Climate Change Adaptation Research Group, spearheaded by James Ford, is vulnerable to Cameron’s critique. Ford is a strong advocate for climate change mitigation, but even his scholarship on the state of vulnerability and adaptation research and its current gaps (J. Ford et al.) does not consider including climate change drivers in the research scope and does not name colonialism as a concept to be considered in assessing the vulnerabilities of northern communities.

power relations upholding the current neoliberal economic order. The taken-for-granted “placelessness” of this economic order characterizes it as more inevitable and pervasive than it really is: emphasizing the translocal and interconnected trajectories along which capital travels highlights instead the inherent possibilities for rebalancing that arise from the interdependence of these trajectories. Indeed, Arctic climate change cannot be fully addressed unless researchers, governments, indigenous organizations, NGOs, businesses, and global publics are ready to include trajectories of industrial development — which are the drivers of Arctic climate change — within their analysis and actions.

Cruikshank (*Do Glaciers Listen*) and Cameron (“New Geographies of Story”) specifically point to the potential of story to shuttle between macro, micro, and meso levels of inquiry.<sup>32</sup> Translocal stories speak to geographies of power and knowledge in nuanced ways that create play between the local and particular and the hegemonic/universal, opening up new possibilities for transformational social change. It is with this in mind that my research turns especially to the role of stories— and the communities, alliances, and conversations that they build — as an important way forward. For small northern communities seeking both to adapt to climate change and to encourage other communities to act with them to mitigate climactic changes, the social processes of storytelling build on and resonate with community strengths, local knowledge, and cultural traditions that have evolved in some cases over thousands of years.

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<sup>32</sup> Cameron’s article “New Geographies of Story and Storytelling” surveys how a number of geographers have taken up story and storytelling within their research paradigms. She anchors her discussion of scale and story around Lorimer. In arguing for the value of ‘small stories’, he discusses the power of stories to shuttle between different levels of inquiry.

## Being Caribou, Being a Good Story

As Chapter 3 describes, narrowing my study to a particular set of stories was an iterative and holistic process, involving consultation with a wide swathe of northerners. No one story or set of stories can speak to the multifaceted realities of Arctic climate change, nor the diverse needs of Arctic communities. In finalizing my choice of subject, I looked for a set of stories that seemed to be imbued with the potentialities discussed in this chapter. In particular, I sought out instances of “livelihood stories”, or stories that included a livelihood dimension; issues in which aboriginal communities are strongly involved in telling public stories not just locally but “translocally” — regionally, nationally, and internationally; and issues in which the conservation community had a comparatively long history of involvement.<sup>33</sup> In line with my “in-practice” orientation — relevant both to my methods for studying public storytelling, and to my desire to have that study feed back into real-world conversation about social change strategies — I sought instances where there was a possibility of focusing my inquiry to include some kind of quantitative as well as qualitative “results-based” metric. Lastly, I selected subject matter in which I could build upon the connections that I have as a practitioner, a choice which greatly increased my access to relevant individuals, organizations, and communities.

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<sup>33</sup> Just as aboriginal storytelling draws from a long historical tradition, so to it is most productive, in seeking out examples of conservation community public storytelling, to examine cases that draw upon a robust and relatively long-term commitment to a particular issue. This can be measured in decades for environmental groups as opposed to centuries for First Nations, but just the same — particularly because I am interested in how stories move through and build upon existing networks — I believe it is more productive to look at examples where relationships and commitments are well developed.

The Being Caribou expedition was an initiative to produce a new set of stories about the migration of the Porcupine caribou, to complement existing efforts to raise awareness about threats that oil and gas development posed to Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR). As choices about whether to develop the Refuge are made by Congress, the issue had a clear 'translocal' dimension; both aboriginal communities and conservation groups had been raising awareness throughout North America about the issue for decades. Because Being Caribou produced a set of discrete media products that were circulated through particular platforms and networks, it was possible to conduct research to quantify circulation of the Being Caribou stories. Finally, the Being Caribou project had important roots in Yukon; my work at YCS coincided with the peak period of circulation of the *Being Caribou* film in concert with the campaign led by the Alaska Wilderness League (AWL) to influence key Congressional votes in 2005. YCS supported the local campaign and I was acquainted with some of its organizers, including expedition publicist Erica Heuer. Having such pre-existing relationships in Yukon was extremely helpful for building trust and involving both environmentalist and First Nations groups as partners in the research.

Building trust was especially key in light of the complex histories and present day politics that play into conflicts about the Arctic Refuge, and into northern climate change stories more broadly. In the next chapter, I will briefly review the most crucial of these complexities as they apply to northern storytelling: the northern imaginary, traditional knowledge, and evolving regimes of northern governance.



## **Chapter 2**

### **Setting Up a Story: Reviewing the Complexities of ‘North’**

Stories from and about northwestern North America enter into a rich and complex cultural landscape in which “imaginary norths” and “ideological norths” colour both the lived experiences and stories of northerners.<sup>34</sup> As Grace, Hulan, and other theorists make clear, many of these “norths” are generated at least partly through a lens of non-northerners’ experiences and values; in both Canada and the United States, northern margins/peripheries have played an important economic and cultural role in constructions of nationhood. This chapter begins by briefly situating the concept of “northern imaginaries” as it applies to my study region. Next, I review how traditional knowledge, central to the cultural perspectives of northern indigenous communities and to the “local” norths these communities experience, has informed my methodological approach to northern storytelling. Following this discussion I focus on how governance has evolved and is evolving in my study region in response to shifting visions of “north.” Governance is first described concretely as it applies directly to the legal status of the calving grounds and summer and winter grounds of the Porcupine caribou, before turning to the work of northern scholars to consider northern governance as a process of interactions and illegibilities between indigenous and Western cultural forms.

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<sup>34</sup> Rob Shields outlined ideological and imaginary Canadian norths in 1991; however, his work on “True North” is regularly cited by others writing about the Canadian north. See, for example, Hulan (5) and Grace (42).

## The Northern Imaginary

Both Alaska and the two Canadian territories, Yukon and the Northwest Territories (NWT), are northern frontiers of larger nation states. As Cruikshank (*Do Glaciers Listen?; The Social Life of Stories*) details, colonial encounters on these frontiers have gone on for centuries, and include scientific expeditions, trade and commerce, and the extension of institutions and jurisdiction including policing, administration of justice, and building of infrastructure such as the Alaska Highway. A proliferation of texts has accompanied these encounters, including explorer narratives, sketches made by official artists on scientific expeditions, personal and official correspondences such as letters, police reports, and newspaper articles that accompanied the Klondike gold rush<sup>35</sup> and other resource booms, and notes and drawings of American naturalists such as John Muir and Margaret and Olaus Murie. As these texts found their way from northern regions into broader circulation in Canada, America, Europe, and parts of the Commonwealth and other colonial and postcolonial states, they were quickly supplemented, and to a degree even supplanted, by speech, writing, painting, music and other forms of expression that took “north” as its subject matter.

Since the millennium, a number of academic works have attempted to survey and analyze Canadian cultural texts whose circulation contribute to the “imaginary north” or northern imaginaries that animate not just discussions of the Canadian north but of Canadian cultural identity.<sup>36</sup> Whether focusing on ‘official’ discourse such as government

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<sup>35</sup> In fact, there were any number of gold rushes in BC, Alaska, and the Yukon in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, such as near Forty Mile on the Yukon River, and in Atlin, BC.

<sup>36</sup> These works—particularly Grace, Hulan, and more recently Baldwin et al.—tend to focus on what Bourdieu might term “high culture” products such as classical music and

reports and the remarks of politicians, or turning to popular culture texts including literature, artwork, and music, there is a general consensus, well expressed by Rob Shields in 1991 that “the ‘True North Strong and Free; has a striking prominence amongst English-speaking, central, southern Canadians in the dominant political rhetoric it generates” of the North as a resource rich wilderness hinterland, central to Canadian ideals of nationhood (164). Canadian artistic works tend to reproduce a “Great White North” in which a romantic attachment to both wilderness and various “rugged” characteristics associated with winter and cold, act to discursively efface ongoing colonialist power relations, normalizing the dispossession of indigenous peoples and projecting the north as a kind of pure tabula rasa for the territorial and economic ambitions of the Canadian nation-state (Baldwin et al. 1-15).

Different scholars emphasize different aspects of this dynamic. Hulan, for example, focuses strongly on gender, associating narratives of ruggedness with “the inscription of traditionally defined masculinity (which) depends on the exclusion or the

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novels, and on cultural products which circulate outside of northern Canada. Outside of work focused mainly on aboriginal and Inuit cultural production, there is a lacunae in research that applies a structured narrative analysis to discovering the “northern imaginaries” propagated by vibrant northern local arts and culture scenes such as the myriad music festivals, northern craft festivals, film festivals, touring theater and dance companies, and even YukomiCom (a comics convention); work published by northern publishing houses (such as the Lost Moose Catalogues published regularly in the 1990s, or Beluga Books’ Writing North anthology, edited by Yukon writers Patricia Robertson and Erling Friis-Baastad); numerous high-profile northern plays such as work by Mitchell Akiyama, Leonard Linklater, and Patti Flather; and the “grey literature” of northern genre novels. While these genre novels used to be published primarily out of Alaska, in the self-publishing era, there has been a very significant increase in Yukon on-the-land narratives, ranging from thriller and mystery stories to work such as Eleanor Millard’s fiction and memoir writings about FASD and other issues affecting Yukon communities. The applied research I cite on Yukon imaginaries and Yukon tourism cannot entirely close this gap, as it is largely focused on the impressions of “outsiders” rather than the imaginaries of the local population.

opposition of the feminine, represented as the other, the unknown, the wilderness” (24).<sup>37</sup>

The authors of *Great White North* situate their discussions of nature and race within a critical analysis of “whiteness” as a historical and present day category (Baldwin et al. 6).

While I have focused more narrowly on northern imaginaries, and their particular animating tropes, these imaginaries take their place within a broader conceptualization of the role “imagined communities” play in the nation state (B. Anderson), and within much more comprehensive accountings of the role that racial imaginaries play in constructing colonial and post-colonial societies, as put forward by such theorists as Fanon, Said, and Spivak.

Although American discursive formations of the “Great White North” are linked more closely to imaginaries rooted in a “frontier mentality” and less to the mythologies of the British Empire, like their Canadian counterparts they have deep roots in the European constructs of wilderness, civilization, and territory that characterize the colonial imaginary. For example, Bordo anchors “new world” wilderness paintings first within a Christian ethos where wilderness is a “textual condition of scripture” and of savagery cast out from the Edenic garden (228), and then within a Cartesian logic that renders the North American ‘wild’ landscape as a *terra nullus* evacuated of the figure of indigenous inhabitation and smothered in a European wilderness sublime, becoming a “declaratory apparatus for the constituting of territory” (245).

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<sup>37</sup> In contrast de la Barre found present day Yukon tourism narratives to be suffused with masculinist culture, a reading consistent with Shield’s description of the northern Canadian imaginary.

As Cruikshank notes, the narratives that gain official sanction within northwestern North America, becoming “authorizing statements, the foundation on which policy decisions were made” (The *Social Life of Stories* 5) have overwhelmingly been those based on cultural understandings from Europe. Recent research on tourism narratives in present-day Yukon (Cooke; de la Barre) suggests a strong continuity between the place identities articulated by Yukon tourists and tourism operators, and the northern imaginaries of wilderness sublime, ruggedness and independence that have circulated within North American and European culture for at least the last two hundred years.

## **Traditional Knowledge**

While studying the impact of present day public storytelling about climate change in northwestern North America requires some understanding of the dominant narratives which shape public discourse in the region, it equally necessitates a grounding in a crucial framework for understanding story from an aboriginal perspective: traditional knowledge. Storytelling is one of many practices taken up to share aboriginal traditional knowledge, and it is difficult to take a broader perspective on aboriginal storytelling without recognizing traditional knowledge’s constitutive role in aboriginal culture and governance.

For my research, I have largely focused on understanding traditional knowledge from the perspective of northern and coastal First Nations and Inuit groups either with

ties to my study areas or adjacent to them.<sup>38</sup> While no doubt some insights from other aboriginal cultures are germane to the work, in my experience traditional knowledge holders are very careful to circumscribe their knowledge within a specific culture and lineage. Following their example, and given the limitations of my understanding, I have preferred to err on the side of caution, rather than risk eliding difference and generalizing into a totalizing category aspects of "traditional knowledge" that are distinct to individual cultures.

In addition to more widely-read anthropological works (particularly Julie Cruikshank, whose previously discussed books have made a tremendous contribution to understanding the social life of stories), I have, where possible, drawn on the available research produced by northern First Nations themselves. Two books authored in conjunction with the Vuntut Gwich'in First Nation (VGFN) have been especially helpful: the multiple award winning *People of the Lakes: Stories of Our Van Tat Gwich'in Elders*, produced as part of a multi-year oral history project spearheaded by the VGFN Heritage Department, and its antecedent oral history *The Land Still Speaks: Gwich'in Words About Life in the Dempster Country*.

As the stories I seek to pay attention to are those related to the Porcupine caribou, I have sought out not just anthropological literatures, but scientific literature on traditional knowledge, resource co-management, and climate change. Berkes' as well as Nadasdy's (*Hunters and Bureaucrats*) thorough studies of traditional ecological knowledge as it has been or has failed to be incorporated into resource management

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<sup>38</sup> Athapascan linguistic groups extend far into the continental United States. I have found Keith Basso's *Wisdom Sits in Places* quite useful: although its subjects live in Arizona, theirs is an Athapascan language.

regimes have been particularly informative. However, I have also drawn on more general cultural and natural histories relevant to my study region<sup>39</sup> and on a number of scientific reports, especially the chapters of the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment (ACIA) that were authored in conjunction with northern indigenous organizations.

My exposure to traditional knowledge has come through three routes: academic literature and coursework; interactions with indigenous people in the context of my work and personal life; and (as will be further elaborated in the methods section) through my own efforts, through wilderness travel and other perceptual exercises, to change my perceptions, to "see the world with Aboriginal eyes" (Rice 1). I have been particularly influenced by my exposure to the work and philosophy of the Tr'ondek Hwech'in Heritage Department, with whom I co-authored a research paper on cultivating traditional knowledge of environmental change within Tr'ondek Hwech'in traditional territory, which includes part of the migratory route of the Porcupine caribou.<sup>40</sup> While traditional knowledge includes specific information, skills, and practices, I understand it as being a dynamic approach to knowledge cultivation, a worldview, and a particular orientation to

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<sup>39</sup> *Herschel Island/Qikiqtaryuk: a natural and cultural history of Yukon's Arctic Island*, which is discussed more extensively in Chapter 4, particularly comes to mind.

<sup>40</sup> I worked under contract for the Tr'ondek Hwech'in Government, which owns the traditional knowledge that is discussed in the paper. More broadly, however, being exposed to the philosophy and research methods of the Tr'ondek Hwech'in Heritage Department, and spending time with Heritage Department staff on the land and at community events with Tr'ondek Hwech'in citizens hugely influenced my perspective and understanding. This was especially the case as Tr'ondek Hwech'in people hunt caribou, and I was able to attend a "First Hunt" camp sponsored by the Heritage Department.

being, thinking, and problem-solving that integrates heart, mind, body and spirit, and is profoundly relational.<sup>41</sup>

My research interest is in the “in-practice” work that stories do: within aboriginal communities, storytelling is part of an oral tradition that has been practiced for thousands of years as part of the exercise of aboriginal culture and governance. Although my discussions will focus particularly on aboriginal story and storytelling, these should be understood more broadly as embedded in the lived practice of traditional knowledge (Tr’ondek Hwech’in and Roburn; Parsons et. al).

## **Evolving Governance Regimes**

Within my study region, the changes in governance regimes over the last many decades have been as dramatic in reconfiguring the political landscape as climate change has been in altering the physical landscape. To play a role in reconciling or regulating responses to dramatic fluctuations in climate, public storytelling must effectively insert itself into regimes of governance that are far from sedimented, and prone to unpredictable alterations and shifts. Two main forces have driven these modifications: firstly, Canada and the United States have acted to bring northern territories more firmly within their jurisdictions, and secondly, in order to do so both nation-states have had to come to new governance and territorial arrangements with the aboriginal inhabitants of these regions.

Although purchased from Russia in 1867, it took many decades for Alaska to become first a territory and then a full-fledged state with a representative government.

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<sup>41</sup> I am inspired in this definition both by Tr’ondek Hwech’in (Tr’ondek Hwech’in and Roburn) and by Archibald’s description of indigenous education and storywork.



The 1958 Statehood Act for Alaska allowed "a remarkably generous settlement that included a grant of 104 million acres ... Approximately 30% of Alaska. Moreover, Alaska's leaders could select the land piecemeal over the next quarter – century" (Nelson 5). However, in 1967, after oil was discovered near Prudhoe Bay on Alaska's North Slope, the Secretary of the Interior issued a "land freeze" blocking the state from selecting and claiming lands to which aboriginal title had not been successfully resolved with the federal government (Ganapathy). The Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) of 1971 was negotiated in relatively short order, and reconfigured the legal arrangements in which Alaskan native communities operated by organizing Alaskan natives into for-profit regional corporations (twelve based on ethnolinguistic groupings of tribes, with one corporation later designated for natives living out-of-state), and approximately 200 village corporations. The Gwich'in villages of Vashraii K'oo (Arctic Village) and Viihtaii (Venetie) —communities that are dependent on the Porcupine caribou herd within my study area and that have been especially vocal in its defence — were among seven villages that opted out of the ANCSA arrangements. They were unwilling to have communal land transferred to a corporate form of title and elected instead to have lands that were previously part of their reserve under the reservation system administered by the Viihtaii Reserve Tribal Government (Ganapathy). However, battles over what kind of jurisdiction the Gwich'in could claim continued for decades before finally being decided at the Supreme Court level in 1998 (Dixon).<sup>42</sup> The traditional

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<sup>42</sup> This is a greatly simplified summary of the result of centuries of American Indian policy. While technically Alaskan natives did not fall under the same jurisdiction as other Native Americans, because their land claims had not been addressed by treaty prior to 1971, in practice the political subjectivity of Alaskan natives as well as their concrete

territories of Arctic Village and Venetie Gwich'in remain profoundly affected by the changes wrought by ANCSA, because surrounding native corporations are heavily involved in resource development,<sup>43</sup> but do not have as robust a mandate when it comes to the protection of culture, language, and traditional territory.<sup>44</sup>

Alongside Alaskan native constituencies, in the second half of the twentieth century a highly organized, well-funded environmental movement — mainly spearheaded by conservation leadership anchored in the continental United States, but including Alaskan constituencies — lobbied powerfully to reshape governance in Alaska, consolidating networks and evolving tactics that continue to be relevant in the present day. The Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA), which passed in December 1980, "preserved more than 107 million acres, more than one quarter of Alaska and one – half the federal land in the huge state, including a large percentage of Alaska's most spectacular mountains, fjords, wetlands, and unusual geological features." (Nelson 3). Its provisions put significant constraints on resource development by

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living conditions cannot really be separated from the consequences of official American government policies such as Manifest Destiny or the Dawes Act. Case and Voluck offer a more comprehensive treatment of Alaskan natives under American laws. Additionally, while the Venetie decision has stood since 1998, legal definition of 'Indian Country' are both contested and in flux. DeMarban provides an update on the situation as of February 2015.

<sup>43</sup> The native corporations pay dividends to their shareholders, but also contribute to the cash economy in numerous ways, such as by creating jobs; some corporations have been very financially successful, and there are now much greater disparities in income among Alaskan natives, particularly between those who financially benefit from resource extraction and those who receive marginal or no benefit.

<sup>44</sup> As part of the Venetie decision it was ruled that the lands of the Venetie Tribe, including Venetie and Arctic Village, no longer had 'Indian Country' status because of the passage of ANCSA. Without this status, tribes lost important kinds of local government powers, constraining possibilities for tribal sovereignty.

designating various levels of protection to sensitive ecosystems, backed by the resources and protocols of designated federal authorities.

In Canada, northern First Nations have frequently negotiated for parks and for conservation management regimes such as co-management boards as part of the settling of land claim and self-government agreements. For example, Vuntut Gwitchin negotiated for the creation of two new national parks as well as an additional large conservation area within its traditional territories. The first of the modern northern treaties signed in my study region was the Inuvialuit Final Agreement (IFA) in 1984. In Yukon, an Umbrella Final Agreement (UFA), finalized in 1990, paved the way for individual Yukon First Nations to settle their land claims and negotiate self-government agreements. Vuntut Gwitchin settled its claims in 1993, with its agreements coming into effect in 1995. Further south, Tr'ondek Hwech'in agreements were settled and came into effect in 1995.

At the territorial level, both Yukon and NWT governments have sought to make devolution agreements with the federal government in order to increase self-determination and service provision at the territorial level of jurisdiction. Yukon achieved a devolution transfer agreement in 2001 which came into effect April 1, 2003, whereas NWT's devolution agreements (which were stalled by jurisdictional disputes with First Nations) have only recently been signed more than a decade later.

Much of the academic literature on northern governance in Canada stresses the shortcomings of new arrangements as far as giving a fair and equal voice to indigenous communities. Among others, Irlbacher-Fox, Nadasdy, Sandlos, Bocking, and Kulchyski describe the systemic character of incidents in which the capacity of northern aboriginal communities and civil society to assert themselves in regional, national, and international

decision making fora is restricted by the proscribed, procedural based instrumentality of state bureaucracy.

Kulchyski and Irlbacher-Fox reference discursive patterns deployed by the State to shut out aboriginal realities. Irlbacher-Fox describes as 'dysfunctional theodicy' the tendency of the Canadian state and territorial authorities to script aboriginal-state relations to position the aboriginal as dysfunctional and the state as redeemer. So, for example, poor educational attainment is framed in terms of the failure of aboriginal students, although the culture of low aboriginal educational attainment is a direct result of the many dysfunctions of the residential school system (31-34). In Kulchyski's terms, the "form" of the state, and particularly the language that proscribes it, preempts genuine interaction with aboriginal realities: "The State will not address Aboriginal people until they learn (its) writing, (its) form. Negotiation, indeed discussion, cannot proceed without it. But learning this form of writing means engaging in the logic of the dominant order: a paradox. A precondition for playing the game is surrender" (*Like the Sound of a Drum* 17).

A more optimistic view is that First Nations have consistently engaged with the Crown since the Royal Proclamation, and that rather than succumbing to the dominant order, northern First Nations have gradually carved out a larger space within it.<sup>45</sup> Empowered by self-government and land claims agreements, First Nations and Inuit

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<sup>45</sup> Yukon and NWT First Nations were key instigators of the federal government policy changes that ushered in the modern land claims era. In 1973, in response to Indian Affairs Minister Jean Chretien's infamous 1969 White Paper, Yukon chiefs travelled en masse to Ottawa to present their counterproposal, *Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow*, to Prime Minister Trudeau. The document became a foundation for Yukon land claims negotiations.

groups in Canada have in a few short decades build governance institutions and co-management arrangements, taken charge of cultural heritage promotion and language instruction, launched a number of successful business ventures such as the 49% Vuntut Development owned Air North, and through various mechanisms exerted a significant influence in designations of the land base and of marine resources for conservation or development.<sup>46</sup> As Tr'ondek Hwech'in and Roburn suggest, traditional knowledge is woven into these new institutions and governing arrangements in subtle ways. If, in keeping with Berkes' arguments,<sup>47</sup> traditional knowledge can be characterized as a form of flexible and adaptive thinking well suited to complex systems, it may simply be too early to definitively assert that traditional knowledge cannot take a meaningful place in modern state governance, especially as there is good evidence that individual First Nations are integrating traditional knowledge practices and protocols into their governance<sup>48</sup>. It is possible that over time, elements of these successful models will spread, and that more equal power relations between different knowledge forms will evolve into northern governance through shifting political power among actors, through the building of strong relationships, and through creative thinking, co-operation, and commitment to develop new approaches. If traditional knowledge is understood as knowledge-in-process which "undergoes continual generation and regeneration as people interact with the environment; observing, learning, and adapting" (Berkes 162) and

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<sup>46</sup> An excellent example of this influence is the current protracted political maneuvering over the adoption of a final land use plan for the Peel watershed in North Yukon. First Nations are leveraging the powers gained in the UFA to push for increased conservation.

<sup>47</sup> See Chapter 1's "A Resilient Whole."

<sup>48</sup> Some of this evidence is discussed more fully in Chapter 9, for example with reference to the Teslin Tlingit Constitution.

involves frequent stumbles, or “mistakes” that are critical to learning and responding dynamically to emergent conditions and divergent values,<sup>49</sup> such an outcome is likely. In this case, dispositional change may precede the discursive; without trivializing the dispiriting nature of the displays of State ignorance and denial that Irlbacher-Fox describes encountering in Gwich’in and Inuvialuit self-government negotiations, the scenes she describes—in which native delegations respond articulately and with feeling to challenge and educate government negotiators—can also be occasions of meaningful engagement and education of the government bureaucracy.

In governance contexts that are far from static, discursive surfaces can be deceiving — texts are tactical and may mask tensions, change processes, and internal struggles that are reshaping political terrain. Studying the impact of public storytelling in such conditions requires taking a probing and nuanced approach not just towards what is said and not said, but towards the actions and relationships that define political, social, cultural, and environmental commitments.

## **A Coda on Governance and Forms**

Any multi-stakeholder decision-making forum — be it a parliament, a working group or committee of an intergovernmental body, or a formal negotiation between parties — is a dense agglomeration of discursive practices and formal and informal protocols that structure the proceedings. While Western democratic states encapsulate governance within the very prescribed and often legislated boundaries of bureaucracies and their

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<sup>49</sup> Berkes argues that indigenous conservation ethics actually emerge from the processual knowledge of making mistakes and recalibrating, and that aboriginal knowledge must be understood in this frame and not as the innate wisdom of the “noble savage” (134).

procedures and exercises of power, a growing number of northern and indigenous scholars are exploring governance as a social force that is both suppressed (by western forms of governments colonizing the spaces once filled by traditional indigenous forms of governance) and expressed within the social life of communities and their stories. Indigenous legal scholars such as Napoleon and Borrows, in order to make their arguments legible to Western legal systems, use the word 'law' to describe these social forces.<sup>50</sup> Kulchyski, who incorporates performance studies and critical theory into his political analysis of northern governance, places a heavier emphasis on the discursive, describing this as a "politics of forms" that moves beyond defining governance as the exclusive realm of formal political structures and processes (legislatures, elections, etc.) to include community level interactions, and cultural norms and practices in their enactment/performance. It is Kulchyski's first thesis that "in Aboriginal self-government, the politics of form is of considerable importance ... the form in which power is deployed not only reflects the cultural values of those who deploy it, but it embodies, enacts, and perpetuates those cultural values" (*Like the Sound of a Drum* 15-16). For Kulchyski, "form" is a broad category. He variously discusses social forms (by which he means the protocols and traditional parameters of social relationships within aboriginal cultures) (104), storytelling and narrative as indigenous cultural forms (8); form as the rules that structure government bodies; the community as a form of social being (15) and even subversion as a 'form' of contested intentionality (26). The concept of forms serves to blur the lines between daily community living and governance.

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<sup>50</sup> The final chapters of this thesis will delve further into Borrows and Napoleon's thinking.

In practice, the evolution of the forms of which Kulchyski speaks is deeply tied to language. In *Like the Sound of a Drum*, Kulchyski tries to disrupt the instrumentality of institutional writing<sup>51</sup> by breaking up the sections of the work which conform to standard academic writing practices with sections that are written in a narrative style and 'work' on the reader as stories do. The return to story as a conversational tool, in which the experiences of northern aboriginal peoples can be put into conversation with Western notions of governance, is surprisingly common within scholarship that addresses northern Canadian land claims and governance issues. Whether in early mapping/land use studies and other land claims explorations (Brody, *Maps and Dreams*),<sup>52</sup> or in new work on northern self-government (Irlbacher-Fox), a wide range of northern scholars intersperse narrative sections and/or testimonies and academic writing.<sup>53</sup> Partially, this strategy serves to convey whatever particular experiences and meanings that these authors feel are best conveyed through story. Partially, however, these forms of writing are a deliberate intervention, at the level of language, that is meant to shift or shake up the parameters of academic writing. It is as if by balancing between a form that privileges logical argumentation (the essay) and a form that privileges the logics of lyric and gesture (the

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<sup>51</sup> Kulchyski is writing from an academic/institutional setting. Although his research and life experiences bring him into contact with northern communities, sometimes for extended periods of time, his work is informed by the parameters of discourse in which it takes place, which is academic writing. This form has protocols and practices, such as peer review, that regulate what constitutes valid and valued academic speech and writing.

<sup>52</sup> Like Kulchyski, Brody broke up his more standard academic writing with narrative sections describing experiences with Beaver community members.

<sup>53</sup> A full discussion of lyric and creative theorizing on the Canadian north is not possible within the scope of this thesis, however, it should be acknowledged that this writing style has a long history and encompasses many sub-genres and approaches, ranging from the more strictly lyrical writings of John Moss, to feminist texts such as Van Herk's *Places far from Ellesmere*, to lyric styles that are braided into critical and cultural theory analysis, such as Van Wyck's *The Highway of the Atom*.



story), the writer is performing a re-calibration, shifting power relations such that the knowledges supported within each form can equally be given their due.

Van Wyck, for example, uses an alternation between the accessible stories of his ‘field notes’ (often supplemented by scrapbook-like illustrations: a snapshot of the edge of a raven’s wing; a reproduction of a past postage stamp) and denser theoretical passages, to highlight a frustrating quandary both he and the Dene people of Deline faced: the complex bureaucratic obsfucations, pointless paper trails, and flat-out denials of access to information (be it proprietary or classified as national security information) to answer basic questions about how much radiation Dene people had been exposed to, and how, during the operation of the Eldorado uranium mine. Van Wyck’s journal fragments about the land, its characters, and its stories, invoke a lived reality of northern experience that contrasts sharply with the cool language of a government fact-finder whose report on Dene radiation exposure oscillate between “*no evidence*, on the one hand, and *we couldn’t access the information that would assist in answering the question*, on the other” (Van Wyck 188). Here, the instrumentality of the writing of the Canadian state is put on full display.

The rather interesting corollary to such academic writing strategies is that if it is successful—if indeed, story portions speak to essay portions, creating new kinds of connections and possibilities in the mind of the reader—it suggests that the limitations of form are not absolute. Storytelling *can* in fact converse with more analytic and instrumental knowledge forms. Juxtaposing stories with other text creates oscillations between the different forms, binding them more closely together by creating a relational coherence in which each text is imbued with meaning by the other, and made more

profound through this connection. The very act of telling a story, of inserting story into relationship — be it with another text, with a listener, or with institutional forms which in fact are not static but become what they are through the practices of everyday life<sup>54</sup> — shifts the discursive field.<sup>55</sup> Roth et al. illustrate how such storytelling can shift aboriginal/non-aboriginal power dynamics on the page in their three intertwined stories of media coverage during the 1990 Oka crisis. The two ‘insider’ (Mohawk) and one ‘outsider’ (non-native journalist and media trainer) stories are laid out as three parallel columns. The chapter “is not meant to be read as a dialogue among its authors, but rather as a series of parallel voices framed within a broader argument for the necessity to rethink the writing practice of Canadian journalism” (Roth et al. 53). The three column layout was chosen to show equal perspectives, a fraction of many, and to challenge the ‘bipolar’ two-sides-to-the-story structure of mainstream media, “leaving room for the reader to access what Raymond Williams calls the “structure of feeling” — the emergent and uneven texture of a series of events and their after-effects (Williams, 1977, pp. 128-135)” (53).<sup>56</sup>

In Kulchyski's terms (*Six Gestures*), the story is performing a gesture. This gesture towards the analytic text exceeds the limits of language it spills out of the

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<sup>54</sup>The previous chapter only briefly referenced institutional change theories, however it is generally accepted within the field and within social innovation theory that organizational cultures, as well as more formal rules, are crucial to shaping institutions, and that cultures are created by the repeated, everyday enactment of patterns of behaviour.

<sup>55</sup>I am here invoking Foucault's notion of what a discursive field is — a complex matrix of language, institutional practice, and other relationships.

<sup>56</sup> I have focused on the use of such literary techniques in academic writing aligned with northern and aboriginal studies in Canada, however such writing strategies have far broader application, whether in aboriginal studies in Australia (the work of Stephen Muecke especially comes to mind), or in more general postcolonial cultural criticism, such as the work of Trinh T. Minh-Ha.

container of form, creating a moment of disorganization, of disorientation — a moment in which the reader must reorient him or herself in an act of sense making. McKay (*Vis à Vis*) might argue that this moment exposes language as apparatus. The leap that language makes, like the leap of metaphor “always says . . . that language is not commensurate with the real, that leaps are necessary if we are to regain some sense of the world outside it” (McKay, *Vis à Vis* 69). It is a moment of poetic attention, in which “language is experiencing its uselessness and the consequent need to stretch itself to be adequate to this form of knowing” (30). The story is an open hand, a gifting that invokes reciprocity. It offers up a glimpse of the potentiality that elude language’s grasp, an “entry point(s) where wilderness re-invades language” (McKay, “Baler Twine” 85), inviting the reader to engage in storywork,<sup>57</sup> in sense-making, in stitching its narrative to others (the analytic text; a memory of the reader’s; the thread connecting this particular anecdote to the ones that break the text before and after). Perhaps the effect is ephemeral: a moment of recognition that disrupts the established order. Or perhaps it is more: a subtle shifting of the text towards lyric resonance. As described by Zwicky, “Lyric resonance is a function of the attunement of various distinct components. It thus requires an open structure with distinct elements or distinct axes of experience which stand in a non-linear relation to one another. Being drawn apart, it is brought together with itself” (“Bringhurst’s Presocratics” 111).

In other words, the juxtaposition of northern stories with written analysis can be understood as particular examples of storytelling-as-gesture, as incremental, repeated, lived practice that, consistently applied, can move beyond tactical intervention to shift

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<sup>57</sup> See Archibald for further explication of this term.

engagement, create mutuality, and strengthen connection and community. This coherence operates differently from the coherence of academic argument, whose 'glue' is systematic and logical consistency. Instead, the forms of coherence in the elders' lives and stories are relational and elliptical, and grounded in the qualities of spoken language.

In “Oracularity,” Jan Zwicky describes the oracular utterance — a particular example of the lyric prose of spoken storytelling — as variously “(divinely) inspired, veiled, ambiguous, enigmatic, mysterious, or obscure” (486). She contends that philosophy has increasingly come to depend on analytical reason: that philosophical clarity has more and more been assessed based on whether a given claim can be systematically broken down or disassembled into logical assertions (501-2). By their very nature — lyrical, sonorous, grown from a radical but non-systemic integrity (491) — oracular pronouncements are not amenable to such interpretation. Zwicky argues that in modern times and especially within North America, lyric utterances, including but not limited to the oracular, have been increasingly misunderstood as either false or inconsequential.

Nevertheless lyric speech comprises important forms of human connection, and maintains powerful purchase in organizing human behaviours and thoughts, both individually and in terms of the collective regulation and structuring of social relations that are important aspects of all cultures. Zwicky further describes that “There is an astonishing unanimity among lyric writers on the perceptual metaphor of choice for focused attention to non-articulate beings or aspects of the world: not seeing, but listening” (“Bringhurst’s Presocratics” 101). In describing the work of lyric prose in articulating lyric coherence, Zwicky argues that this form of speech “rejects the primacy

of words as bearers of meaning, and locates meaning's roots in the prelinguistic gestures of music and rhythms of the non-human world” (110). Zwicky, like Bringhurst, McKay, and other ecopoetic writers, locates the ecopoetic project as an effort to shift language, to open it to the lyric and the poetic, such that we will be better able to intuit, experience, and work with the life forces located in the pre-lingual gestures of the world and their vestigial traces within the physical soundings that make up language. This perspective resonates deeply with aboriginal cosmologies that locate the origin of sound in the creation of the universe. Rice argues that within many aboriginal cosmologies, language itself is structured and oriented to act as a conduit for expression by the natural world. Story, for the purpose of my research, encompasses this further reach of story, these idiosyncratic — yet deeply attuned — leaps beyond language.

But how to leap beyond human language? How to explore the potentialities of “practice, materiality, embodiment, affect, ontology and the emergent” that Cameron describes as key to new geographies of storytelling? Perhaps these call for a kind of co-creation: method and material making each other in the medium of the scholar. How? It is best to just plunge right<sup>58</sup> in.

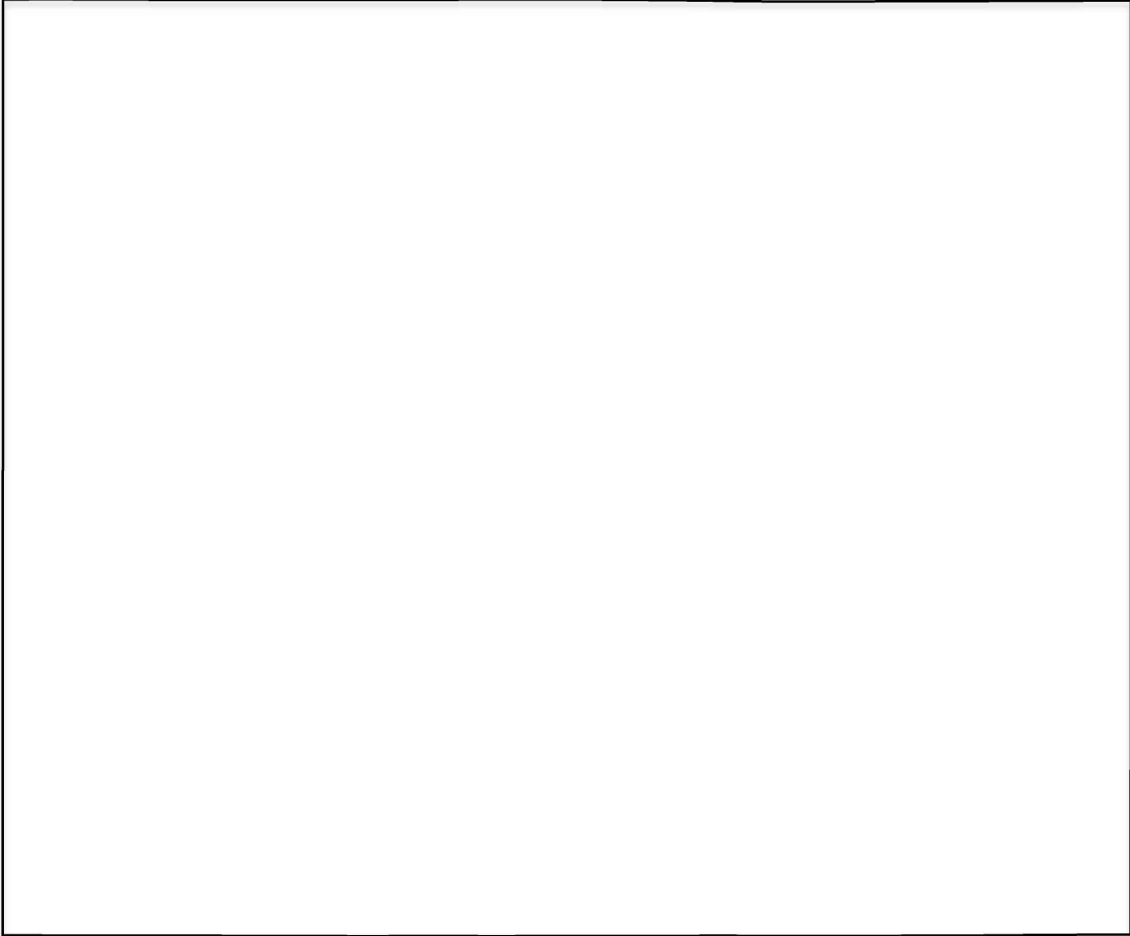
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<sup>58</sup> Right – write – rite (a tertiary triptych).

# Chapter 3

## Knowing and Unknowing: A Meditation on Methods in Two Parts

### Part I: Unknowing



**Figure 1**

Three weeks before a recent visit to the Yukon, I had a visitor. This visitor came in the form of a dream.

The dream was powerful. And clear. It said: pay attention! It said: I have business with you.

I didn't tell anyone about the dream. I didn't know what to make of it. Or rather, I knew that I was lacking the information to form a meaningful understanding, and I didn't know how to go about finding this information. At least not where I was living.

Within my personal experience, one of the things First Nations elders and spiritual leaders are quite clear on, is that one must pay attention to dreams. Dreams convey important information. They are a portal for communication with animals, the spirit world, and an ancestral time that exists in parallel to our own.

When I was in the north, I was lucky. I had an opening to speak with someone knowledgeable so I asked about my dream. I got some important information. For now, it is information that sits: I have noted it and keep it in the back of my mind, and I will try to keep alert should an occasion arise when this information opens a path.

Part of what I was told was clear. Part was cryptic, a gesture towards a direction that was both obvious and confounding. Like someone pointing to a library when one doesn't know how to read a book. Obviously it would behoove one to learn how to read—but it is no easy task.

## **Prefiguring**

I began this section with a figure rather than words because it offers a different kind of opening. Perhaps that opening is not immediately legible: what is the white square? Is it a

“tabula rasa”, the tacit assumption of a blank white slate which so many northernists claim characterizes southern imaginaries of Arctic and sub-Arctic regions (Kobayashi, Cameron and Baldwin; Hulan; Grace), and which has been regularly invoked by American elected officials in real-world public debates over loosening restrictions on oil development in the Arctic Refuge?<sup>59</sup> Is it a window, and if so is this form carving open a different kind of textual space, or, as Friedberg might argue, is it invoking an architectural and figurative trope with a deep cultural history, “an analog for the perspectival frame of painting” that acts as a marker indexically freighted with the entire history of “epistemic changes in representational systems from painting to photography to moving – image media and computer display” (5)?

Certainly the ‘window’ reminds me that an investigation of the type I have undertaken necessarily takes place within a larger consideration of epistemological terrain: any cross-cultural inquiry must address the question of what prejudices we bring to our knowing, and what efforts have been undertaken to unpack tacit assumptions that, like Friedberg’s window, appear invisible/transparent yet delimit our perspectives. Perhaps the very opacity of the white square—signifying particular things to me, but obliquely so, and thus equally open to a variety of interpretations—foregrounds the

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<sup>59</sup> Frank Murkowski, Senator from Alaska, famously held up a blank sheet of paper on the floor of the Senate to describe the lifelessness/blankness of the Arctic Refuge in winter. See McCarthy. In a highly contentious Senate debate in March of 2003, pro-refuge Senator Barbara Boxer specifically displayed images from Subhankar Banerjee’s first book of Arctic Refuge photographs “to show that the refuge is not “a flat white nothingness” and a “frozen wasteland of snow and ice,” as drilling proponents have described it. See “Subhankar Banerjee interview with Lily D. Burke and Catherine Whitney,” in *The Last Wilderness: Photographs of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge* catalog, Gerald Peters Gallery, New York-Santa Fe-Dallas, 2004.



problem of intelligibility in its myriad dimensions: individually, cross-culturally, and across language and scholarly conventions.

However, the foremost reason for the placement of the blank square is intuitive: it seemed right as a way to acknowledge the centrality of some approaches that undergird my investigation without being readily apparent. When I look at that white square I see my dream.

### **Dreams of the Extraordinary**

My dream is a challenge I am not yet equal to. I lack the requisite relationships, time in communities, and cultural familiarity to interpret the dream with any meaningful level of cultural competency. In the words of Inuvialuit filmmaker Dennis Allen,<sup>60</sup> I may have information, but I do not have knowledge.

Yet this very un-knowing provides a crucial opening. My dream fits squarely within David Young and Jean-Guy Goulet's classification of "extraordinary experiences" or "experiences that anthropologists themselves regard as unusual or extraordinary" — and generally inexplicable— "but that are received as normal by people in their host culture" (Nadasdy, "The Gift in the Animal" 36). In his discussion of animal-human relationships among northern hunters, Nadasdy argues that extraordinary experiences are both "largely impervious to standard forms of academic inquiry" (36) and highly relevant and useful for understanding other cultures and gaining powerful insights into our own

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<sup>60</sup> Mr. Allen is both Inuvialuit and Gwich'in by heritage. I have identified him as Inuvialuit because for administrative purposes he identifies as a beneficiary of the Inuvialuit Final Agreement. Allen's distinctions between information and knowledge will be returned to in the closing chapters.

embedded (and embodied) assumptions. Citing Povinelli he posits that to truly take seriously the knowledge of northern hunters—to take this knowledge as literal as well as metaphoric—requires reconceiving basic tenets of social theory such as the concepts of “personhood, agency, knowledge, power, labor, exchange” (26). In Nadasdy’s view, “an education in emotion” —what Rancière might conceptualize as a re-partitioning of the sensible—is a necessary part of this work.

Without such an education, the intellectual project of taking northern stories seriously is limited by my shortcomings in recognizing storywork that operates in ways I cannot conceive of and therefore do not perceive. Perhaps a story serves best to explain this challenge. In the fall of 2009, while working as a contractor on a climate change and traditional knowledge project with a northern First Nation, I was interviewing a particularly intelligent, experienced, and well-respected elder at a community mapping session, when he stated unequivocally and in fairly exact terms that the sun had moved since his youth and did not rise nor set in the same place. As he was saying this, I felt profoundly challenged. In theory, I held that traditional knowledge was just as valid or more valid than scientific information. But in truth, I believed that the sun rose and set exactly as it always has. Copious reading of the literature and evidence on the accuracy of traditional ecological knowledge made no difference: my gut reaction, which I could not rationalize away, was that my worldview was correct. I found myself prey to exactly the insidious thoughts I mistrusted in those who devalued traditional knowledge: perhaps the elder was simply repeating what other, Inuit elders had told him,<sup>61</sup> perhaps it was not

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<sup>61</sup> The observation that the sun has moved was and is a fairly common IQ (Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit, or Inuit traditional knowledge) observation in the eastern Arctic.

accurate observation but a kind of over-susceptibility to anecdotal evidence and mystical/apocalyptic/prophetic thinking that had caused him to speak in such a way.

For months, I was regularly bothered by this irresolvable paradox: traditional knowledge or mechanical universe? One winter afternoon I found the solution in an account of European ideas of north from antiquity to the 20<sup>th</sup> century that described “Another form of northern wonder is the Arctic mirage, refraction of light, creating the appearance of islands, ships or cities where none could actually be” (P. Davidson 60). The penny dropped: I realized that *the index of refraction of the atmosphere had changed*. The apparent movement of the sun was actually a change in the composition of the atmosphere itself, a change that had become pronounced enough that light travels (or diffracts) measurably differently compared to a few decades ago, causing a distant object in the sky to appear moved with respect to the horizon. Much as in the 1970s and 80s, Inuit were the first to notice the phenomenon of Arctic haze that was later interpreted as an indicator of ozone depletion and the ozone hole, leading to the Montréal protocol banning CFCs, so the elder had accurately observed atmospheric change of a type I had not considered observable to the naked eye.<sup>62</sup> The elder was right, I was wrong. But more germane to my work as a scholar, I had not been able to recognize a truthful observation because I did not trust something so far outside my belief system.

My difficulty was not unique to me: study after study of public perceptions of climate change suggests that empirical and statistical information—as opposed to Dennis

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<sup>62</sup> A few months later, as I live-streamed the discussion following the world premiere of *Inuit Knowledge and Climate Change* at the imagineNATIVE Film + Media Arts Festival in Toronto I was surprised to hear co-director Ian Mauro state that in producing the film, and taking seriously the assertions of Inuit elders, they had made an important scientific discovery: that the index of refraction of the sky had changed!

Allan's 'knowledge'—rarely impacts on beliefs.<sup>63</sup> It is for this very reason that my research into shifting public perceptions and policy on climate change seeks to assess if stories are able to accomplish something that argument alone cannot. But if part of my research looks to indigenous storytelling traditions, and much in these traditions is deeply unfamiliar to me, how can I address the reality that I may subconsciously reject and 'miss' important information? How can my research practice go further than occasionally surfacing my own cultural and analytic biases, and undertake the difficult affective and imaginative work of unlearning taken-for granted core beliefs in order to cultivate a deeper openness to other ways of knowing? How can I decolonize not just my thinking but my perception?

It is in this context that the extraordinary experience has value. When one's own worldview comes up completely short, but another smoothly and easily integrates a significant experience, consciousness shifts. The extraordinary experience offers a moment of defamiliarization—an unmasking of ingrained cultural tenets that are ordinarily difficult even to perceive—coupled with a flash of insight in which another worldview suddenly makes visceral, bodily sense. Emotional, physical, and spiritual stakes realign, creating possibility for the integration and recalibration of core beliefs.

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<sup>63</sup> Somerville and Hassol, Sterman, Klockner, and Frank offer a small sampling of studies of climate change communication that suggest that factual communication of climate change risks is rarely effective with general publics.

## **Defamiliarization: Sensory Ethnography as Method for Encountering the Unknown**

Extraordinary experiences offer an example of what sensory ethnographers categorize as “disorienting experiences” in fieldwork that create a type of liminality in which researchers come to reflexive realizations that ‘jolt’ them to new understandings (Hahn 2006: 94 qtd. in Pink). No methodology can guarantee such an encounter; however, various fieldwork strategies can increase their likelihood and prepare researchers to engage reflexively and analytically with the opportunities they offer (Pink 45, 65). Sensory ethnography in particular offers various strategies for the researcher seeking to “develop an awareness of and ‘overcome’ her or his own ‘sensory biases’ and then train oneself to be sensitive to a multiplicity of sensory expressions” (Howes and Classen, 1991: 260 qtd. in Pink 51). However, as “other cultures do not necessarily divide the sensorium as we do” (Howes and Classen 1991: 257-8 qtd. in Pink 51) — indeed, the aboriginal philosopher Brian Rice emphasizes that aboriginal sense perceptions “are culturally distinct and depend on a person’s orientation to the cosmos” (Rice 16) — sensory ethnography incorporates sensory, emotional, and kinetic dimensions. It is only through embodied practice that indigenous hunters achieve an “education of attention” in which the hunter learns to sense the environment in a culturally specific way as he moves through the landscape (Ingold, *Perception* 37). Culture and movement are inseparable: Casey contends that our very gestures and bodily schema are profoundly inflected by culture— that something as simple as learning to swim is shaped by “a loose assemblage of memories, thoughts, and perceptions” (Casey 27) that guide our movements to follow an idealized template or image of what swimming looks like. In Casey’s interpretation, “The list of culturally specified ways of carrying corporeal constraints into the realm of

meaning — carrying them, I would insist, on the backs of habitually structured schemata of the body — could continue indefinitely” (32).

While cautioning that “processes or methods for analyzing sensory ethnography materials are as yet underrepresented in existing literature” (130), Pink extends a useful general framework for sensory ethnography as the interaction between practices that cultivate cross-cultural, sensorial openness, and analytic, self-reflexive work that draws on corporeal experiences to expand, enrich, and challenge one’s research methods, practices, and conclusions. Thus, in parallel to the more traditional research activities of reading, writing, and conducting fieldwork, I have attempted to build on my exposures to traditional knowledge — which have largely arisen outside the research context, often explicitly so — to cultivate personal practices that attempt to take indigenous knowledge seriously in an embodied and holistic way that includes but also exceeds conscious intellectual choices. This work built upon the understanding of local sensibilities I gained living in the north prior to beginning my dissertation, and also grew out of my learnings from the aforementioned traditional knowledge and climate change project, which included both a fairly extensive review of relevant traditional knowledge literature and project results, and opportunities to engage with the community out on the land, for example as part of a caribou hunt. Finally, in attempting to understand northern indigenous values attached to “being on the land,” my own experiences of non-motorized backcountry travel—particularly trips of longer than a week— have given me something to “think with.”<sup>64</sup> Pink emphasizes that developing one’s sensory subjectivity (and

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<sup>64</sup> In the same sense as Cruikshank (*The Social Life of Stories*) and others speak of stories as being good to think with.

intersubjectivity) often involves a process of using one's "own sensory values and practices as the means of comparison and a reference point through which to situate the different approaches of [my] various research participants" (52). This is both an analytic and an embodied process. In particular, concomitant with a more "corporeal" self-reflexivity, I have strived to cultivate an awareness of how my particular subject position within a society fraught with systemic racism and ongoing extensions of colonialism influences my analysis and worldview.<sup>65</sup>

When researching in indigenous community contexts, I tried to be mindful: to acknowledge but still my anxiety and approach mistakes as a possibility important to learning, and ignorance as an opportunity to practice humility.<sup>66</sup> In discussing his efforts to apprehend<sup>67</sup> a contemporary Dene political meeting, Kulchyski observes that

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<sup>65</sup> I have made a deliberate choice not to include these reflections within this text. As Andrea Smith highlights, too often the "confessional narrative" of the privileged subject is performed in a way that reifies exactly the hierarchies it seeks to trouble: such narratives individualize problems that must be tackled systemically, and focus energy on the already privileged "confessor," further reinforcing power based on social identities/categories. Much like Smith, I consider self-reflexivity about one's privilege to be an essential precursor to social scholarship, but believe that collective spaces for advancing scholarship and social change (such as an essay or intellectual discussion) are most productively used either to flesh out existing problems at a systemic level, or to envision and build alternatives to the present order.

<sup>66</sup> Kulchyski ("Speaking the Strong Words") characterizes humility as a Dene/Athapaskan value. Attempting to approach my discomfort in this way is not an attempt to 'go native.' Rather, following Andrea Smith, it is an effort to be receptive to a given experience, rather than letting the impulse of self-reflexivity divert my attention to concerns and anxieties that, while well-intentioned, ultimately focus on the interior world of the self rather than on the potential of the moment of encounter.

<sup>67</sup> I hope this is a suitable word choice: "comprehend" goes too far, as I doubt Kulchyski would judge himself culturally competent to fully understand the interactions at the meeting. "Apprehend" focuses more on the earlier stage of simply perceiving; much of Kulchyski's efforts are devoted to trying to sense the underlying structure and protocols that act as a container for the meeting and its speech act, particularly as — as Kulchyski

“Compared with Dene, we are childlike in our eagerness to express ourselves and in our inability to follow simple ethical speech protocols” (“Speaking the Strong Words” 298). Gwich’in and Inuvialuit cultural contexts include elaborate protocols and skills related to communicating — such as an emphasis on careful listening, elegant and often concise expression,<sup>68</sup> and the use of silence — that I only partially understood or was even aware of. Pink (52) points out that sensorial self – awareness is often generated during rather than before the research process. While phenomenological writings (Abram; Casey) were helpful, in minding Nadasdy’s caution about the importance of cultural and emotional education in developing perception, I found it necessary to supplement my practices more directly with psychological techniques focused on cultivating awareness of the connection between thought and feeling (Beck and Beck; Beck and Clark) in an effort to become more attuned to the underlying emotional resonances that drove my reasoning and actions within research contexts. For example, I tried to move away from my near automatic association of silence in public spaces as corollary to submission, oppression, or absence — what Kidron labels as Western, “logocentric paradigms of silence” — so as to sense how silence might function in active and politically productive ways. Particularly when it came to observing dynamics in communities, meetings, and other

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points out—outwardly the majority of the meeting time lacks any clear moderator or articulated set of protocols such as Robert’s Rules to give it structure.

<sup>68</sup> By this I mean that in my experience Gwich’in and Inuvialuit speakers are not prone to flowery descriptions with a lot of detail. Because modes of communication are quite different, I have sometimes heard non-aboriginal people express frustration at the long-windedness and repetition of certain examples of indigenous public speech. This may be because in the Western tradition we are conditioned to expect concise, “on-point” contributions to a debate that are expressed as points in an argument, whereas rhetorical devices such as storytelling are more elliptical and require more effort of interpretation on the part of the listener.



public culture situations, my efforts were aimed at slowing down unconscious responses so that I could better begin to sense the protocols and dynamics that were guiding the exchanges. This proved particularly useful to the cross-cultural work of seeking resonances between indigenous storywork and popular-movement building uses of story to emotionally engage with apathetic publics.

Kulchyski believes that “Dene speech ethics are as much about when not to speak, how to show a degree of restraint, which ensures that listening is also taking place” (“Speaking the Strong Words” 298). In trying to learn Athapascan/Dene speech ethics,<sup>69</sup> and to listen differently, I became more inclined to leave some spaces and silences in the research — not necessarily permanently but for a time — in order to consider what that silence or space could offer and what resonances it had. Was each lacuna a gap in my intellectual foundation that needed to be filled by seeking theory, guidance, and information? Was it a lack that would be filled by maturity, that was best left fallow as I grew into new understanding through practice, experience, and reflection? Or was this space an opening, a portal to be propped open to the dynamic flow that is knowledge co-creation (Hunt and O’Flaherty (2007: 293) qtd.in Berkes)?

There is much to be gained through dwelling in the “calm rhythms of lived silence” that Covarrubias argues permeate American Indian speech forms. However, not asking questions may have impoverished my direct understanding, and increased the possibly of substituting my own speculations for corrective information: the approach had the precarity of always courting failure. But perpetual (partial) failure is also the risk, or perhaps the precondition, of connection to the sensual world. McKay (*Vis à Vis*)

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<sup>69</sup> The Athapascan groups I worked with fall under the broader term of “Dene.”

argues that the most imaginative and insightful language—metaphor and other figures of speech that call us to poetic attention—arises from our attempts to reach that which always escape our grasp. According to McKay, “the capacity of all things to elude the mind’s appropriation” (*Vis à Vis* 21) strikes at the heart of what constitutes both wilderness and our ability to encounter the duende or lifeforce of the world.

In aboriginal cosmologies, such lifeforce is integral to the unknown/not fully knowable, and acts in equilibrium with knowledge. Thomas King describes western stories as bound up in a cosmology where dichotomies such as knowledge/ignorance, rich/poor and white/black are engaged in a grand narrative of struggle to eliminate their opposite, for example through the ascendancy of good over evil (24). This is a world of “easy oppositions” where “we are suspicious of complexities, mistrustful of contradictions, fearful of enigmas.” In this model, a hierarchy of knowledge minimizes or obliterates ignorance. In contrast, story (as a form of knowledge) works in native cosmologies to create coherence and harmony in a world that is always partially unknowable, and see-sawing between continual rebalancing dualities. Because the universe is dynamic, knowledge is also in-process, a constant relational effort of assessing and responding to the environment (Berkes, 171-2). The training for developing such knowledge is dynamic and relational: communicating with another person is always contingent, always uncertain, always open to an element of surprise. One must learn to dance with uncertainty, leaning in and leaning away, opening to some possibilities while steering away from others.

Cheney describes ethical action, as conceived via First Nations storytelling and knowledge practices, as

first and foremost an attempt to open up possibilities, to enrich the world. It is not an attempt to respond to the world as *already* known. On the usual view, for example, we must first know what animals are capable of, then decide on that basis whether and how we are to consider them ethically. On the alternative view, we will have no idea of what other animals are actually capable — we will not readily understand them — until we *already* have approached them ethically: that is, until we have offered them the space and time, the occasion, and the acknowledgment necessary to enter into relationship (90).

Cheney argues that the protocols of respect and reciprocal relations that are usual described as part of the epistemology of First Nations worldviews, and which are inextricably bound up with storytelling, are methodologies for producing knowledge which are tailored to approach the unknown and to consider that unknown through an evolving relationship built with respect, openness and calm contemplation as opposed to fear. Humility, respect, and reciprocity are important parts of such a relational knowledge dynamic. With various constraints (time, money, location) limiting the relational and reciprocal elements of my research, especially with regards to northern communities, I found myself sometimes stepping back in the interest of balance: my research could offer only limited returns, so I did not want to demand too much of busy individuals. At other times, I found myself stepping up, for example when the chair of the Porcupine Caribou Management Board (PCMB) invited me to sit in on the PCMB meetings rather than interview him.

Cultivating a relational approach to knowledge —an apprenticeship in finding balance in uncertainty — can, in this instance, be understood as a counterpoint to the apprenticeship of writing a thesis, which is an embodied training in isolation, submitting to intellectual hierarchies, and ‘fixing’ a foundation of knowledge upon which more knowledge can be built (Ikeda, personal communication 2013).<sup>70</sup> It would be disingenuous not to surface the tension inherent in trying to bridge these two approaches. I initially approached this tension intending to “give unto Caesar what is Caesar’s”:<sup>71</sup> as an apprentice not just in indigenous ways of knowing, but in higher academic learning, it seemed wisest to gain a more robust understanding and practice of existing conventions before stepping too far outside of their bounds in attempting to reconcile differing knowledge traditions. Intending to keep the written dissertation component within standard norms and conventions, I made separate commitments, outside of the formal exigencies of the thesis process itself, to share my findings in other ways with the partners and audiences for whom the research is relevant.<sup>72</sup> However, this proved not so clear-cut in practice: my commitment to relational knowing provoked both questions and new pathways. For example, I intended to apply conventional forms of citation. However,

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<sup>70</sup> In the words of Satochi Ikeda: “Has there ever been a co-written thesis? (in the humanities)” (Ikeda, pers. comm 2013)<sup>70</sup>.

<sup>71</sup> This is a reference to Matthew 22:15-22, a biblical New Testament story in which the Pharisees try to trap Jesus by asking if they should pay tax to Roman Emperor, an occupying power. Jesus asks them for a coin, and asks whose head is on it? When they reply it is the Emperor’s, he tells them to give to the Emperor what is his, and to God what is God’s.

<sup>72</sup> An example would be that I wrote a blog post about Alaska Wilderness Week for the Gwich’in Steering Committee, and that I attended and tabled at the Gwich’in Gathering in summer 2014. I also hope to share my results, in a short and accessible format, with the Canadian Environmental Grantmakers Association, and the Circle on Aboriginal Grantmaking.

these forms can minimize indigenous contributions, for instance through a shorthand that credits the academic author without acknowledging the indigenous individuals and cultures to whom certain insights or knowledge were originally attributable (Roburn and Tr'ondek Hwech'in). In coming to understand conversations between indigenous and Western knowledge traditions as central to my research (a project of Métissage (Donald) which will be expanded upon in later chapters) I came to view the dissertation text itself as a site of engagement between Kulchyski's 'forms.' In consequence, I have chosen variants of in-text citation stylings that create an equal textual weight or style for oral interview citations.<sup>73</sup>

This play between forms worked two ways, with how I approached indigenous and western knowledge traditions influencing one another. I found that the building in of a number of returns to communities and to checking interview knowledge shaped how I returned to the "toolboxes" provided by the academic disciplines informing my work. Thus, while this dissertation retains a recognizable standard of organizational scaffolding, beginning with literature review and methods sections, the sections describing and discussing substantive findings are broken up with returns to and expansion of theoretical threads that can weave the findings/knowledge together in new ways.

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<sup>73</sup> Interviews and oral remarks can be cited as 'personal communication,' which tends to connote that such information is more on the level of private conversation than, as is often be the case with oral traditional knowledge, a carefully verified result arrived upon by the pooling of community knowledge. I have chosen to cite interviews instead as I would written text, with 'personal communication' reserved to describe more informal conversations only.

## Sensory Ethnography in Practice

My “sensory apprenticeship” (Pink 70), which is the component of my research that relied most on less conventional research practices, involved several techniques. In reviewing literature, I paid particular attention to descriptions of the sensory cosmologies of northern cultures, and to elements within descriptions of traditional knowledge and storywork that derived from different perceptions of time and space. I have questioned how I might perceive/imagine the world differently if I shared these perceptual assumptions. As a simple example, the coatrack below hung in my first Yukon home.



**Figure 2**

I assumed it showed purple elephants in a tropical scene, until one day I looked again and realized that it depicted woolly mammoths in exactly the landscape where the house

stood, on the cliffs above the Yukon River, thousands of years ago during the Beringia. Later, coming face-to-face with a life-size wooden replica of a giant beaver at the Beringia Centre, I realized that the mythical creatures in northern Athapascan stories were not so mythical at all, but *might be artifacts in oral culture dating back to the Beringia*, when indigenous peoples shared the landscape with giant bears, beavers, and other ‘fantastical’ creatures. Could I imagine a continuity between myself and my cultural landscape which stretched back thousands and thousands of years to the last ice age? Could I adopt, in my everyday awareness, a sensibility in which a connection to such a distant past was real and relevant? What might it mean if I did? Does storywork/public narratives about caribou accomplish anything in this regard? What might it mean to “think forward” for the same number of generations, which is also a key orientation in indigenous cosmologies?

I began to read science fiction, such as Kim Stanley Robinson’s Mars trilogy and parts of Le Guin’s Hainish Cycle, to broaden the timescale of my imagination of the future possibilities of human cultures, to create more play in my thinking, and to practice conceptualizing a broader trajectory of connection between different life forms and life forces, as is characteristic of indigenous cosmologies. I tried also to cultivate an openness to stories, dreams, and intuition, and to how these and other forms of traditional knowledge may ‘work’ subconsciously and over a long period of time. I have been fortunate to have experienced story ‘work’ in which a Yukon master storyteller told me two extraordinarily prophetic stories that I often returned to—and often understood differently—during a particularly trying period in my life. This experience gave me a more visceral understanding of what, psychologically, traditional stories can accomplish.

Although my understanding is limited by my ‘outsider’ status in northern indigenous cultures, I believe this bias is generally true in terms of what traditional knowledge is shared in non-indigenous contexts; in my experience—which is in keeping with much literature about storywork in particular (Basso; Archibald) —knowledge holders make very deliberate choices to share something that they deem relevant to a particular individual at a particular time. My thesis research is less concerned with apprehending traditional knowledge as a whole than with understanding particular indigenous teachings that have been shared cross-culturally because they are perceived to have a broader application to relationships with non-indigenous people. However, it is also not surprising that the teachings I have found most useful were those directed personally to help me; the affective and relational component of traditional knowledge and storytelling is emphasized over and over again in the relevant literature.

Another example of this favoring of the relational is that indigenous interviewees were extremely judicious in responding to questions about the challenges of working with environmental groups, or the difficulties they or their communities had experienced as a result of involvement in political education efforts<sup>74</sup>. Several times, interviewees either decided not to say more, asked that I redact some comments, or during the checking-back process removed details that touched too keenly on these challenges. One respected Old Crow community member who offered some critical feedback on the *Being Caribou* community consultation process followed his comments by noting that some may disagree, “because of the respect.” The Gwich’in stress on maintaining good

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<sup>74</sup> By this I mean what would be referred to by the conservation community as advocacy efforts, although Gwich’in do not use the term as it is not fitting with their approach to a nation-to-nation relationship with state actors.



relationships, in this case at the expense of downplaying some of the harm individuals experienced, became a bias within my data, but a bias that can be understood as strategically chosen by Gwich'in as better aligned with their core cultural values than the alternative of too pointedly criticizing valued partners.<sup>75</sup>

As Pink describes, developing one's sensorial subjectivity in a research context may shift one's research approach (Edvardsson and Street 2007:26 qtd. in Pink 67). Consistent with my interest in listening and orality, I made it part of my methodology to re-listen regularly to my research interviews, particularly as I was cooking or doing household chores, as I found that this gave me a different perspective on the material than the 'choppier' process of starting and stopping the conversations to note-take and transcribe. It allowed me to listen for the kinds of content embedded in tonality, rhythm, and other embodied qualities of voice, as well as the traces of indigenous modes of address and speech such as holophrases (Neuhaus) that I will later argue are of relevance to questions of storytelling and governance.

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<sup>75</sup> I do not fully know the reasons for this restraint; while I assume, because it was frequently mentioned, that respect and wanting to preserve good relationships was a major motive behind the tendency for criticism to be careful and muted, there may have been other factors. For example, another thing that many elders I spoke with mentioned, was that modern technologies made it easier to do things and in a sense to put less thought into them, which in a round-about way makes one less respectful. For example, when one has many bullets it's easy to be wasteful rather than if one has to make just six or ten bullets count to feed the community. So there is perhaps a more general tendency at work in which learning to be respectful/measured in one's responses is not just a means-to-an-end (of good relationships with environmental groups), but a part of developing as a thoughtful, respectful, and effective community member.

## A Question of Balance

In exploring the differences between a traditional knowledge orientation and a more Western one, it is not my aim to be categorical, but to suggest that my knowledge project involves a trick of balance, mediation, transposition and translation between what are in fact overlapping worldviews. Sterne (“The Theology of Sound”) in particular cautions against the ways in which an overly deterministic “oral-literate-electronic schema” (209) create “antiquated notions of sensation and cultural difference” that limit the possibilities of a global history and anthropology of communications (222). Sterne calls for careful ethnographies of communication that examine cultural patterns in communications, especially as inflected by the introduction of new technologies—but understand technologies as affordances.

The white square, for me, is just such an affordance. I invoked it first as a blank cipher for a dream I cannot recognize. As such it was a visceral prompt demanding an affective, imaginative, and moral accounting to the experiences that gazed back at me from beyond its frame. This first iteration reminded me that the best cross-cultural work is often unsettling.

I wish now to re-align (or square) the square to its more common indexicality, and turn to its more practical provocation. I have laid out the theories and approaches that screen and scope my inquiries, but what practices support them? What methods stitch together my research frame?

## **Part II: Knowing**

### **Refiguring: Tracing the Schema of Self in the Action of Research**

This chapter began with a focus on methods that unsettle knowing through exercises that help the practitioner to extend and challenge his or her existing perceptions. I have used these ethnographic and self-reflexive practices to attempt to take indigenous worldviews seriously, to find a research process that resonates with the insights of Shawn Wilson that it:

has become apparent to me [is] that for Indigenous people, research is a ceremony. In our cultures an integral part of any ceremony is setting the stage properly. When ceremonies take place, everyone who is participating needs to be ready to step beyond the every day and to accept a raised state of consciousness. You could say that the specific rituals that make up the ceremony are designed to get the participants into the state of mind that will allow for the extraordinary to take place ... It is fitting that we view research in the same way — as a means of raising our consciousness (Wilson 69).

Practices that open a place for newness in thinking, however, must be supplemented by practices of encounter that bring one into contact with new information and ideas. Before delineating the methods of encounter I applied in my research, I offer a brief reflection on the foundations of professional and personal experiences onto which my new encounters accreted.

Earlier I discussed the idea of cultural schema—how a complex mix of gesture, habit, intuition, received ideas, memories, thoughts, and perceptions are at work in daily

actions and affective experiences. Schema offer another way of thinking about implicit, shared norms. As with Casey's earlier example of swimming, while we may all do the front crawl differently, its pattern is coded not only through people's kinetic experiences of learning to swim but through exposure to activities such as swimming lessons and competitions, watching others do laps at the pool, and of course through the diagrams and standardized rules and manuals of both water safety and competitive sport. Earlier sections of this chapter discussed the importance to my research efforts of attempting to better apprehend some of the cultural schema at work in how Gwich'in and Inuvialuit communities told stories about caribou. In the case of my fieldwork with conservation organizations, in interpreting the schema of social movement conversations and leadership building practices, include storytelling, I drew heavily on many years of *in situ* experience of movement building and facilitation.

Prior to working at the Yukon Conservation Society, I had worked or volunteered in just about every kind of non-profit position within small environmental and social justice groups,<sup>76</sup> from administrative (and financial) coordinator, to researcher, communications coordinator, youth and action co-ordinator, and board member. I had been active in social movement storytelling since I was a teenager and travelled Canada as part of a youth-organized environmental speaking tour that reached over 250 000 elementary and high school students, helping to build participation in the Environmental Youth Alliance (EYA). In speaking with others about Arctic Refuge slideshow and film tours discussed in later chapter, I had my own experiences of organizing and taking part

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<sup>76</sup> I also worked for some national level, better resourced groups such as Amnesty International, but these groups have more specialized jobs such as in-house accountant and IT professionals that I have not done.

in an environmental slideshow tour to fall back on; these experiences prompted me to ask specific questions about how the tours were organized and worked behind the scenes, and what the experience of being on tour was like for the participants, which led to findings and discussions considering such tours practices of social movement leadership building.

Equally important to my orientation towards the ‘schema’ of story in social movement leadership have been my more recent experiences as a practitioner helping to spark and shape containers to hold social movement conversations on community and capacity building. Both through my work as a facilitator, and through 2 1/2 years of serving on the board of a major capacity building organization for Anglophone and Allophone community sector groups,<sup>77</sup> I have gained experience with Montreal-based communities of practice focused on nurturing social innovation in the civil society sector. I have also learned specific vocabularies and frames of reference for these processes, which have arisen from exchange between the sector and local academic institutions.<sup>78</sup>

The affective skills that I have developed through such work form an important analytical

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<sup>77</sup> During this time, organization was going through a major internal reorganization towards a non-hierarchical staffing structure, a process that took close to two years of organizational conversations and experimentation. My facilitation work in Montreal also builds on other facilitation work I have done since the 1990s, including community organizing in northern Canada.

<sup>78</sup> For example, the now defunct Institute for Community Development and the currently operating Human Systems Intervention program within Concordia's Department of Applied Human Sciences have trained and supported many individuals involved in local community development work. The Institute was a fixture in the community development scene in and from Montréal for approximately 20 years, propagating new social movement conversations and strategies through such projects as its Summer Institute, and the University of the Streets. Another example of community/academic linkage is Warren Nilsson's doctoral research at the McGill School of Management, based on a study of social purpose organizations in Montréal, was taken up so enthusiastically within parts of the Montréal community sector that his community published plain-language book *The Southern Wall: the Art of Engagement at Santropol Roulant* has gone into reprint.

underpinning to my research: they have given me tools for exploring “notions like practice, materiality, embodiment, affect, ontology and the emergent” (Cameron, “New Geographies of Story” 575) in collective contexts. As Cameron discusses in her survey of geographers who are reexamining “the concept of story as part of a relational and material turn within the discipline, as part of a renewed focus on the political possibilities afforded by storytelling, and as a mode of expressing non-representational, (post)phenomenological geographies” (573), new meanings, associations, and possibilities flow from research which engage with such lived elements of story. For example, I found dissonances between the public communications of organizations and their members, and the practices, positions and feelings that were sometimes expressed to me as a researcher. Wrestling with these contradictions and exploring the alignment between values, statements and actions was a productive exercise for gaining greater insight into the schema/culture within communities and organizations.<sup>79</sup> Without the “soft skills” of years of training in supporting organizational conversations, and in working out the subtleties of how alignment and resistance are expressed within organizational contexts, it would have been difficult to assess or apply Marshall Ganz’s theories of social movement storytelling to the coalitions, communities, and networks whose public storytelling I studied.

Additionally, my experiences as a facilitator helped me better follow the flow of the emergent within the fluid contexts in which movement stories were told. Facilitation

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<sup>79</sup> As discussed in Chapter 1, Ganz argues that story catalyses the link between values, emotions, and action within social movements; a social change mentor of mine, Deborah Barndt, whose work is further discussed in Chapter 8, emphasized repeatedly in a class I took on critical education for social change, that “wrestling with the contradictions” is often at the heart of productive social change work.

scenarios are often highly emergent, such as when I arrived at a workshop and all but one of the scheduled presenters had been unable to get into the country due to Canada's increasingly stringent policies on issuing visas to third world citizens. In such a situation, one must be able to rapidly assess and establish a rapport with session speakers and organizers, read the mood in a room, draw out suggestions for structure and shape them, find creative and quick "moments" to engage the audience with the speakers and each other, and project a relaxed but energetic optimism that helps spark openness and enthusiasm in others. The skills that are required are affective and kinetic as well as analytical. Although one can learn particular tricks to assist in maintaining the 'flow' of a conversation, such as summarizing what's been said and verifying common understandings, or asking everyone to contribute a one word takeaway from the discussion, these tricks are not useful unless one has developed the primary skill of the facilitator, which is to follow the exchanges and energy flows between participants. One must develop practical judgment to know which intervention or lack thereof will best guide the conversation. This kind of practical judgment is constantly at play in social movement storytelling; having a greater awareness of it allowed for a different kind of analysis of the lived, affective experiences of storytellers and their audiences.

### **A Short Description of the Research Process**

As both Leavy describes in her discussions of the principle of recursiveness and the spiral model of research design (57-59) and Pink broaches through concepts such as researcher intersubjectivity, self-reflexivity, and the serendipity associated with longer-term fieldwork practices, sensorially-engaged research within communities necessitates an

iterative research design process, in which the researcher adjusts her tools and methods as new information suggests what knowledge gathering strategies best facilitate productive encounters. The act of narrating the research process, as I am doing here, in itself knits together and creates coherence within a process that in reality had a number of paths-not-taken and false starts.

My field research process began in 2008 with a scoping process in which I interviewed over two dozen Yukoners, ranging from government scientists to politicians, bureaucrats, and indigenous, community and business leaders, about their perceptions of the most important climate change issues and challenges facing Yukon.<sup>80</sup> The next year, I returned for further exploratory field work at three sites in Alaska and Yukon. None of these sites figure prominently in the final dissertation work, although my time in and around Dawson City led to my working on the climate change and traditional knowledge project discussed in Chapter 2, which significantly enriched my understanding of traditional knowledge, caribou, and climate change in a portion of the range of the Porcupine caribou herd.

In the final project proposal developed subsequent to my second research trip, as I was spending more time in the north doing contract work, the overarching framework of encounter that I proposed was that of “lifecycle” analysis. Building on research I had

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<sup>80</sup> The interviewees included government scientists and planners, researchers at the Northern Climate Exchange and from elsewhere at Yukon College, First Nations spokespeople and individuals working for Yukon First Nations (individual nations and the Council of Yukon First Nations), grassroots environmental activists and representatives of Yukon environmental NGOs, and other relevant Yukon professionals, such as Prix de Rome winning architect Tony Zedda. The goal of these interviews was to better appreciate northern concerns with climate change, and what gaps existed in the present research.



begun for a coursework paper, I proposed to follow the media products of the *Being Caribou* expedition, and their circulation through North American popular culture. Following the methods pioneered by Balides (2000), Acland and Wasson, and other film theorists who have sought to understand the political economy of films by following their lifecycles as well as the logic of circulation of their various spinoff products, my plan was to trace the political impact of *Being Caribou* by mapping conditions of production and distribution, and the strategic alliances used to situate the expedition and its narratives within the larger political economic context in which they were intended to have an impact. This tracing has chronicled the appearance over a five year period of several key “products” of the expedition, such as a regularly updated website; media coverage and expedition reports issued during the journey; integration of the journey with web-based educational tools/initiatives geared at schoolchildren; and two books on the *Being Caribou* journey — that derived from the multiple community engagement, educational, and media strategies that characterized the *Being Caribou* expedition. It also included a chronology of the expedition itself, encompassing consultations with local First Nations and other stakeholders; the building of relationships with project funders and with environmental groups; and the creation of a media and educational infrastructure to report on the expedition.

Inspired by Acland and Wasson’s conception of “useful cinema” (3)— which draws on techniques pioneered by Jenkins, Balides, Schwartz and other film scholars in order to qualify and quantify the circulation of film in both commercial and community/subcultural realms beyond the multiplex—my research focus especially traced the “storywork” of the *Being Caribou* film by paying attention to the contexts in

which the film and other media products were shown and circulated. In particular, I concentrated on the sharing of the film within social movement networks as part of efforts to protect the Porcupine caribou calving grounds in the Arctic Refuge during the 2005-6 period. This included the use of the film at Alaska Wilderness Week, and at thousands of screenings organized by Alaska Wilderness League and Alaska Coalition members, as these organizations campaigned with Gwich'in representatives and the Canadian government in the weeks in which the calving grounds repeatedly came within a few Congressional votes of being opened to industrial development.

My study draws on primary source material from the expedition; data from the National Film Board and other distributors or distribution nodes of the film; “grey literature” about the expedition including websites and educational and media publications; “grey literature” documenting the use of other similar story/media in the Arctic Refuge campaign such as Subhankar Banerjee's arctic photographs; data provided by organizers with the Alaska Coalition; interviews with the filmmaker, with film distributors including environmental organizers/campaigners, and with local activists; and interviews with indigenous and non-indigenous leadership in northern Canada, and with northern agency and community members in Canada involved in the Arctic Refuge campaign and the *Being Caribou* expedition. Key field research included a March 2012, trip to Washington to take part in “Alaska Wilderness Week”, the biannual training for grassroots environmental lobbyists at which the rushes from *Being Caribou* were first screened, and a winter 2012 trip to Inuvik, Old Crow, and Whitehorse, during which I not only conducted interviews but attended a multi-day meeting of the Porcupine Caribou Management Board as well as a multi-day meeting on community-based monitoring

knowledge-sharing workshop in Inuvik, and did research at the Yukon Archives. While in Inuvik I also undertook some relationship-building and research scoping related to local indigenous perspectives on whales and ocean regulation.

In keeping with Leavy's reflections on the process of transdisciplinary research design,<sup>81</sup> my encounters with indigenous communities contributed to a re-evaluation of my research focus and scope while the research was still in progress. It became apparent that, through the "relational knowledge" perspective of indigenous communities, the *Being Caribou* expedition could only be understood within the broader context of Gwich'in, Han, and Inuvialuit relationships with the caribou, stretching back thousands of years. More narrowly, the film and expedition also had to be understood within the context of the many decades of advocacy undertaken by indigenous leadership, often in collaboration with environmental groups, to protect the caribou herd as Canadian and American governments more concretely brought their northern territories within their jurisdiction. I revised my research plans, drawing on my existing connections and background within Yukon, to further situate the *Being Caribou* expedition within a broader perspective and longer timescale. With this increased scope, it became apparent that including a smaller parallel study on indigenous whalers and Arctic Ocean development and regulation made for too large a project: to truly appreciate indigenous perspectives, I would have to consider the relationship between whales and indigenous

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<sup>81</sup> Leavy argues for transdisciplinary research to be problem-focused and to follow a responsive methodology, by which she means that a research project must include regular reflection on the study design, and the flexibility to make changes in the study design if new information or insights suggest that the current methods are not appropriately focusing the project, or that information is being left out, or that a new perspective is warranted. (Leavy 54-59)

peoples in a way that I lacked the research capacity and pre-existing relationships to meaningfully include. I shifted the bulk of my research interest in whales into a postdoctoral research proposal. It is my intention to carry forward the conclusions and further questions arising from the *Being Caribou* work into building a more robust research framework for analyzing how public storytelling efforts impact climate change policy as it relates to pipelines, aquatic oil and gas drilling, and ocean governance in regions where Canadian indigenous communities engage in subsistence harvesting of whales and other marine life.

Deepening my research into *Being Caribou* through re-imagining how the “lifecycle” frame could be applied over a longer timescale both opened further towards the “un-knowing” research practices detailed earlier, and prompted a return to some of the more classical modes of inquiry of critical cultural studies. I revisited the work of Stuart Hall, Raymond Williams, and other UK intellectuals, and how this work was taken up in America by James Carey and others. In particular, works in the field of reception studies, such as Janice Radway’s early work on women reading romance novels, informed my search for methods to both qualitatively and quantitatively account for the circulation and interpretation of “public stories” within different social strata/networks. I further drew on historical, ethnographic, and anthropological perspectives to situate the products of public storytelling, be they literary, from the oral tradition, or presented in a multi-modal, multi-media form, more broadly within the social, political, and cultural currents of their time.

Prior to offering the detailed breakdown of *Being Caribou*’s circulation in the 2004-6 period, and in the chapter preceding my consideration of the *Being Caribou*

expedition's trajectory over the longer term, I elaborate on some of the conceptual evolutions that accompanied these returns, offering up more apposite methods for my inquiry. One general template that I have found particularly useful is Desbien's *Power from the North*, a work that seamlessly weaves considerations of Québécois literature and years of publicity materials and political propaganda on Quebec hydroelectric development projects into a broader analysis of how a "culture of hydroelectricity" has functioned to define and support a particular vision of the Québécois nation which has "marginalized aboriginal territories through a manipulation of Northern Quebec's material landscape" (Desbien book jacket)<sup>82</sup>. Similar to Desbien's project, my research is an attempt to understand the storytelling modes of a particular moment of political struggle in northern community/southern State relations, how these have both shaped and been shaped by a broader set of political and social relations, and how these particular enactments of "power politics" speak to the ongoing challenges northern communities face in bringing their stories to bear on the regimes governing the intertwining of northern climate, energy, and food security.

## **A Coda on Interpretation of Research Pertaining to Indigenous Perspectives**

Earlier, in describing my research methods, I focused on the rather broad spectrum of personal practices I undertook to become more aware of my cultural biases

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<sup>82</sup> Desbien is one of a number of Québécois scholars contextualizing relations between the Quebec state and indigenous peoples within the broader evolution of Québécois culture. Because much of this work is published in French—for example, see Salée—it is less 'in conversation' than perhaps it should be with other work on the cultures of aboriginal- relationships with provincial, territorial, and federal governments within Canada.

in an attempt to understand indigenous perspectives on their own terms. In the case of the materials actually presented in this dissertation, these more unconventional practices of exploration and interpretation have been bounded within a framework of fairly straightforward expressions by mainly Gwich'in, but also Inuvialuit and other northern indigenous peoples, of their perspectives on their relationships to the land, water, and animals of their traditional territories, and how these relationships should be governed. Gwich'in leadership has been advocating on the Arctic Refuge issue, within the context of Canadian and American state structures, for several decades. The positions of the Gwich'in are clear, well documented, and have evolved through the articulations of many different interactions between Gwich'in and non-Gwich'in governance structures. There is a broad-based consensus across all the Gwich'in communities in Canada and America on the importance of the calving grounds in the stewardship of the Porcupine caribou herd; there is also consensus on the political strategy to be pursued.<sup>83</sup> The Vuntut Gwich'in of Old Crow, among whom my interviews are concentrated, have been developing their methods of political engagement on issues relating to the Porcupine caribou herd for not just decades but generations. A number of interviewees had taken a leadership role either in land claims self-government negotiations, land management

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<sup>83</sup> The Gwich'in Steering Committee (GSC), whose mandate is to ensure protection for the calving grounds, was founded in 1988 as an outcome of the clearly articulated, unanimously adopted consensus of a meeting of all Gwich'in communities at Arctic Village. Banerjee (*Arctic Voices*) includes in his text the original testimonies of Gwich'in leadership to Congress in 1988 immediately following the formation of the GSC, as well as the declaration that was past in Arctic Village in June 1988). Through the GSC and formal political structures, the Gwich'in have adopted and supported a clear official position on their goals for the refuge and their pursuit of their objectives.

within Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation (VGFN), or political leadership for the whole region (three of the people I interviewed had been Members of the Yukon Territorial Legislature, including one current member; two interviewees were past and present spokespeople for the Gwich'in Steering Committee). In interpreting the public strategies for awareness raising used by Gwich'in, I could refer back not only to these interviews and interviewees, but to numerous other texts by Gwich'in who are very experienced and skilled at transmitting their concerns within various cultural forms (academic texts, Western democratic political speech, etc). Of particular note, in recent decades Gwich'in have formalized the documentation and interpretation of their heritage through the archives and other projects of the Vuntut Gwich'in Heritage Department. For example, an elder-driven oral history project of the Vuntut Gwich'in produced the University of Alberta press publication *People of the Lakes*, which quite clearly and compellingly lays out the concerns of the Vuntut Gwitchin with regards to the stewardship of the Porcupine caribou herd and the protection of the calving grounds. While there is always the danger of being presumptive and overstepping the bounds of one's actual understanding of another culture, the indigenous communities in my study have been publicly and quite successfully advocating and communicating cross-culturally on the issues in question for decades; one can assume a reasonable degree of legibility in the remarks made, particularly by leadership, in the context of the interviews I conducted. The interviewees knew how to communicate to outsiders clearly, and had both the structures (the VGFN Heritage Committee; the Gwich'in Social and Cultural Institute) and the know-how to voice their concerns if an interpretation did not sit well with them. Furthermore, the goal of my observations is not to definitively describe Gwich'in or other northern peoples'

positions on the political issues at stake — communities are quite articulate at doing this on their own — but to attempt to explore what implications and possibilities their discourses on storytelling and their uses of storytelling can offer to a broader theoretical contemplation of shifting public perceptions and policy choices on the climate change issues that affect northern communities. The next chapter begins this examination through taking a multi-generational perspective, as Gwich'in and Inuvialuit communities do, on human-caribou relations within the Porcupine caribou's range.



## **Chapter 4**

### **A Being Caribou Lifecycle Analysis: Taking the Long View**

#### **Beginning at the Beginning**

When you sit along the river in fall time, or in the spring, they're either going south or they're going north, and you know where they're going when they're going north in spring. They're going to their birth ground. That's when I start to think about the cow caribou in the cold water, carrying its young, carrying it all the way up to the coast to give birth. That caribou is carrying another caribou to carry on its generation. When I think that way, then you sit on the riverbank and then you see that same caribou swim across again, but it's a different caribou. You'll never see that caribou in your lifetime again, that same caribou. But the next caribou comes, just another shadow, it's a life revolving. I try to explain that all the time but it's so hard, difficult to explain (Schafer).

The first parameter to set in undertaking a lifecycle analysis of the Being Caribou expedition is this: Which cycle? Whose life? Does the cycle begin with the expedition itself? Is it embedded in the larger cycle of expeditions and films undertaken by Karsten Heuer and Leanne Allison as they came into their own as filmmakers, writers, and environmental advocates? Does this picture fit more broadly within an almost century long history of aboriginal and non-aboriginal advocacy for the American legislative protection of the coastal plain of northeastern Alaska? Does it reach still further back, through the many generations in which Gwich'in and Inuvialuit people lived alongside the Porcupine caribou herd, accompanying their migration in what Sakakibara would describe as 'collaborative reciprocity' a state in which "humans and animals physically

and spiritually constitute one other; [such] that the soul, thoughts, and behaviours of animals and people interpenetrate in the collaboration of life” (1007)? Or is it necessary to go back beyond historical time, to the origins of the first known appearance of caribou and people in the region, and of the intertwined cycles of migration and regeneration that compelled Heuer and Allison to attempt to tell the story of the Porcupine caribou in the first place?

Heuer’s account of the genesis of the Being Caribou project (Heuer, *Being Caribou* 1-4) begins with a scene much like the one Esau Schaefer describes: in June 2001, as a park warden on his first patrol in Ivvavik National Park, Heuer and another warden found themselves on the banks of the Firth River

amid a sea of animals coursing northwest. Caribou cows and their newborn calves dotted every hillside, pouring over dark rocky slopes and lingering snowdrifts in waves and streams that spread like shadows towards the Firth River ... All night long, group after group of grunting cows spurred their hesitant newborns over the canyon rim. Cries of protest drifted up from the river as the young struggled in the first big swim of their life. The current tore orderly strings of caribou into the spreading chaos of calfless mothers and motherless calves, the air filling with bellows and bleats (Heuer, *Being Caribou* 3).

Heuer could not shake the incredible surge of life — and struggle, and death — that he had witnessed, nor how the migrating herd’s “energy had passed right through me” (4).

He was seized with curiosity to follow the caribou, to inhabit the landscapes they inhabited and to tell the story of the incredible challenges — raging rivers, deep snow and

high mountain passes, predation, mosquitoes, violent storms — faced by the caribou on their journey to the calving grounds. The more Heuer researched the Porcupine caribou and the controversies surrounding protection of their habitat, the more he felt that “all I was hearing were politicians, environmentalists, and scientists citing numbers and statistics ... Nowhere was there a hint of energy and power that I felt out there on the tundra. Nowhere did I find this story of the caribou herd itself” (8–9). But if Heuer was moved to undertake his expedition by an urge to tell the same story of struggle, migration, and renewal that Schafer describes — a story about the bedrock of Gwich’in culture, as the lifeforce of the Porcupine caribou and the Gwich’in have been intertwined for centuries — does it follow that the lifecycle of the expedition must be understood within the thousands of years long trajectory of the caribou migration?

From the perspective of Esau Schafer, Lorraine Netro, and other Gwich’in I interviewed, the cycle of life of the caribou and the cycle of life of the Gwich’in reach far back in archaeological time, intimately entwined.<sup>84</sup> Caribou and the ancestors of the Gwich’in<sup>85</sup> roamed the windswept, dry steppes of Beringia — an ice-free subcontinent

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<sup>84</sup>Archaeological time may be the most appropriate term for referring to the time period covered by Gwich’in ‘long ago stories.’ Smith and Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation (VGFN) use the term distant history (XXXVII), in order to emphasize the continuity between these stories and the lives of present day Gwich’in. The continuous transmission of such accounts over thousands of years of continuous habitation of the region lend these accounts a weight that is perhaps misrepresented by anthropological/folkloric terms such as origin myths or legends.

<sup>85</sup>In the broadest sense, these human inhabitants were ancestors of the Gwich’in. While it is impossible to verify beyond about 1200 years that inhabitants of the region were of Gwich’in lineage, evidence of caribou-dependent, nomadic peoples in the area stretches back approximately 40 000 years. In particular, the kinds of tools found from towards the end of the last ice age are likely to be those of ancestors of Gwich’in and Inuvialuit. Artifacts believed to be tools made from the bones of caribou and other large mammals

surrounded by glaciated North America and western Asia<sup>86</sup> —alongside the short faced bear, giant beaver, woolly mammoths, the American scimitar cat, and numerous other ice age mammals who did not survive the glacial retreat (Morlan, “Beringia Research” and “Current Perspectives”; Kyikavichik; Njootli Jr.). An oft-cited Gwich’in creation story describes how the relationship between Gwich’in and caribou became established when animals and humans separated into distinct beings, with Gwich’in retaining a part of the caribou heart and the caribou retaining part of the Gwich’in heart (P. Matthiessen 41-2; Gemmill; Elias). After opening our conversation by explaining “It started in my mother’s womb, the relationship with the caribou,” Darius Elias, MLA for Old Crow, described growing up in a wall tent on Crow Flats, and how

the caribou would come, and we’d harvest and we’d look after it, look after the caribou, give back to the land, make offerings. Use every piece of the caribou, and prepare it, dry it, look after it. Then we’d all have a family dinner and thank the caribou for giving themselves to us once again so that our families can live. That tradition has been going on for thousands and thousands and thousands of years (Elias).

Just as it is an important spiritual obligation to giving thanks to caribou at the end of their lives and to respect the animal’s gift of life by caring for the body properly and using all parts, so the Gwich’in treat the grounds where the caribou give birth as sacred, “Iizhik Gwats’an Gwandaii Goodlit” or The Sacred Place Where Life Begins (Gemmill; Kassi;

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found in the Bluefish Caves near Old Crow and radiocarbon-dated to about 25 000 years ago (VGFN and Smith XLI-XLV; Morlan, *Beringia Research* and *Current Perspectives*)

<sup>86</sup>Asia and North America were linked by a land bridge as water became trapped in glaciers, ocean levels dropped, and Beringia emerged.

Netro; Gruben). Gwich'in have an obligation to protect the place that sustains the lifeforce they share with the Porcupine caribou. This obligation, like the life force it subtends, is intergenerational and exceeds the bounds of any given life. Interestingly, because the calving grounds are sacred, many Gwich'in will not go there, and instead know the calving grounds as a storied place (Gruben; Netro). As such, the Gwich'in connection to the calving grounds as a birthing place is both very tangible — Gwich'in see the pregnant caribou pass on their way north, and in return in the fall time nudging their calves to swim the Firth, Porcupine, and other rivers — and metaphysical. For example, in describing giving birth as a sacred time for humans and animals, Lorraine Netro referred to the late Sarah Abel's description of the calving grounds as equivalent to a hospital or nursery;<sup>87</sup> it was fairly common for Gwich'in women I spoke with to relate to the caribou needing a protected place to give birth by reflecting upon their own experiences of birthing and becoming mothers. As a storied place, the calving grounds are generative not just for the Porcupine caribou herd, but for Gwich'in who feel kinship with the experiences of the caribou in the powerful act of giving birth and renewing the cycle of life, be it Gwich'in or caribou.<sup>88</sup>

To place the lifecycle of the Being Caribou project within a genealogy extending back to the caribou's origin story — a story of caribou and Gwich'in as mutually

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<sup>87</sup>Sarah Abel was an important Gwich'in elder who lived to be 102 years old. She was a leader in both the traditional and modern sense, and was the first female council member of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation. A more detailed biography is available at <http://www.civilization.ca/gwichin/storytellers/sarah-abel/>.

<sup>88</sup>The calving grounds are also nesting grounds for more than 130 migratory bird species, and denning and rearing sites for polar bears and small mammals (Heuer, *Being Caribou* 6-7). Several essays in *Seasons of Life and Land* describe this biological diversity in great detail.

constitutive of one another — is thus to understand the project's story within a continuum of passages: the cyclical migrations of caribou, shifting through geological time as glaciers retreated and drainage basins altered; the waves of technological change, from bone tool to caribou fence to guns, motorized travel, and digitized devices, through which caribou/aboriginal relations have cycled and restabilized; and the transition from a landscape marked only by the traces of hunter-gatherers to one integrated within an industrial infrastructure and subject to the governance regimes of two nation states, and subject to increasing precarity and variability from the forces of anthropogenic climate change.

To understand the Being Caribou project in this way is also to engage in a longitudinal study of the transmission of story and life force over time and across changing biological and cultural communities. The fight for the Arctic Refuge is a case of community organizing across generations, with the children of both native and non-native activists taking up the work of their parents. The Being Caribou expedition took place on the cusp of a major shift towards the mainstream uptake of social media; the expedition's accumulation of narratives and community media engagements — themselves accruing onto existing networks and communities, built through previous cycle of storytelling and community connection — offers an excellent entry point for considering continuities in social movement organizing during the passage from an analog to a digital age. Much scholarship on digital culture and civic engagement, particularly work being funded by large American granting agencies, such as the Pew Internet and American Life Project (a project of the Pew Research Center, itself a subsidiary of the Pew Charitable Trusts), or the Youth and Participatory Politics Network of the MacArthur Foundation's Digital

Media and Learning Research arm, focuses on how Facebook, Twitter, the widespread use of the internet, and the increasing affordability and accessibility of citizen media have inflected politics through shaping the stories communities tell and how they are spread. Less research contextualizes these developments within a broader consideration of what stories communities tell, how they are spread, and how these trajectories co-evolve through dedicated, long term social movement organizing. The Being Caribou project offers a window onto a particular moment in the cyclical, intergenerational efforts that have grown and sustained a remarkable grassroots movement — which has successfully prevented oil drilling in the 1002 lands of ANWR for decades — across shifting cultural and technological norms. This chapter contextualizes the Being Caribou expedition within a ‘long view’ of the thousands of years long human/caribou relationship in northwestern North America, as well as within a consideration of the formative experiences that shaped Allison and Heuer’s orientation towards living and sharing the story of the Porcupine caribou migration.

### **Borne and Reborn: Stewarding the Porcupine Caribou**

Standing on the banks of the Firth River, watching a last caribou cow disappear over the far bank with her calf in June of 2002, Heuer was not just a witness to a recurring cycle of migration; he was, in his presence on the landscape, part of the latest articulation of aboriginal stewardship of the Porcupine caribou herd. Ivvavik, which means ‘a place for giving birth, a nursery’, in Inuvialuktun (*Ivvavik* 4) and which protects the portion of the calving grounds that lie in Canada, was the first Canadian national park created as a consequence of an aboriginal land claim agreement (the Inuvialuit Final Agreement or

IFA, signed in 1984). It is a nursery not just for caribou, migratory birds, and other wildlife, but also for a new set of relationships.

In 2002, as a warden in a park jointly managed through Parks Canada and Wildlife Management Advisory Council (North Slope),<sup>89</sup> in consultation with surrounding Inuvialuit and Gwich'in communities, Heuer was responsible for ensuring that the landscape supported not just wildlife, but subsistence hunting and the continued presence of Inuvialuit and Gwich'in — including the preservation of cultural heritage such as campsites, gravesites, rock caches and caribou fences, and cabins and sod houses.<sup>90</sup> Martin contends, in the case of Ivvavik and other northern parks, that “how the new park(s) operated and the philosophy that underpinned them” were “dramatically shaped” by their being the result of resurgent native political power and land claims negotiations, and that “These parks were fundamentally different from most of their southern counterparts because they were created through a process of negotiation with indigenous leaders” (*Negotiating a Partnership* 275). In the case of Ivvavik, the park structure, mandate, and vision come directly out of provisions negotiated into the IFA, and include several measures to ensure indigenous involvement in park management, with a focus on local hunters and trappers.

The “wilds of northern Yukon” (Heuer, *Being Caribou* 3) where Heuer found his inspiration, is, in fact, a region governed by the vision statement, developed in partnership with local indigenous communities and the federal government, that “the land

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<sup>89</sup>The full name is abbreviated as WMACNS. WMACNS is a comanagement body, whose provisions are also laid out in the IFA, that is jointly supported by the Inuvialuit Game Council (IGA) and the Federal and Yukon Territorial governments.

<sup>90</sup>Heuer's own photographs of such heritage, for example of a sod house, continue to be used on the park website.



will support the people who protect the land” (*Ivvavik* 1). Ivvavik is administered as a lived and storied landscape in which Inuvialuit, their Gwich’in neighbours, other locals, visitors, and wildlife and natural features all have their place. This qualitatively different approach to governance, one adopted by the three northern parks, Ivvavik, Herschel Island-Qikiqtaruk, and Vuntut, that have jointly been nominated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, both tangibly shapes the on-the-ground practices of park administration, and intervenes in the globalized discourses that shape how parks and protected areas are conceived. Articulated within Ivvavik’s park management plan are a series of steps to ensure the living presence of Inuvialuit people and culture, ranging from a policy to hire a majority Inuvialuit ranger staff<sup>91</sup> and to favour Inuvialuit for economic opportunities in the park (for example, as outfitters), to “developing community-based interpretation programs, providing learning opportunities for youth within the park, and promoting the preservation of traditional knowledge” (*Ivvavik* 4). As a warden, Heuer regularly encountered and took part in processes that supported an aboriginal presence on the land, such as monitoring the caribou migration and assisting in sending this information to the Porcupine Caribou Management Board (PCMB) and other management bodies, helping to locate and assess the significance of camps and other historic sites, or checking hazards and navigability of the Firth River for rafting groups (often led by aboriginal outfitters). These activities help constitute the park not as a nature apart from human cultures, but as a common space, shared by past and present human cultures, migrating birds, caribou and other fauna, and cycles of plant life, and shaped by flows of air, water, rock, and ice. In Ranciere’s terms, Heuer’s work — and the discursive work it performed

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<sup>91</sup>So Heuer was often on patrol with Inuvialuit wardens such as Mervin Joe (Joe).

on him and others — played a part in the reconfiguring of the park landscape through a repartitioning of the sensible.

## **Making Sense of a Sentient Landscape**

Park operations and heritage interpretation within Ivvavik and Vuntut national parks carry out an important discursive function of enunciating aboriginal presence and aboriginal worldviews as part of the processes on the land that form the collective body politic. This is a continuation of work that Inuvialuit and other northern indigenous people began at a national and international level decades ago. Before Inuvialuit and Gwich'in hunters and trappers could negotiate access to the park and a management regime that supported subsistence lifestyles, their subsistence activities had to be rendered visible as something that was part, and had for centuries been part, of the landscape.

Ranciere describes the distribution of the sensible as the “distribution of spaces, times, and forms of activity that determines the very manner in which something in common lends itself to participation and in what way various individuals have a part in this distribution” (Ranciere 12). He further describes that “The distribution of the sensible reveals who can have a share in what is common to the community based on what they do and on the time and space in which this activity is performed” (12). Ranciere argues that the partitioning of the sensible— the determining of which forms, positions, communities, social positions, and functions are visible/perceivable and which are not— is at the heart of politics. This awareness reshapes political terrain by shifting the consciousness and sensory experiences of individuals: specific measures, such as

regulations and policies on hunting and trapping, flow from this change in perception, but in Ranciere's schema, the true moment of meaningful politics prefigures such changes. Much of the work of politics, for marginalized groups, is simply to render their experiences and their agendas "sensible" and thus a part of the "aesthetico-political field," where it becomes common and part of a shared reality in which forms of governance emerge and communities and social forms become meaningfully enacted.

During the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry (1975-6), hundreds of Gwich'in, Inuvialuit, and Inupiat from Alaska were vocal in their concerns for the future of the Porcupine caribou, which many communities depended on.<sup>92</sup> In his final recommendations, Justice Berger proposed an international wildlife preserve to protect the herd's range in Alaska and Canada, with a 5000 square kilometre wilderness park on the Yukon Arctic coast.<sup>93</sup> Martin ("Global Values, Local Politics") traces these and other developments that led to the establishment of Ivvavik within a context of Inuit internationalism: since the arrival of industrial whalers in the 1890s, through to the discovery of significant oil reserves off Prudhoe Bay in adjacent Alaskan waters, the western Canadian Arctic has been an international arena in which Inuvialuit leadership has been in active communication with other indigenous northerners, most especially the Inupiat leadership with whom they share a homeland and whaling heritage, and who had

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<sup>92</sup>The Inquiry's final report was issued in 1977. The final chapters of this dissertation return to the Inquiry and its aftermath. Like the Trudeau government's 1969 White Paper, announced by Jean Chrétien, Minister of Indian Affairs, the Inquiry was an important catalyst for northern aboriginal people to organize themselves into new political formations and assert their sovereignty. See Watkins for a selection of primary texts that speak to the development of Dene political expression in this era.

<sup>93</sup>In 1977, Berger also drew on the arguments made by indigenous witnesses to suggest a new kind of wilderness designation that incorporated subsistence harvesting rights (Martin, "Global Values, Local Politics" 163; *Ivvavik* 8).

important experiences and advice to share emerging from their own experiences negotiating the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act. Martin argues that in the 1960s, 70s, and 80s, as Inuvialuit were mobilizing and later negotiating to have their land and self-government claims addressed, they were involved in sophisticated transboundary networking, organizing, research, and learning aimed at creating the most political leverage and tactical advantage to pioneer new kinds of agreements that would balance conservation with continuing their subsistence lifestyle, and balance the economic advantages of potential resource development with measures to ensure development was appropriate and benefited local people.

Achieving new forms of governance required more than negotiating at a local or regional level; Inuvialuit leadership had to actively challenge land use categories and regimes. In the case of creating protected areas, testimony at the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry, among other interventions, acted to unseat traditional understandings of protected areas as “wild nature” devoid of human presence, and to propose another model of management for such areas in which human cultures, including subsistence harvesting, played a significant part. To do so required contesting not just local, regional, or even national frameworks,<sup>94</sup> but international frameworks for protected area management, such as those of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Tracing their analysis back to the 1973 Arctic People’s Conference in Copenhagen—which

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<sup>94</sup> I do not mean here to discount the importance of changes to national frameworks. Martin (*Negotiating a Partnership*) offers an excellent, detailed analysis of how Parks Canada changed its national park establishment and governance policies in the latter half of the twentieth century, specifically in response to northern indigenous political advocacy.

Inuvialuit representatives attended (Martin, “Global Values, Local Politics”) — Gissibl, Hohler, and Kupper describe this work of indigenous communities as transnational movements to “contest(ed) the territoriality of parks from below,” which “did not erase but transform(ed) territoriality,” (13) renegotiating the ways in which parks civilized nature and brought territory into the narratives of nation-states.<sup>95</sup> One useful way of conceptualizing these activities is through a “translocal” frame.

## **Translocal Trajectories**

As noted in Chapter 2, geographers have theorized the translocal in order to trouble hierarchies of placemaking that assume fixed scalar categories (local, national, and global). The conception of the translocal instead stresses cross-scalar, transboundary processes that actively produce geographic experience and spatial difference (Grenier and Sakdapolrak 375). The term “translocal” keeps local conditions — particularly environmental conditions — at the forefront, with the local as the core that interactions grow out of. It echoes the concentric circle model which, as will be further discussed, Norma Kassi described as animating Gwich’in uptake of political organizing to protect the calving grounds.

Translocal frames encourage thinking about how local-to-local connections function across a variety of spatial and temporal scales (Grenier and Sakdapolrak 378; Brickell and Datta, 1-18), which is particularly germane to understanding the ongoing

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<sup>95</sup>Much excellent research examines the evolution of the philosophy of national parks internationally (Gissibl, Hohler, and Kupper), and nationally (Campbell). This work must also be understood more broadly within the evolution of European and North American imaginaries of wilderness, which will be addressed later in this text.

influence of northern aboriginal networks and political formations that first came to the fore in the 1970s. For example the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC), which arose from the 1973 Arctic People's Conference,<sup>96</sup> and which acts as a pan-Arctic representative of Inuit communities in Greenland, United States, Canada, and Russia, has played an important strategic role in asserting the rights of northern aboriginal people internationally as nation states have attempted to reconfigure their maritime boundaries in order to claim rights to resources, which are intimately bound up to climate change issues<sup>97</sup>. As one of six indigenous permanent participants on the Arctic Council, it also regularly contributes to improving pan-Arctic relations and governance on a wide variety of issues, from marine transportation to conservation of Arctic flora and fauna and monitoring of pollution, and climate change assessment.

“Translocal assemblages” offer a useful way of thinking through “spatial connectedness as mediated by processes of disassemblage and reassemblage of ‘history, labour, materiality and performance’” (McFarlane, 2009: 566 qtd. in Grenier and

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<sup>96</sup> It was at this meeting that Inuit visionaries decided a pan-Arctic, Inuit political organization should be formed, and took the first steps towards building the organization, which officially met for the first time in Barrow, Alaska in June 1977. See <http://inuitcircumpolar.com/section.php?ID=15&Lang=En&Nav=Section> for the ICCs description of these events. At the time, the ICC was the Inuit Circumpolar Conference, but it has since changed names.

<sup>97</sup> A complete accounting of the ongoing jockeying surrounding nations trying to map and claim Arctic waters (and the minerals and oil and gas under the sea floor) as extensions of their continental shelves is beyond the scope of this narrative. However, under the terms of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, (UNCLOS), nations have ten years after ratification to make claims to extend their maritime borders to increase their Exclusive Economic Zones. The ICC has reacted quite strongly to some of the more exclusionary diplomatic positioning that has accompanied these efforts, for example by issuing a robustly worded statement asserting Inuit circumpolar peoples' rights in response to the 2008 Ilulissat Declaration: <http://inuitcircumpolar.com/files/uploads/icc-files/PR-2008-06-02-IlulissatResponsePressRelease08Jun2.pdf>

Sakdapolrak)<sup>98</sup>. Brickell and Datta (18) particularly stress the storying dimensions of the translocal, describing that “daily practices of translocality reside not only in physical movement but also extend to often mutually constitutive acts of visualizing and imagining connections between places and spaces.” The translocal imagination is mobilized on a daily basis, not only through the circulation of stories, but in how these stories are articulated to other flows of individuals, populations (including animal migrations), materials, symbols, ideas, stories, knowledge<sup>99</sup>, and phenomenological experiences of place-making. In the case of Ivvavik and Vuntut parks, policies and daily practices enacted what could broadly be labelled Gwich’in and Inuvialuit “heritage interpretation” schema, which narrated the landscape with a different partitioning of the sensible than similar southern territories would afford.<sup>100</sup> Much like the framing that opened this chapter, this schema narrates the landscape so that localized, living human interactions on the land are practiced and understood within their particularities (for example, the detailed technique, technology, and skill of drying meat), but geographically and historically situated within broad spatial and temporal scales, with an emphasis on the continuity of relationships through these passages.

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<sup>98</sup>Geographers such as Verne (2012: 23-31 qtd. in Grenier and Sakdapolrak) have taken this a step further, drawing on the work of Deleuze and Guattari to think through the rhizomatic character of such assemblages. This perspective has much to offer, and is an avenue of analysis I would like to pursue in future.

<sup>99</sup>In this respect, theorization of the translocal owes a debt to Appadurai’s work on the five “scapes”.

<sup>100</sup>This is vividly apparent in the difference in documentation for national park plans in southern Canada, such as Banff and Jasper, and the much less bureaucratic language of the Ivvavik National Park management plan, which was collaboratively constituted through consultative co-management processes. The 2012 cultural and natural history of Ivvavik’s sister park, Herschel Island/Qikiqtaryuk (Burn), offers an extremely detailed example of this type of heritage interpretation as inflected by the influence of indigenous governance of the park and surrounding lands.

## Long-ago Times: Cycles of Stewardship, Cycles of Story

When I was working at Vuntut National Park, I've seen remnants of caribou fences that are hundreds of kilometres long. Like unbelievable. Right from the Firth River to Timber Creek caribou fence. I found that fence and I walked as far as I could for days and days and days and it's absolutely phenomenal, the technology and the infrastructure that the Gwich'in used to ensure that our people survived and that the relationship to the caribou was there. ... When those caribou used to get harvested within the corral there, the respect ran so deep that they would cut the grass and take it out of the inner corral just so the caribou wouldn't smell or touch their own blood when the harvest was over. That's how much they respected that inner corral there where the majority of the harvesting took place (Elias).

Darius Elias' narrative about caribou renders visible several critical elements of the context in which the Being Caribou journey was embedded. As Elias describes, the dozens of caribou fences scattered across the Western Arctic, many of which are more than ten kilometres long, are remarkable feats of engineering, especially as many are built across barrenlands and tundra with little easy access to timber.<sup>101</sup> Yet, although the fences

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<sup>101</sup>Gwich'in fences are largely made of driftwood, whereas Inuvialuit used stones to channel the caribou's path. Further information on Gwich'in fences can be found at VGfN's Caribou Fence Interactive (<http://www.vgfn.ca/heritage/>), or through Parks Canada's information on Vuntut National Park (<http://www.pc.gc.ca/eng/pn-np/yt/vuntut/natcul/natcul2.aspx>). Inuvialuit fences are discussed in materials on Ivvavik Park put out by the Wildlife Management Advisory Council (North Slope) ([http://www.wmacns.ca/north\\_slope/Areas/ivvavik/](http://www.wmacns.ca/north_slope/Areas/ivvavik/)).



were an important technology for large-scale, well coordinated group hunts, they scarcely entered Canadian cultural heritage discourses<sup>102</sup> prior to Inuvialuit and Gwich'in communities negotiating for the creation of Ivvavik and Vuntut National Parks — valued for both their wildlife habitat and because they contained important cultural sites, including the caribou fences — as part of their land claim and self-government agreements (Martin, “Global Values, Local Politics” 157-168; Elias; Bruce).

Much of the literature and media on caribou fences emerged as a result of two multi-year VGFN Heritage oral history and toponomy projects conducted from 1999-2007 (Smith and VGFN XII-XIII). As this work progressed, VGFN helped instigate the participation of Parks Canada, the Canadian Museum of Civilization, and university researchers to work with Gwich'in to locate and study extant caribou fences, and to include caribou fences in their programming.<sup>103</sup> Within the community of Old Crow, the existence and importance of the caribou fences is well known.<sup>104</sup> However, the process of disseminating information about the caribou fences beyond areas in which the Gwich'in have significant jurisdiction (such as in parks interpretation or in education within their own First Nation) is slow; for example, the Yukon government has developed and made available a series of K-12 curricular materials on caribou which includes passing mention

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<sup>102</sup> In other words, the fences are not monumentalized as archaeological sites on the scale of pyramids, Roman ruins, the moai statues on Easter Island, Stonehenge, or other ruins. Nor do the parks and caribou fences have the same public history presence that the buffalo jumps and buffalo hunts have, for example with Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump being a UNESCO World Heritage site, although in recent years Canada has put Ivvavik/Vuntut/Herschel Island (Qikiqtaruk) forward on its tentative list for World Heritage Sites. See <http://www.pc.gc.ca/progs/spm-whs/page08/site04.aspx>.

<sup>103</sup> An excellent example of this is the Caribou Fences Interactive that was a joint project of Parks Canada and VGFN: <http://www.vgfn.ca/heritage/>.

<sup>104</sup> Several interviewees, especially current and former park wardens as well as various young adults in the community, mentioned the fences.

of the fences,<sup>105</sup> but these are only optional supplemental materials to the standard curriculum which is that of British Columbia.

Cruikshank (*Do Glaciers Listen; The Social Life of Stories* 71-97) goes into some detail on larger historical patterns of colonial and postcolonial administration in Yukon that support cultural erasures through the institutional uptake, distribution, and circulation of British and Canadian processes, narratives, and cultural norms at the expense of local knowledges. In the case of the caribou fences, the admiration that Gwich'in express for the technological innovation and craftsmanship evolved by their ancestors tends to be erased in encounters with popular culture, in favour of characterizations of northern aboriginal peoples — for example as living simply and in harmony with nature and being 'noble savages' — that resonate much more with the discourses that circulate widely among non-aboriginal publics<sup>106</sup>. In the case of the Being Caribou expedition, the caribou fences are acknowledged and also indirectly alluded to in the background materials produced for the journey,<sup>107</sup> but within the more widely circulating versions of the

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<sup>105</sup>Known as "Project Caribou: An Educators Guide to Wild Caribou of North America," the project was headed by Remy Rodden, the Conservation Education Coordinator at the Yukon Department of Environment. Materials are freely downloadable as pdfs via <http://taiga.net/projectcaribou/>. The project appears to have started publishing materials in 2005.

<sup>106</sup>Kobayashi et al., Hulan, and Grace each trace these associations in popular culture with respect specifically to northern aboriginal peoples. More broadly, King and Francis provide a history of the aboriginal as noble savage in North American popular culture.

<sup>107</sup>For example, the Being Caribou website includes a one-page backgrounder on "Caribou People" which equally discusses ancient caribou harvesting (the caribou fences are indirectly discussed as "corrals") and traditional technologies using materials from caribou, and modern management of the herd as well as how dependence on the herd is integrated with modern life: "Beside the satellite dishes are caribou antler fences and drying racks. Behind the techno music on teenager's headphones are the drumbeats of the traditional dances that continue in the community today. Prized caribou slippers sit beside the latest Nike shoes, and stories of a boy's first caribou hunt circulate the streets with

expedition story (books; film; media reports) these storylines are largely subsumed beneath more cross-culturally legible currents. The education about caribou fences by Vuntut Gwitchin and Inuvialuit has principally been through forms of participatory engagement such as park wardens coming into the schools; elders going out to the fences to share stories either directly to youth who are present or through recordings that are later made into multimedia presentations; youth making short films;<sup>108</sup> non-linear user-directed multi-media projects such as the joint Parks Canada/VGFN caribou fence interactive; and talks given out on the land by park wardens to visitors to the national parks.

Whether in the case of such park interpretation activities or of translocal educational efforts to protect the Arctic Refuge, Gwich'in work to shift perceptions to acknowledge their rich and complex historical and present relationship with the Porcupine caribou closely parallels what Norma Kassi has described as the "concentric circle" model advocated by Gwich'in elders for raising awareness about the calving grounds. Broad support is built first through intensive work in one's own community, engaging with as many as possible to create a strong local consensus. Next, one works with nearby communities with which one has established relationships, so that these communities can be enlisted to help grow the circles of support outward from their

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concerns of a US-Iraqi war". See <http://www.beingcaribou.com/beingcaribou/backg/people.htm>.

<sup>108</sup>For example, Brandon Kyikavachik's short film *Caribou Fence* was made as part of a collaboration between Old Crow high school students and the NFB's Our World program in which aboriginal youth combined filmmaking with using their traditional languages. For further details see <http://www3.onf.ca/blogs/ourworld/about-our-world/> and <http://www3.onf.ca/blogs/ourworld/2009/01/13/old-crow-blogger-brandon-kyikavachik-talks-about-the-taste-of-convenience/>.

source. This grassroots approach to raising cultural awareness shares commonalities with processes of community organizing but grows out of Athapascan principles of traditional governance.<sup>109</sup>

Elias's description of the caribou fences puts forward both a more fluid and a more comprehensive perspective on aboriginal governance: the formal establishment of self-governance and the powers to have jurisdiction or at least a say over traditional lands is subtended by a continuous exertion of Gwich'in governance, made through the broader "story" of generations of everyday decisions about how Gwich'in communities live on the land and influence it by their presence. Brandon Kyikavachik, a young VGFN councillor, echoes this view in explaining:

The Vuntut Gwitchin have been using ingenuity to survive in this very harsh, very unforgiving but very beautiful environment for a very long time, and when I say very long time I mean up to 23,600 years long. We have always found a way. Whether we were building caribou surrounds and working together to survive hundreds of years ago, or simply using vice grips and pliers for a makeshift handlebar on our snow machines today, we always find a way to get the job done (Kyikavichik).

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<sup>109</sup>For example, consensus is valued in decision-making, and as Kulchyski ("Speaking the Strong Words") describes, people take the time to engage in careful dialog and sharing of viewpoints and to grow consensus as far as possible, even if this is often a slow process. Roburn and Tr'ondek Hwech'in goes into some detail on the Tr'ondek Hwech'in Heritage Department's 'public history' approach to working with both Han people and their aboriginal and non-aboriginal neighbours in a grassroots way that respects and arises from traditional knowledge approaches. Parsons et al. specifically examines how such an approach is applied to working with heritage artifacts of the type that might be found in museums.

This way of seeing goes further than rejecting the traditional-modern dichotomy foisted on aboriginal people by popular culture, which aboriginal peoples and anthropologists have been challenging for decades (Brody, *Living Arctic* 169-86): it suggests that technological innovation is a necessary quality for indigenous cultural survival, and one that was in play long before contact with Europeans and industrially produced goods.

Similarly, negotiating self-government and land claims could be understood as finding a way to continue being Gwich'in and Inuvialuit, within a new reality of the jurisdiction of nation states. In this context, the Inuvialuit Final Agreement (IFA), the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation (VGFN) land claims and self-governance agreement, and the various governance regimes and lands designations growing out of them (including the Porcupine Caribou Management Board (PCMB), Ivvavik and Vuntut National Parks, the Fishing Branch Special Management Area, the Wildlife Management Advisory Council (North Slope) (WMA CNS), and the North Yukon Renewable Resource Council (NYRRC), among others) are simply modern extensions of indigenous stewardship and governance, adapted to present circumstances. However, in my conversations with Gwich'in and Inuvialuit, it was clear that, no matter the circumstances, traditional law was very strict with regards to appropriate behaviour governing relationships between Gwich'in, Inuvialuit, and caribou (Elias; Kyikavachik; Bruce; Gruben), and careful thought went into ensuring that those values were incorporated into new governance regimes (for example, the mandate to create the Porcupine Caribou Management Board (PCMB) was part of the IFA in 1981), into formal and informal regulation of caribou

hunting, and into cultivating awareness among younger hunters of how different technologies can impact caribou and how to use them appropriately.<sup>110</sup>

Like much traditional knowledge (Parsons et al.; Trondek Hwech'in and Roburn 441-2), many of the technologies evolved to hunt and process caribou are best appreciated through a kinetic engagement with their crafting. For example, one interviewee who had worked for many years doing heritage interpretation in Vuntut National Park described how it was through working with caribou meat that she deepened her respect for and connection to her culture:

Working with meat was kind of the first big learning curve for me with that. Because it is very specific. You do need to know where every little joint is, where every little piece of bone is. You need to know how to cook and roast and boil different parts for different reasons. And also that every part of it has its own nutrition value (Confidential 1).

It is through such intricate learning that the technology of Gwich'in and Inuvialuit becomes apparent, whether this is in feeding a child the most nutritious food for a particular stage of development, in making sled runners with caribou forelegs aligned so the hairs are all sewn in the same direction, or in any of the myriad other ways caribou are rendered into shelter, tools, containers, clothing, and food (Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation). In referencing the caribou fences as part of Gwich'in technology and infrastructure, and in describing long ago caribou hunts as choreographed affairs that

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<sup>110</sup>For example, in my conversation with Robert Bruce, he discussed how the use of motorized snow machines, which make a lot of noise, impacted caribou, while Stanley Njootli Jr talked about hunter education to encourage the use of a scope to shoot more accurately and therefore humanely.

followed strict rules of governance, Darius Elias' reflections serve to braid the past into the present by suggesting several constants in Gwich'in culture: caribou; valuing technological innovation and intelligence/foresight; maintaining thoughtful, respectful relationships across generations (valuing the ingenuity of one's ancestors and thinking forward in terms of stewardship for future generations) and between species; always finding a way to adapt, make do, and overcome challenges of immense and at times mythic proportions; and respecting traditional laws, including their spiritual dimensions, when making decisions about how to behave on the land.

### **Translating Translocal Influences: Caribou All the Way Down<sup>111</sup>**

These values of Gwich'in culture suffused Heuer's everyday experiences as a park warden, and Allison's experience working for VGFN to support youth from Old Crow in making a film about their relationships with caribou (Allison, Interview). While Heuer attributes his decision to undertake the Being Caribou project to his experience as a witness to a moment in the 2002 Porcupine caribou migration, it is useful to unpack the story behind this moment, and understand it as a translocal one that arises both from the discursive interventions that, particularly since the 1960s have reshaped the region, returning more governance powers to aboriginal communities,<sup>112</sup> and from the convergence of the complex matrix of experiences, exposures, connections and histories

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<sup>111</sup>King began each of his Massey lectures about native storytelling with variations on the same story about the earth held up by turtles; each time the story ends with the same question, and the same answer that it is "turtles all the way down" (2)

<sup>112</sup>I am using the term "discursive" in a Foucaultian sense here to include not just text/language, but the assemblages of power that lend influence to particular utterances and categories within the discursive field, shaping material conditions.

that brought both Heuer and Allison to a point of not just contemplating but actually carrying out an extremely challenging project.

At a local level, Allison and Heuer's very presence on the land in 2001 and 2002 was the result of how Gwich'in and Inuvialuit worldviews, storytelling, and politics had powerfully shaped the landscape: their jobs came about through the success of broader northern indigenous initiatives to protect Porcupine caribou habitat (including portions of the calving grounds in Canada in Ivvavik, and key parts of the migratory route in Ivvavik and Vuntut national parks), and reinforce the cultural connections between people and caribou in ways that were adaptive to changing technology and social forms. This multi-scalar discursive work, in which stories and shared experiences acted as a powerful conduit for moving local northern indigenous realities into prominence within the national and international arenas in which decisions about processes<sup>113</sup> of territoriality are made, had reshaped the administrative landscape in ways that rendered caribou as part of the everyday "sensible" of the region that Allison and Heuer encountered, whether expressed through international treaty or through local park interpretation activities.

In multiple forums, Allison and Heuer have repeatedly articulated that their motive for undertaking the Being Caribou expedition was that they wanted to have an impact in helping to protect the calving grounds, and the contribution they felt needed to be made was to bring the story or perspective of the caribou — by which they meant the embodied experiences of the caribou struggling through deep snow and Arctic storms, over mountain ranges and across turbulent rivers, all the while tracked by predators and

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<sup>113</sup>I have chosen the word processes because the reconfiguration of landscapes as territories is a social process that only becomes meaningful when enacted through specific activities of governance.



swarms of bugs, on a journey to give birth and renew the herd — into debates about the future of ANWR (Heuer, *Being Caribou* 10; Egan Lecture). In other words, their project was to bring the experiences of the caribou into the distribution of the sensible in which positions are taken and decisions made. Allison and Heuer's instincts in this regard likely came at least partially due to their own "repartitioning of the sensible," or growing awareness of the power of caribou through their interactions within Gwich'in and Inuvialuit territories. It also, however, arose from other interactions and experiences that had shaped their trajectories as conservationists and translocal storytellers. These include the Y2Y hike, their exposures to conservation groups and funders, and Allison's experiences as an emerging social purpose filmmaker.

### **Translocal Storytellers: Y2Y and Other Local(e)s**

A translocal perspective involves moving beyond Heuer and Allison's encounters within the north, to consider the other relationships and locations that fed into the conception and execution of the Being Caribou project. Of particular interest is the Yellowstone to Yukon (Y2Y) hike/expedition. In 1998 and 1999, Heuer had hiked, skied and canoed 3600km from Yellowstone National Park to Watson Lake, Yukon, with Allison joining the 1999 leg, in order to promote the fledgling Y2Y conservation initiative.<sup>114</sup> Y2Y was part of an important discursive shift in conservation thinking that paralleled some of the reconfigurations in landscape governance in process in northern Canada. Much as northern First Nations had come together across territorial and regional

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<sup>114</sup>The full route is described both in the Y2Y section of the Necessary Journeys website (<http://www.beingcaribou.com/y2yhike/old/route/default.htm>) and in Heuer's 2004 book on his hike, *Walking the Big Wild*.

boundaries and bureaucratic regimes to holistically broach caribou conservation and watershed issues,<sup>115</sup> conservationists were increasingly realizing that parks alone were insufficient to protect ecosystems. Studies of top predators such as wolves and bears clearly showed that these animals ranged hundreds of miles in a given year, far exceeding the boundaries of existing protected areas, and that blockages to their travel patterns — for example, a multilane highway across the length of a valley — were of major concern. As local and regional biologists, conservationists, and associated organizations began to discuss these results, it became evident that fragmented local monitoring and conservation efforts, while important, were not providing a full picture of the ecosystem health in the northern Rockies.<sup>116</sup> What was required was a broader, translocal vision, in which the various parks and protected areas were linked by wildlife corridors to provide contiguous opportunities for species to migrate.<sup>117</sup> Y2Y thus began as a transboundary co-operative effort to conceive of the northern Rockies as a contiguous, interconnected

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<sup>115</sup>These aboriginal governance efforts will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

<sup>116</sup>Both Heuer (*Walking the Big Wild*) and Anderson and Jenkins make the case for wildlife corridors as a strategy for biodiversity conservation in the Y2Y region.

<sup>117</sup>This is particularly true in the context of climate change. While I was working at YCS, I spoke regularly with forest ecologist Jim Pojar, head of Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS) Yukon. At the time, he was encouraging CPAWS to invest in research into connectivity for plants as well as animals, given that due to climate change some plants would have to migrate significant distances in short time periods, such as in the case of high alpine vegetation. An example of this work from the early 2000s, looking at eskers as skeins of connectivity, can be found at <http://www.cpawsyukon.org/resources/cpawsyukon-liard-basin-report.pdf>. More recently, Pojar was commissioned by a consortium of major environmental groups including CPAWS to coordinate a major research report, released in 2010, on climate change and the conservation challenges it poses for British Columbia. As the climate becomes more variable and unpredictable, “conservation” increasingly becomes an effort to maintain intact swathes of ecosystems that are large enough to give flexibility to species transitioning through dynamic change.

ecosystem stretching from Yellowstone to Yukon, and to bring communities, conservation groups and conservation professionals such as biologists, local and regional governments, funders, hunters and fishers, and other constituents together in ways that would move such a vision forward on the ground by encouraging conservation projects at all scales (from small community projects through to large management areas such as the Muskwa-Kechika) that could be linked up.<sup>118</sup>

The metaphor of connectivity, for wildlife and for human communities, provided a scaffolding for the nascent Y2Y efforts.<sup>119</sup> The conference which publicly launched the Y2Y consortium in 1997 was named Connections,<sup>120</sup> and early literature from the organization contains numerous references to goals such as “that the world- renowned wilderness, wildlife, native plants, and natural processes of the Yellowstone to Yukon region continue to function as an interconnected web of life, capable of supporting all of the natural and human communities that reside within it, for now and for future generations<sup>121</sup> or that Y2Y should work “as a connector [...] an alliance-building force, scientific warehouse, and funding ally for groups and individuals doing on-the-ground

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<sup>118</sup>At the time, Y2Y was a leading-edge conservation initiative, specially recognized at the 1997 International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) World Meeting. See <http://www.beingcaribou.com/y2yhike/old/route/propo.htm>.

<sup>119</sup>In ecological literature the term connectivity, usually used in the context of ‘landscape connectivity’ is the opposite of fragmentation, the process by which ecological systems become broken up, often through human incursions. See Anderson and Jenkins (1-6). The term connectivity takes more of a cultural turn in how it is used by geographers, to refer to how features (‘natural’ or human infrastructure) on a landscape are related to one another. Overlain with this are more recent connotations of connectivity as a feature of online networking.

<sup>120</sup>See <http://y2y.net/about/y2y-team/stephen-legault-coordinator-crown-of-the-continent-conservation-initiative>.

<sup>121</sup>This quote is taken from the front page of the mission page of the Y2Y website as it appeared in 2003. See <http://web.archive.org/web/20030811180449/http://www.y2y.net/overview/default.asp>.

conservation work” (Yellowstone to Yukon, *2007 Annual Report 2*).<sup>122</sup> However, in the early years of Y2Y, in practice there were huge gaps in connectivity, whether of scientific information on wildlife corridors and wildlife barriers, of coordinated policy across territorial, provincial, and state lines, or of on-the-ground buy-in and connection to the Y2Y concept on the part of local stakeholders.<sup>123</sup>

In 1998, Heuer sought to strengthen that connectivity, raise awareness of the need for Y2Y, and gauge its plausibility through walking, skiing, and canoeing the entire Y2Y corridor.<sup>124</sup> The metric and communication tool that he chose for assessing the viability of wilderness corridors on his route was “the presence or absence of the wilderness – dependent grizzly bear. Where I saw signs of recent activity, I assumed the cores and corridors of Y2Y were still possible; where I didn’t, I presumed they had been lost” (Heuer “The Wilder Side” 150). Later, in writing his first book, Heuer mentioned not just

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<sup>122</sup>These same goals are articulated in earlier Y2Y materials, but are not stated as succinctly as in this quote.

<sup>123</sup>The inspiration for Y2Y came to Calgary conservationist Harvey Locke in 1993 while he was on a horsepacking trip in the Muskwa-Kechika (Heuer, *Walking the Big Wild* xii-xiii). According to the “About” page of Y2Ynet ([y2y.net](http://y2y.net)) as captured in 2003, later that year, a group of conservationists and scientists met near Calgary and began discussions about the concept that slowly grew. In 1996, the group became an official network and hired a coordinator, and in 1997 an office was opened in Canmore. When Heuer undertook his hike, Y2Y was very much a young network struggling to establish itself throughout the Y2Y corridor.

<sup>124</sup>Heuer was not the only long-distance walker inspired by Locke’s vision. Jim Stoltz, who had already completed several very long distance continental hikes, set out to hike from Yellowstone to Yukon in several legs beginning in 1997 and ending in 2002. A memorial site (<http://www.walkinjim.com>) and the Wild Wind Foundation, which gives out educational scholarships, commemorates Mr. Stoltz’s music, poetry, photography, activism, and 27 000 miles of walking journeys. In 2001, Josh Burnim did a “Sawtooth to Selkirks” hike along an 800 mile stretch of the Y2Y corridor. His efforts were similar but smaller scale, also following animal routes and using media and slide presentations to promote wilderness corridors and wildlife conservation. See <http://www.wildrockies.org/idahohike/>.

grizzly bears but wolves and other large predators —and particularly the wolf Pluie, who appears in the foreword —as being key to both the organizing principles and the ‘story’ of his Y2Y trek.<sup>125</sup> This story element grew in importance as Heuer carried out his journey, finding the passages and barriers to wildlife “on the ground, but also in the communities, from a social and values perspective” (Heuer, Egan Lecture). As he encountered the people of the “working landscape,” and gave presentations on the Y2Y concept to sometimes hostile audiences, Heuer experienced “into-the-frypan type of learning for how to be effective storytellers, how to weave a compelling narrative” (Egan Lecture). Facts and argument heavy lectures tended either to bore audiences or inflame tensions in polarized communities. He found that “to start building up trust and the conversation from the ground up” stories were extremely effective, especially stories about his dog Webster, who accompanied him for much of the trek. In translating the Y2Y project into book form, to bring more of a “human face,” Heuer made part of the narrative the love story of his beginning the trek with one girlfriend and ending with another (“but with the same dog!” as he added in public presentations).

Core story elements unite the Y2Y and Being Caribou expeditions: both projects concern trying to connect with animals and follow their routes through a landscape, and yet doing so as humans, living mutualities and challenges within the closest of relationships. But in less obvious ways, the Y2Y journey prefigured Being Caribou, philosophically and practically. The Y2Y expedition was an attempt to work through the core Y2Y organizing principle of connectivity in practice, on the ground. Did or could

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<sup>125</sup>Over the years, the Y2Y website materials have been reworked to include the story of Pluie as a key anchor in the narrative of the origins of Y2Y.

wolves, grizzlies, and other large predators travel between conservation refuges along wildlife corridors? Administratively, could different jurisdictions link up not just laterally (adjacent municipalities) but vertically (from municipal to regional to state/province and even internationally) to work collectively on a bigger picture project? Could the concept of Y2Y be successfully seeded in communities from Yellowstone to Yukon, creating a common vision that disparate ecosystems, economies, and social structures could all be a part of, even across international borders?

To grow Y2Y's effort at building linkages, Heuer and to a lesser degree Allison<sup>126</sup> had to constantly shuttle between micro, meso, and macro levels, meeting and connecting with the local people wherever they went and linking local needs and issues to the possibilities and promise of a thriving Y2Y corridor. Both organizing the trek and publicizing it involved Heuer and Allison in dense and overlapping networks of communities of concern such as outdoor enthusiasts, biologists, park wardens, lands managers and planners, conservationists, philanthropists, politicians, government officials, journalists, ranchers, hunters and trappers, First Nations communities, and workers in resource extraction industries. The conversations their work sparked created new linkages, drawing geographically disparate communities into the Y2Y networks, and also reinforcing existing connections. In the continuing trajectory of the Y2Y initiative, the Y2Y Hike was one throughline weaving communities along its route into webs of connection that have grown denser over decades, particularly as individuals have migrated between roles and sectors, and as new rounds of activities, such as Y2Y initiating a mapping initiative for the whole region, have engendered further cycles of

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<sup>126</sup>Allison joined the journey in 1999, but was less involved in the preparatory work.

connectivity. Through offering a personal touch at the local level, the Y2Y hike helped to drive translocal relationships that have transformed approaches to human/animal coexistence within the northern Rockies.

This personal touch — a face and a name to carry the Y2Y concept — was at the core of the contribution Heuer and Allison made to building the Y2Y network. Their hard-won skills at going into communities on the Y2Y route to win stakeholders over to the Y2Y philosophy proved thorough preparation for the Being Caribou project's extensive northern community and agency consultations,<sup>127</sup> and later for how each chose to communicate stories of their journey. Heuer in particular honed his storytelling and media skills over two summers; in the first summer alone, working with publicist Justin Thompson, he gave over 60 presentations and 100 media interviews, and was challenged to find a palatable way to present his ideas when a forest industry lobby group, the Forest Alliance, funded and promoted an anti-Y2Y campaign that was covered by dozens of Canadian newspapers (Heuer, *Walking the Big Wild* 124-127). Through these on-the-ground storytelling and conversational efforts, Allison and Heuer acquired a developed sense of grassroots community organizing, and what it required of conservationists.

On a practical level, this sense helped structure the outreach efforts for Being Caribou: Heuer's sister Erica, who had assisted and in the second year taken over Y2Y hike publicity, drew directly on extant relationships, connections, and lists from Y2Y in her work as Being Caribou's publicist (E. Heuer, Interview). Equally importantly, however, when it came to making media about the Being Caribou journey, Allison and

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<sup>127</sup> Much of *Walking the Big Wild* tells the story of Heuer's encounters with loggers, ranchers and other members of the working landscape, and how he learned to present his ideas in ways that people he met could relate to.

Heuer were to begin with a sense of audience that included the forums their messages might be shared in, an understanding of the values and attitudes that characterized a variety of potential recipients and what appealed to their sympathies, and a relatively clear specificity of the “ask” that they were tailoring their stories to. Although documentary filmmakers and nonfiction writers may often spend months or even years getting to know the subjects of their work, it was and remains rare for media makers to think of their work not in terms of subjects and audiences, but in terms of stakeholders, and to build into their process closely coupled stakeholder feedback loops that enter the conversation at the beginning of a project’s lifecycle.<sup>128</sup> Long before any “media products” of the Being Caribou expedition were realized, such products were already shaped by and embedded in a matrix of the multiple spheres of influence that the work would “speak to.” This approach has parallels with consultative processes of northern scientific research, in which conservation biology has been an important leader; with northern governance paradigms and protocols, as influenced by traditional knowledge; and with aboriginal storytelling’s traditional emphasis on telling the appropriate story for the appropriate listener (Profeit-Leblanc, “Stories Have Their Way”; Archibald, 2008). However, for Heuer and Allison, the approach grew organically from their experiences

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<sup>128</sup>Participatory and “citizen media” traditions, such as those which produced the Challenge for Change program in Canada (Miller, “Going Places” 115; Waugh et al, 2010), follow similar models, but like the Being Caribou project, these were not mainstream in the early 2000s, although in an era of increasingly interactive media, feedback loops between media makers and their subjects and audiences are becoming more common. As will be discussed later, film financing in the for-profit model does concern delivering audiences to financial stakeholders (film funders and to advertisers), and this influences film content; this is clearly differentiable from the Being Caribou model, where expedition financing, not film financing, structured the project in its early phases.



on the ground on the Y2Y journey, and from their broader exposure to the evolving, translocal Y2Y process for turning a vision into grassroots community initiatives, linked up and supported at the highest levels of government.<sup>129</sup>

Phenomenologically, as well, the difficult reconciliations that the Being Caribou project came to broach in its boundary work between ‘being caribou’ and being human found their first articulation in the Y2Y hike. During Y2Y, Heuer in particular had to constantly cross over between the bodily experiences engaging with the public and the busyness of industrial society —especially the near constant TV, radio, and newspaper interviews on his scheduled stops — and the extremely different physical character of solitary nonmotorized travel through landscapes, including quite wild landscapes.<sup>130</sup> In Heuer’s own words, from his trip journal:

Irate ranchers one day, marauding bears the next. I feel like I’m living two lives, bridging separate worlds. But I have to realize, however, that what I hear and experience in the towns and cities are the values that will

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<sup>129</sup>Information from the original Y2Y website, particularly the backgrounder on Y2Y implementation (<http://www.beingcaribou.com/y2yhike/old/route/imp.htm>) as well as the final tour update of 1998 (<http://www.beingcaribou.com/y2yhike/old/updates/up7.htm>), go into some detail on the nuts-and-bolts process of implementing Y2Y through specific work on the ground in communities along the corridors. The conclusions of Anderson and Jenkins (124-143), who evaluated the Y2Y as a case study of conservation corridors support the arguments here, particularly through such conclusions as “Charismatic leaders play critical roles in mobilizing conservation efforts,” that “such mobilization often involves introducing key stakeholders and the media to the resources they hope to protect,” specifically citing Heuer’s work as well as backcountry hiking and aerial tours done in the Muskwa-Kechika), and that small scale conservation initiatives, grown through consensus-building, were key to supporting the larger project (142-143).

<sup>130</sup>Allison joined for the second year of the journey, which was done in two legs with long breaks in between. She did not do a significant number of media interviews and public presentations on Y2Y during the timeframe of the expedition, and thus didn’t have the same experience of repeated, abrupt transitions between wilderness and peopled settings.

determine the future of these narrow strips of wilderness through which I walk. It is too easy to forget how human and natural history have always been intertwined. Wilderness as a place devoid of human influence is a mythical concept, an idealistic notion at best (Heuer, *Walking the Big Wild* 52).

Heuer follows this passage in *Walking the Big Wild* by briefly segueing into the aboriginal histories of the Y2Y region through a description of his stumbling upon an arrowhead the next day. Although Heuer does not use the language of eco-criticism, he is clearly working through critiques of the concept of “wilderness” similar to those that were jumpstarted in academic circles through Cronon’s publication of “The Trouble with Wilderness,” and questioning how the Romantic imagination has obscured his sense of North America as an inhabited (and, in some senses, ‘working’) landscape in the pre-contact era. More broadly, Heuer was grappling not just with connectivity in an ecological sense, but also with human and animal coexistence and shared histories, with fluidity and disjuncture in crossing boundaries, and with how charges of contact surge through communities and create and reinforce nodes in networks. And this work was being done ‘in situ,’ within the context of similar conversations taking place among the environmental funders, government resource management and park workers, academic conservation biologists, outdoor recreationists of many types, and First Nations that concretely shaped both expeditions through providing seed funding, on the ground help<sup>131</sup>, and knowledge necessary for route selection.

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<sup>131</sup>For example, park wardens at Ivvavik helped Heuer and Allison ferry their gear across the Firth River (Joe); outdoor recreationalists that Heuer contacted informally through his

Such connections and conversations carried forward both within and beyond the context of the Y2Y project;<sup>132</sup> the long-term nurturing power of such relationships, as they pertain to the lifecycle of the Being Caribou project, and of the broader trajectories of Heuer and Allison's work as conservationists, outdoor enthusiasts, and media makers, will be taken up again in later chapters. Germane to the present discussion, the experience of multi-stakeholder involvement and collaboration contributed to Allison and Heuer undertaking comprehensive consultations with northern stakeholders from the outset of the Being Caribou project.

## **A Full Circle<sup>133</sup>**

Among the dozens if not hundreds of media makers that have visited Gwich'in and Inuvialuit territories to make films or write articles related to caribou, Heuer and Allison

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various connections helped him to place food caches along the most inaccessible portions of the Y2Y route north of Jasper that the expedition skied through in 1999 (Heuer, *Walking the Big Wild* 132-140).

<sup>132</sup>The Y2Y hike influenced Y2Y's public outreach significantly — after the hike, major artistic public relations initiatives, such as major photography and art exhibits in 2006, 2007 and 2011, and a coffee table book of photographs and essays, became part of Y2Y's work. For example, in 2006-7, a major Y2Y photography exhibition at the American Museum of Natural History was seen by over two million people. In 2007, the Burke Museum and Mountaineers Books, which went on to publish the coffee table book *Yellowstone to Yukon: Freedom to Roam*, in which Heuer had an essay, put together a touring exhibit of photographs from the Y2Y region. The 2006 Y2Y Annual Report (<http://y2y.net/files/14-y2yannual2006-final.pdf>) describes these initiatives in more detail. The 2011 art exhibit, *Yellowstone to Yukon: the Journey of Wildlife and Art*, was mounted at the National Museum of Wildlife Art in Wyoming, and the Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies, as well as having a virtual component accessible by iPad.

<sup>133</sup>The original project application that Allison and Heuer had put forward to the Vuntut Gwich'in Heritage committee and the Gwich'in Renewable Resource Board was titled "Full Circle."

appear to have conducted by far the most extensive consultations with stakeholders.<sup>134</sup> A partial list of these consultations, included in Appendix 1, comprises government officials and scientists who tracked the herd, notably those working in what is now Environment Yukon<sup>135</sup> and the Canadian Wildlife Service; Parks Canada; the Alaska Department of Fish and Wildlife and officials at the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge; a number of comanagement bodies in Canada that have responsibility towards the management of the herd; and a number of hunter and trapper committees and renewable resource committees that are the land claims mandated organizations that support and represent subsistence harvesters at the local level. All these interactions shaped the Being Caribou project in practical ways that structured the expedition and the narratives it eventually produced. For example, input from government scientists was key to Heuer and Allison's migration—both in terms of increasing the couple's understanding of how the herd might behave and therefore where to go next to follow the herd, and because during the journey scientists would share information about the location of particular animals that were fitted with electronic tracking devices (Don Russell, caribou biologist, personal conversation, 2008). Similarly, Gwich'in people provided essential support in finding the right starting point for following the herd, and offered crucial spiritual and traditional knowledge

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<sup>134</sup>The Vuntut Gwitchin Heritage Department has an application process for media makers that is similar to the committee process used by VGFN for proposals to conduct research in the community. I was able to skim through some of the other applications. A new BBC project to film the Porcupine caribou migration using drones, which is going through the Yukon Environmental and Socioeconomic Assessment Act (YESAA) process as of this writing (2015) may be just as or more extensive in its consultation process.

<sup>135</sup>In 2002, this government division was called the Department of Renewable Resources, however in the early 2000s it was renamed/reorganized, presumably between Environment Yukon and Energy Mines and Resources.

necessary for such a physically challenging journey (Tetlichí). Gwich'in worldviews significantly influenced the project, and resistance within some parts of the local indigenous community to the project<sup>136</sup> underscored for Heuer and Allison the need to think carefully and relationally in choosing how and where to tell their stories.

Buy-in from the Gwich'in Renewable Resource Council (which gave financial support) and other northern community representatives that could be listed as having been consulted and/or as being supporters was also key to demonstrating the Being Caribou's potential to make measurable long-term gains in translocal support for conservation, beginning with the constituencies most reliant on the Porcupine caribou herd. While, relative to similar expeditions, Being Caribou operated on a shoestring budget, the project did solicit in-kind donations and start-up funds. Like its Y2Y predecessor, the expedition received sponsorship from outdoor clothing and gear companies (and food stores in the case of Y2Y), donations from individuals, and relatively modest grants from charitable foundations. To compete successfully for such grants requires framing one's project in the terms of the grantor.<sup>137</sup> For example, the 2005

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<sup>136</sup>See Heuer (*Being Caribou* 13-14). Some Gwich'in and Inuvialuit alluded to this discontent in my interviews with them, particularly with reference to the calving grounds being a sacred place where people were not meant to go.

<sup>137</sup>This was particularly true during Being Caribou's start-up phase: post September 11th, 2001, most North American environmental grantmaking foundations saw the value of their endowments, comprised of shares in public traded companies and particularly in "tech bubble" companies, plummet. In response they cut back on their grants and refocused their priorities, often adopting a more corporate/instrumentalist/results-based model in which funded projects had to be very clearly articulated to accomplishing the funder's political objectives. Henderson offers one example of the case of the Packard Foundation. Unfortunately, most publicly available research on charitable foundations is done by the foundations themselves, and it tends to discuss the precipitous drop in environmental granting much more obliquely, as for example is the case with a TREC report issued in 2005 that begins its executive summary by stating "When the

version of the strategic framework of the Wilburforce Foundation (similar in spirit to the 2000, 2002, and 2010 versions), describes its mission as “science-driven,” valuing exuberance and risk, and wanting to draw “community-based constituencies” (Wilburforce).<sup>138</sup> While the Being Caribou journey had natural affinities with this outlook, to access funding (which it did) its goals had to be translated into specific objectives and deliverables that could be measured against the “benchmarks” included in Wilburforce’s documentation, and framed as a compelling story/project that would excite and inspire. The Being Caribou’s expedition decision to share its stories through a multi-pronged media, public education, lobbying, and outreach strategy cultivated not just audiences and better dialog and relationships with northern stakeholders, but support from conservation funders: it offered many concrete and quantifiable products and outcomes (such as a certain number of regular expedition updates sent to a list of media contacts, resulting in a quantity of published articles) that could be judged against the

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environment was a “hot” issue in the 1970s and 1980s and hundreds of environmental nonprofits formed, most of them were supported by generous funding from the technology boom’s new philanthropists. With the tech boom past and environmental foundations narrowing their giving focus, conservation nonprofits must take a hard look at how to expand and strengthen their fundraising programs” (Humphries). In my personal experience working with larger environmental grant-making foundations as an ENGO representative, through both conversations and in confidential data shared with me, it was apparent that for many environmental grant makers that served the Alaska/Yukon grantmaking activity dropped between 30-50% in the years immediately following 9/11. This most particularly constrained grantmaking for new projects, as foundations felt the need to provide some support/continuity to projects they were already supporting.

<sup>138</sup> Each version of the Strategic Framework relies heavily on the language of conservation science and frames funding priorities in terms of goals and benchmarks; I have chosen the 2005 articulation as it is more detailed and coherent than earlier versions. Wilburforce provided seed funding to Being Caribou and is listed as a sponsor as early as 2003. See

<http://web.archive.org/web/20030802053159/http://www.beingcaribou.com/human/h4.html>.

benchmarks included in granting criteria.<sup>139</sup> This strategy also shaped the process and therefore the media products of the expedition; as was the case with the Y2Y project, the original narrative source materials (photos, film, journal entries) from the expedition got repeatedly reworked through various forms of public engagement (media interviews; dispatches from the trail; early rushes of the film shown at public presentations before any editing was done, etc.) before being shaped into the more highbrow cultural forms of a finished book and movie. This reworking and engagement with popular or low culture forms is also reflective particularly of Allison's background working in conservation activism and alternative media.

### **GIFTing: A Grassroots Media Orientation**

Allison's reason for becoming a filmmaker was that while working at Raincoast Conservation Society, she had seen an important report on wolf conservation gain national news coverage because of efforts Raincoast had made itself to gather and disseminate video footage of wolf packs on BC's central coast and "it hit me like a ton of bricks how powerful that video was" (Allison, Interview). When Allison set across the tundra in 2003 with a video camera, batteries, and a portable solar panel, her experiences and formation as a filmmaker did not come from a film school environment which valued the auteur tradition and invested film with high cultural capital. Instead, her background articulated film and other multimedia tools to community education processes, grassroots political organizing, and independent not-for-profit communication networks.

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<sup>139</sup>Wilburforce at that time really did use "benchmark" as a term in its literature on applying for grants.

Allison's only formal filmmaking training consisted of a one-week training at the Gulf Islands Film and Television School (GIFTS), a small alternative filmmaking school in rural British Columbia. GIFTS, which started in 1995 as a rural summer camp training youth in film and video production, was by the early 2000s an important regional node in a North American alternative media community described by Carroll and Hackett, during the same time frame and in the same region,<sup>140</sup> as engaging in democratic media activism. This activism was firmly embedded in what Elmer, Langlois, and McKelvey would characterize as the "hyperlink-web 1.0 framework" (9) that prefigured the social media/participatory culture networking formations of "Web 2.0." The Being Caribou expedition began before YouTube arose in February 2005 or Twitter launched in 2006, before Facebook became an open network, and before other popular sharing platforms such as Instagram or even Flickr attained widespread usage. However, coupled with increased access to the World Wide Web and email, the lower costs, lighter weight, and generally increased accessibility of video cameras had already fuelled considerable growth in "indymedia" production and distribution. Carroll and Hackett (89-92) depict an evolving organizational ecology in which more traditional alternative media hubs such as community radio stations coexisted with web-based networks such as Indymedia (a global network of independent media sites where individuals could upload news content) and Tao Communications, which gave political activists access to email and listserves, and support and hosting for setting up secure web pages.

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<sup>140</sup>Carroll and Hackett did fifty-four interviews in Vancouver, the nearest big city to GIFTS (Carroll and Hackett 84).



Ford and Gil have traced the development of this community back to the galvanizing political moment of the Zapatista revolution in 1994, in which the internet was used to mobilize a global constituency of support for the Zapatistas, despite censorship of the conflict by Mexican state media. More expansively, however, an internet-enabled “media democracy” community can be considered as fitting within a broader genealogy stretching back decades, at least to UNESCO’s 1980 MacBride Report, in which nations of the global south objected to the concentration of media ownership and media content within First World interests (Rodriguez 5-10). While the United States blocked efforts to implement MacBride recommendations that would systematically change regulations governing communications flows, citizen’s media and alternative media institutions continued to challenge from below the model of profit-driven mass communications run by global conglomerates and closely articulated to the power structures of market economies. In Canada, the values driving GIFTS and other participatory media efforts in the early 2000s owe a particular debt to community radio and television networks (which had trained community members to make media for several decades), and to the kinds of participatory filmmaking methodologies pioneered by such programs as the National Film Board’s 1967-1980 Challenge For Change (Waugh et al.).

At GIFTS, Allison was exposed to a very low-tech, do-it-yourself model: in most GIFTS programs, students complete a short film within a week. Additionally, while GIFTS is affiliated with several successful Canadian documentary filmmakers and prides itself on producing working media professionals, many of its programs also use film production as a process and empowerment tool to help members of specific

constituencies come together to address key issues. Miller (*Oral History* 115-116) describes this kind of participatory video model as “grounded in mutual respect and shared authority. This meant helping participants articulate personal goals, teaching them media and presentation skills, and involving them in key decisions” in order to transform participants’ sense of self so that they are better able to access political power. This ‘film as process’ model also marked Allison’s other filmmaking experience, working with Gwich’in youth to produce a seven minute documentary and music video about what caribou meant to them and their feelings about oil and gas development in the Arctic Refuge.<sup>141</sup>

Participatory media projects have a distinctive history in northern Canada. Roth chronicles how, in the 1970s, academic researchers and media professionals began working with northern communities to assess the impact of satellites and other communications infrastructure, that were being introduced with little local consultation as to what technology was needed or desired, and how its parameters should be configured. Inuit and First Nations groups began to advocate for formal changes in communications policy, ultimately resulting in a Broadcast Act and other policy and legislation that enshrined specific aboriginal communications rights. At the same time, they worked to develop the capacity of northern community members to make their own media and tell their own stories. As Roth details, these media projects took many forms, from participatory collaborations with partners such as the National Film Board to develop the

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<sup>141</sup>The prominence of participatory media-making in northern Canada has a long history, which Roth contextualizes within the decades-long efforts of northern First Peoples to gain access to broadcast media infrastructure and have a substantive role in producing and circulating stories about the north by northerners.

technical capacity of northerners to make media,<sup>142</sup> to numerous ventures which developed regular northern programming to be broadcast over TV and radio in the north. *Vadzaih* (the Gwich'in word for caribou), the film that Allison helped produce with the youth of Old Crow, fit not only within a long tradition of Gwich'in storytelling, but a history of northern indigenous initiatives to take advantage of emerging media forms to strengthen First Nations and Inuit language, culture, and storytelling. *Vadzaih* toured with the Caribou Commons 2002 'Walk to Washington Tour', sharing a Gwich'in perspective on the importance of caribou with audiences in dozens of American towns and cities<sup>143</sup> as part of a multi-media presentation that included dialog with northerner speakers, some of whom were Gwich'in (Journey North).

These understandings of film are reflected in Allison's preparations for filming the Being Caribou expedition: adopting the portable, low-tech orientation of activist's documentary video, Allison brought simple, lightweight recording equipment that could be charged via solar power and operated by just her and Heuer. This choice shaped the final film's intimate, low-tech aesthetic. Similarly, *Being Caribou* adopts a process orientation by investing much of its attention in the day-to-day experiences of Allison and Heuer as they attempt to "be" caribou. Participatory video's philosophical influence is also evident in the film's closing plea to viewers that they, as concerned citizens, become involved because they have the power to protect the calving grounds.

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<sup>142</sup>Two examples of NFB collaborations are the animation workshops that took place in Cape Dorset in the early 1970s (Roth 97-101), and the Challenge for Change and Media Research departments of the NFB organizing a timely conference in 1975 on northern communications and how to support its development (Roth 105).

<sup>143</sup>The film was part of a larger multi-media program that also included dialog with northerner speakers, some of whom were Gwich'in.

## **“Carrying on its Generation”: Generating New Stories Through the Being Caribou Expedition**

For Heuer and Allison, the media that they produced about their journey following the Porcupine caribou was closely intertwined with the fate of the caribou calving grounds; their media interventions did not begin and end with the media texts themselves, but were bound up in the relationships that sustained the caribou and the calving grounds. This chapter has focused on locating Heuer and Allison within these relationships prior to the day in April 2003 that they arrived in Old Crow, Yukon, ready to follow the Porcupine caribou when they passed the village on their spring migration.

Through the work of publicist Erica Heuer, as the Being Caribou expedition progressed it began to link up more and more concretely with trans-local networks of indigenous and community activists fighting to protect the calving grounds. These networks came to greatly amplify the impact of the Being Caribou expedition on the calving grounds campaign, and increase the venues in which media from and about the expedition circulated. The power of Being Caribou’s “public stories” is intimately bound up with the contexts in which these stories were told. In order to trace the trajectories of these stories, it is necessary to briefly chart the alliances between aboriginal and environmental groups that created the extensive alternative distribution network in which words and imagery from the expedition, and most especially the *Being Caribou* film, were disseminated.

## Chapter 5

### A Storied Network

In September of 2003, Allison and Heuer ended the expedition phase of the *Being Caribou* project early, in order to travel — after only a few days recovery in Old Crow and Whitehorse — to Alaska Wilderness Week (AWW) in Washington DC. Their experiences at the week were to have a huge impact on their work, both providing an ending for the *Being Caribou* film, and connecting the project with a large network of active campaigners on the caribou issue who came to have a crucial role in sharing the expedition's stories.

This network had been building for decades. The 1987 recommendation to Congress by Secretary of the Interior Donald Hodel, that the 1002 lands in ANWR be opened for oil and gas leasing (J. Mitchell) catalyzed a new level of commitment and cooperation among opponents to drilling in the Refuge. American conservation groups and Gwich'in communities greatly strengthened their interrelationships and their grassroots outreach, reshaping the campaign to protect the refuge into a collaborative international effort in which the relationships between Gwich'in and caribou figured prominently. Conservation groups brought to this effort financial resources, highly developed political networks and strategic savvy, and a long-term history of building resonance between conservation goals and American identity and public values. Gwich'in leveraged self-governance agreements to gain representation and diplomatic clout, and reshaped dominant narratives about northern conservation in order to put forward their concerns in ways that connected powerfully both with the grassroots American electorate and with high-level political operatives.

In connecting with the Alaska Wilderness League and the enormous network brought together at Wilderness Week, the Being Caribou expedition became part of a broader social movement set of stories about Alaska, the Arctic Refuge, oil and gas development, climate change, and threats to Arctic wildlife and to northern communities that depend on subsistence harvesting. The lifeforce of these stories — which connected people to communities and landscapes — continued to grow throughout the period in which the 1002 lands faced their greatest threat, even as the life cycles of the individual media products of the Being Caribou expedition entered their final phases.

From 2003 to 2006, the international campaign to protect the calving grounds facilitated the mobilization of Being Caribou expedition media through a massive alternative distribution network of grassroots community, church, indigenous, and conservation organizations. It both extended the reach of the expedition to new audiences, and articulated exposure to the expedition with direct, immediate opportunities for action and connection to organizations fighting to protect the Arctic Refuge. The effectiveness of the Being Caribou expedition as a political intervention is best understood by nesting its lifecycle within the broader trajectory of this growing social movement. The reach of the Being Caribou expedition owes much to the Arctic Refuge slideshows, speakers, films, and other often shoe-string storytelling efforts that had — along with intensive media coverage — for over fifteen years sensitized publics in church basements, college auditoriums, community centres, municipal halls, and other locales, building kernels of community in support of keeping the Arctic Refuge free of industrial development. It also owes much to the person-to-person interactions that were part and parcel of the process of telling movement-building stories. Despite the at times fractious

nature of the Arctic Refuge/ANWR debate,<sup>144</sup> these grassroots storytelling efforts, mindful of the Gwich'in resolve to put concerns forward "in a good way," cultivated respectful personal connections as a first step to bringing more people onside.

To understand the orientation of this campaign, and how the approach of the Being Caribou expedition came to work smoothly within it, this chapter turns first to the history of conservation culture in America. Through wilderness conservation struggles, and especially controversies over Alaskan wilderness, the conservation movement pioneered powerful forms of mass politics such as the use of public narrative, ranging from expedition diaries to coffee-table picture books, in order to amplify the circulation of conservationist ideals within both public and elite culture.

After surveying the conservation community's Alaskan initiatives into the 1970s and 80s, this chapter turns to the Gwich'in response to Hodel's 1987 announcement. When Gwich'in communities and organizations came together to develop a ramped-up, coordinated Gwich'in strategy in support of calving grounds protection, they quickly began to work not only with institutions and governments, but also with the conservation community, whose expertise, financing, and sheer organizational manpower were necessary to build and maintain a diverse coalition in support of the Arctic Refuge. The political savvy of the conservation movement was key to "making things public," in McLagan and McKee's terms (9-10), or effectively bringing the calving grounds issue into the public sphere in such a way as to change public perceptions and call into question existing relations of social power. Yet Gwich'in stories were at the heart of engendering these perceptual changes. After a contemplation of the role of storytelling as

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<sup>144</sup> Even the choice of terminology, Arctic Refuge or ANWR, was contentious.

part of bringing Gwich'in and the Alaska Coalition together, this chapter ends by turning to the Last Great Wilderness Project and Caribou Commons multimedia tours, in order to explore how years of multimedia storytelling initiatives built the partnerships, networks, and coalitions with which the Being Caribou expedition connected in 2003.

### **Repartitioning the Public Sphere: Gwich'in, Democratic Politics, and Conservation Culture**

Since the 1980s, conservation groups have spearheaded repeated mobilizations of mass popular support against oil and gas leasing in the 1002 lands: by effectively leveraging this democratic political power, they have swayed American policies on the adoption or rejection of legislation on development in the Arctic Refuge. Timothy Mitchell argues that the very existence of such forms of North American democratic politics is deeply imbricated with industrialization, and the concomitant rise of an infrastructure of mass society: the public sphere, as popularized by Habermas, rests upon distinctions between public and private that are fundamental to capitalism. Mitchell underlines that relationships of technology, labour, and capital play a large role in configuring the social relations and political processes of Western democracy, and that social movements (such as conservation, although Mitchell focuses on labour) emerge within socio-technical worlds that prefigure certain possibilities by the ways in which they render some tactics advantageous and others unworkable.<sup>145</sup> Energy

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<sup>145</sup> While my analysis draws somewhat on social movement theory, as it is researched largely within sociology, political science, and geography, as Heijden (30) suggests, such approaches tend to reach their limits in the liminal and increasingly amorphous spaces between social movements and a more loose appreciation of civil society as part of the public sphere. Heijden (30-35) expands considerably on social movement theory's



infrastructure has played a huge role in such developments: Mitchell describes core characteristics of Western liberal democracy as resulting from the ability of coal workers, dockworkers, and other labourers to lay siege to the energy infrastructure to leverage their demands for better working conditions and greater participation in society, including democratization. LeMenager (5) further claims that "the expansion of the US middle class in the mid-20th century into mass culture, inclusive of working-class arrivistes, the cultivation of the world's greatest system of public education, and essentially middle-class movements like feminism, antiwar activism, and environmentalism presumed access to cheap energy."<sup>146</sup>

In their discussion of "making things public ... the relational processes through which particular relations of social power are reinscribed as issues of political concern and concrete transformation," McLagan and McKee (9-10) stress the need to attend to the specificities and materialities of networks, including their epistemologies and infrastructures, in order to begin to grasp the patterns of platforms and circulation that characterize how culture<sup>147</sup> moves and builds movements. As LeMenager (6) points out, oil is the medium "that fundamentally supports all modern media forms concerned with

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conceptualizations of the public sphere and civil society, which tend to be more normative than either LeMenager or Mitchell's work would suggest is suitable for a "petrocultural" analysis. In focusing on the materialities of communication and its contextualization within culture, I aim to offer a more dynamic conception of how large scale American conservation groups were able to shift public consensus.

<sup>146</sup> Nikiforuk claims that the influence of oil on major structural shifts to the economy goes back much further. He argues that the abolition of slavery was inextricably linked to the emancipatory potential of oil, and that early industrial applications of oil were in fact conceived as replacements for slave labour.

<sup>147</sup> McLagan and McKee are focused on visual culture, but especially in a multi-media era, the point can be expanded easily to include mediums that privilege more than the visual, such as radio or film.

what counts as culture — from film to recorded music, novels, magazines, photographs, sports, and the wikis, blogs, and videography of the Internet." and it is impossible to speak of a present politics of forms<sup>148</sup> that is not in some way indebted to fossil fuels for its actualization. It is chiefly in about the last ten years that environmental cultural studies has begun to figure the narrative of "petrocultures"<sup>149</sup> within its characterizations of modern environmental politics, and to wrestle with the contradictions and clashes such tellings surface. These include the linking of modern "liveness" with the transmutation of traces of carbon-based life thousands of years past, the challenges of "carbon democracy" (T. Mitchell), and the recentring of questions of labour within how environmental movements conceptualize respectful relationships with non-human life and with the earth (LeMenager).<sup>150</sup> Such explorations are redefining democratic struggles as

a battle over the distribution of issues, attempting to establish as matters of public concern questions that others claim as private (such as the level of wages paid by employers), as belonging to nature (such as the

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<sup>148</sup> A term that was earlier discussed with reference to Kulchyski (*Like the Sound of a Drum*).

<sup>149</sup> The term petrocultures came into vogue in Canada with the 2012 beginnings of the Petrocultures Research Group at the University of Alberta, which organized a first biannual Petrocultures conference. The term serves to group together a number of strands of creation and research concerning fossil fuel culture, ranging from political economy and historically focused work, such as Mitchell's *Carbon Democracy* or Lawrence Buell's "A Short History of Oil Cultures", to literary scholars acting as what Imre Szeman characterizes as "petrocritics", to cultural criticism beyond the literary, such as LeMenager's work, to an emergent set of creative writing and multi-media projects, such as the interactive *Fort McMoney* project, that are increasingly turning their attention to explorations and critiques of the cultural economy of fossil fuel production.

<sup>150</sup> In Canada, Darin Barney is doing interesting work at the intersection of questions of labour and petroculture. This includes research on proposed pipelines as contemporary sites of 'sabotage,' and on an effort by a group of Alberta grain farmers to retain more control over transporting their harvests to market through buying and running the Battle River Railway.

exhaustion of natural resources or the composition of gases in the atmosphere), or as ruled by laws of the market (such as financial speculation). (Mitchell 9).<sup>151</sup>

Citing Rancière's "Hatred of Democracy," Mitchell (17-18) describes the economy, or rather the conception of an "economic sphere" distinct from, if overlapping with, the public sphere, as deriving from the ascendance of a certain "logic of distribution" that powerful actors, working with and within governments, used to limit alternative political claims.

Seen in these terms, Gwich'in struggles (such as the park interpretation work discussed in Chapter 3) to render their material and political landscapes sensible, and to make claims within a broader North American political economy, have natural resonances with the work of environmental movements. In developing hybrid forms of governance, both inside and outside the codification of land claims,<sup>152</sup> Gwich'in leadership continually worked to recuperate community stewardship and fluid, living relationship with the natural world into governance.<sup>153</sup> This was consonant with the

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<sup>151</sup> While I am citing Mitchell, LeMenager, Tsing, and McLagan and McKee all make similar points.

<sup>152</sup> I am referring specifically to pan-Gwich'in organizations. The Gwich'in Steering Committee is an early example, but pan-Gwich'in initiatives (such as the Arctic Athabaskan Council) and similar initiatives by other northern indigenous groups (such as the Inuit Circumpolar Council) are becoming increasingly common.

<sup>153</sup> For example, the Porcupine Caribou Management Board (PCMB) could be understood as an effort to reinsert a sense of "the commons" into northern politics; essentially, the PCMB works by consensus to manage a common subsistence resource. Kofinas (19), in his dissertation on the PCMB, notes the idea of a caribou commons as a public good, or "common property" or "common pool resources" in macroeconomic terms. Kofinas's dissertation offers a nuanced discussion of the complexities and challenges of hybridizing such different governance traditions (Western and indigenous) in service of a common cause.

kinds of re-equalizations McLagan and McKee describe as increasingly integral to the work of civil society NGOs. In the neoliberal era, at the same time as NGOs agitate to broaden what can be included in the public sphere and therefore within the possible responsibility of public government (such as health care, housing rights, etc.), they at times exert a “mobile sovereignty”, pitching in to offer needed social services and in so doing creating a kind of temporary governmentality.<sup>154</sup> Citing Feher, McLagan and McKee (11-12) describe this movement beyond “representational” paradigms of the political as recognizing a structural incompleteness in politics, a liveness created by the state of flux, contestation, and dynamic interaction premised on a constitutive split between government and the forms of politics that exceed it. The play at this boundary recuperates or releases what is to count in the public sphere.

In engaging with outside governments and political forces over the fate of the Arctic Refuge, Gwich'in leadership had to constantly work this space, sometimes hybridizing Gwich'in and Western governance forms, and at other times exerting governance (including traditional governance) through movements in civil society, in alliance with NGOs and other actors.<sup>155</sup> For example, while the PCMB certainly has gone an important distance in forwarding the Gwich'in interest in calving ground

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<sup>154</sup> I am somewhat repurposing McLagan and McKee's arguments to make my own: the mobile sovereignties they discuss are those of humanitarian NGOs operating in war zones.

<sup>155</sup> Kofinas offers a nuanced evaluation of both the productive moments and the costs for Gwich'in communities of blending their traditional ways with formal State apparatuses through the PCMB, suggesting that the two approaches are to some extent incommensurate. Like Nadasdy (*Hunters and Bureaucrats*), and Kulchyski (“Speaking the Strong Words”; *Like the Sound of a Drum*), among others, Kofinas reaches the conclusion that to date co-management arrangements have not in practiced worked out as favourably or consonant with traditional indigenous governance regimes as their aboriginal designers had originally envisioned.

protection,<sup>156</sup> as a governance body its mandate constrained the types of work it could undertake and sponsor. As Gwich'in sought to move their political engagement beyond their home communities — to realms where the "personal politics" of storytelling, face-to-face interactions, and shared community experiences played less of a role — they required the support and partnership of groups whose politics were equipped to respond to the exigencies of mass society. The decades that the Alaskan conservation movement had spent working with mainstream American sensibilities, building both high-level advocacy networks and a strong grassroots base, made it a copacetic ally both because the movement was well positioned to work with the heavily mediatized and mediated discourses of North American politics, and because, to the degree that it emphasized relationship building and durability over time, the processual orientation of the movement aligned with values essential to Gwich'in governance. This allowed for Gwich'in and a diversity of other community leaders (environmental, American Indian, faith groups, Kiwanis clubs, etc.) to put in the time and energy to build a vibrant social movement in which they were mutually invested<sup>157</sup>.

Together, this leadership worked the shifting interstitial spaces at the boundaries of the public sphere, channeling community linkages to draw new actors and perspectives into a political choice that the U.S. government, following Mitchell,

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<sup>156</sup> Kofinas' (174-254) full enumeration and evaluation of the PCMB's communication strategies in the early 90s makes mention of the PCMB's role with regard to protecting the 1002 lands prior to the late 90s. As previously mentioned, this work continues to the present day.

<sup>157</sup> The latter sections of this chapter explain how the Alaska Coalition was characterized by many, in Han's terms, 'high engagement' organizations and organizational chapters whose membership actively promoted protection of the Arctic Refuge.

wished to delineate as an economic decision. While, by the early 2000s, new platforms provided by the popularization of the internet, cell phones, and other advances in telecommunications, greatly extended the reach of the movement and its vehicles, such as the Being Caribou expedition products, this work is best understood in continuity, as an extension of conservation movement efforts since the early twentieth century to stake out a place for environmental protection within mainstream politics.

### **Cultivating Conservation in the Public Sphere**

The US Natives, and Canadian First Nations people, their passion, the emotion and credibility were very important. But we wouldn't have got anywhere if there had not been from the very start, before the Alaska Lands Act even, and certainly afterwards, a very strong committed passionate US, I repeat, American constituency in order for this to prevail. And that happened first with the US environmental groups and they should never, ever be discounted or minimized for their sheer persistence in the face of such incredible odds. They had the experience, and the resources to keep this going. And the heart. At times of deepest desperation, when everything else has failed, they had the heart to keep going (Confidential 2 discussing efforts to prevent drilling in the calving grounds).<sup>158</sup>

Although the idea of the frontier and its corollary of manifest destiny underlie much of the historical foundations for the “imagined community” of the United States (Anderson),

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<sup>158</sup> To protect the confidentiality of the interviewee, all identifying details from Confidential 2 have been removed, however this person was appropriately positioned to make the observations included in the text.

as Cronon and other critical environmental historians have noted, the nineteenth century saw the rise of a conservation movement that understood wilderness as foundational to the nation.<sup>159</sup> The ‘wilderness condition’ has a long history within Western thought, and a myriad of associations. These range from the bounty of nature celebrated in classical Greek and Roman literature (Nash 9-11), to the largely negative association of banishment and barrenness brought with Judeo-Christian traditions (Nash 13-20),<sup>160</sup> to medieval folk tales of fearful, gloomy forests swarming with supernatural beings (Nash 10-13), to the notions of nature as sublime developed in Romantic poetry and painting (Bordo; Cronon; Nash 45-66), to the complex collage of connotations—both returning to the Garden of Eden, and reinterpreting nature as a system of bounteous wealth to be extracted and repurposed for industrial use — developed in explorer narratives of the Victorian era. Nash adds to this coexisting yet competing North American outlooks that developed as non-aboriginal settlement expanded across the continent, and the frontier came to symbolize both the rugged strength and magnificence of the American character (equal to the awe-inspiring scale of the landscape and its riches), and the material and spiritual success of conquest and civilization of the continent (Nash 67-121).

Environmental historians such as Nash and Stegner, tracing a genealogy of ideas about wilderness preservation through North American “high culture,” describe the

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<sup>159</sup> Cronon describes in much greater detail the tension between the wilderness sublime and the frontier, and situates the sublime within a history of European Romanticism.

<sup>160</sup> The story of the Garden of Eden is the archetypal Biblical story of banishment from a cultivated land of plenty into a frightening, insecure, and difficult wilderness. However, in both the Old and New Testaments, the Jewish people and later prophets find themselves cast out into the wilderness for periods of time, whether wandering the desert for forty years post-slavery in Egypt, or in the case of Jesus being tempted in the wilderness after forty days of fasting.

modern environmental movement as deriving “pretty directly from the nineteenth-century travelers, philosophers, artists, writers, divines, natural historians, and what *Time* has called ‘upper-class bird-watchers’” (Stegner 117).<sup>161</sup> In this narrative, a charismatic individual frames and publicizes an environmental problem, a group forms around him (or her, yet except for Rachel Carson and perhaps, in consort with her husband, Margaret Murie, these charismatic individuals are largely men), and then educational efforts and political pressure force changes in legislation (Stegner 125). Yet, as Mitchell, LeMenager, Tsing, and others have noted, it is important also to pay attention to the production, reproduction, and circulation of stories and ideas within the context of the socio-technical apparatuses that support and extend them.

Schwartz, in her research on mass society in fin-de-siècle Paris, makes a strong case that long before the development of cinema and the general expansion of new forms of analog media such as radio, the culture of leisure that was a part of industrial capitalism was creating certain forms of spectatorship or visual culture in which a “public taste for reality”, integrally linked with “supposedly real-life newspaper narratives” (298), cultivated a wide variety of cultural activities and practices emerging in modern life.<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> Allin’s description of the rise of the influence of conservation interests on American lawmakers from 1916-1955 echoes this kind of account, referring to “new men of stature” arising “to give voice to wilderness values” along with new organizations like the Wilderness Society (Allin 95).

<sup>162</sup> Other scholars make a similar argument in slightly different forms. Eric Huhtamo, whose research includes the dissection of extensive archives about panoramas, walking boardwalks at World’s Fairs, and other ‘mobile media’ evolutions of the fin-de-siècle especially comes to mind. More broadly, Jonathan Sterne, Lisa Gitelman, and Anne Friedberg among others have begun to open out a critical space for the study of “media archaeology,” which explores the interlinking evolutions of culture, economy, and media technologies. This research adds another layer to critical work springing from contemplations of the paths of people through twentieth and twenty-first century



These included audiences for reality-based panoramas, dioramas, and tableaux at wax museums, and the emergence of the Paris morgue as a kind of public theatre for the identification of the dead, with thousands of spectators filing past corpses whose cases had figured in popular press, such as the “Child of Vert-Bois Street” (Schwartz, 298-304). Such forms of mass spectacle, articulated to emerging forms of mass narrative, began to arise throughout the Western world as industrialization took hold. Between 1880 and World War I, during “the golden age of fairs,”<sup>163</sup> over forty large scale international fairs and exhibitions attracted tens of millions of spectators, displaying the latest technological and engineering feats,<sup>164</sup> showcasing flora, fauna and even people from around the globe, and propagating and popularizing the latest political and social theories through lectures and displays (for example, Frederick Turner actually lectured about his frontier thesis at the World’s Columbian Exhibition). Exhibitions such as World’s Fairs — frequently themed on technological invention or scientific prospecting and discovery — or Buffalo Bill Cody’s Wild West Show, seen by millions of people, were freighted with ideas about progress, European cultural superiority, capitalism, wilderness, and ‘backward’ or ‘exotic’ cultures and places. Such ideas circulated broadly through popular culture, blurring the lines between education, entertainment, and politics. As

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architectures, such as Benjamin’s Arcades Project and the figure of the flaneur, or De Certeau’s reflections on walking in the city. I have framed my analysis through a cultural geography perspective as this tradition (alluded to elsewhere in the text, as with Doreen Massey) tends to place more emphasis on place, space, and the inclusion of the “natural” physical world.

<sup>163</sup> This term is found in the entry “world’s fair.” *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. *Encyclopaedia Britannica Online Academic Edition*. Encyclopedia Britannica Inc., 2014. <http://0-www.britannica.com/mercury.concordia.ca/EBchecked/topic/649088/worlds-fair>.

<sup>164</sup> Examples include London’s Crystal Palace, and Chicago’s World’s Columbian Exhibition publically exhibiting for the first time new electrical technologies including the alternating-current generator and the dynamo.

conversations about wilderness conservation began to take place through popular press and other mass media in the late nineteenth and twentieth century, they gained purchase because of their articulations to emerging practices and architectures of mass culture. So, for example, when dozens of John Muir's letters from Alaska were serialized in the San Francisco *Daily Evening Bulletin* in 1879-80 (Muir xxxvii-xix), these missives were anticipated, talked about, and circulated within communities and publics primed to the 'event' of their publication by the Victorian tradition of the newspaper serialization of both explorer/adventure narratives and fiction.<sup>165</sup>

Alex Wilson makes the point that not only are our experiences of the natural world "always shaped by rhetorical constructs like photography, industry, advertising, and aesthetics," (12) and by cultural institutions such as tourism, education, and religion, but "the way we produce our material culture — our parks and roads and movies — is derived from and in turn shapes our relationships with the physical environment" (14). Using the example of the Blue Ridge Parkway, a New Deal public-works project designed as a scenic roadway for motorized recreation, Wilson discusses how the built infrastructure predisposes us to certain experiences of the environment. By creating and curating the circuits through which ordinary Americans enacted the practices of everyday life — in this case practices of outdoor recreation, a major outlet for the expression of postwar consumer affluence, as supported not just by the subsidizing of the motorcar economy/infrastructure, but by a broad set of cultural products and practices, ranging

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<sup>165</sup> The socially conscious fiction of Dickens and Zola, for example, gained a great deal of their popularity through serialization. The study of print culture in Victorian times includes significant work on the serial, such as *The Victorian Serial* by Linda K. Hughes and Michael Lund.

from the family cottage to the proliferation of Boy Scouts and Girl Guides<sup>166</sup>— the architects of the Blue Ridge parkway were actually transforming the landscape to privilege a certain kind of relationship to the land. For example, hillbilly shacks were removed and planted over with native species, and “scenic easement rights” were secured to ensure unsightly economic activity would not be visible from the road. Spectatorship here is not just a mode of viewing, but the enacting of a particular kinesthetic relationship to the environment (which is viewed through glass, from the temperature controlled capsule of the car), and the favouring of a particular vantage, the motorcar, which itself subsumes a specific set of material, economic, and social relationships.<sup>167</sup> For Wilson, *landscape* is a verb that describes the production and enactment of material culture through the social processes of interaction with the physical environment, both built and “natural” (13-14).

In tracing a genealogy of American landscape and conservation philosophy, then, it is necessary to understand discursive work in its materiality—not just as the networking or spread of ideas through particular media, but in the socio-technical orientations and cultural evolutions that undergird such platforms and lead to the expression of these ideas as practices, both individual and institutional/collective. Wilson points out, for example, that the late nineteenth century boom in science and exploration, closely tied to mercantilism and later industrialization, led to the professionalization of sciences investigating nature and to the formation of numerous professional societies,

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<sup>166</sup> Wilson (43) makes the point that outdoor recreation services and commodities grew into a multi-billion dollar business in North America by the 1950s.

<sup>167</sup> Wilson, like LeMenager and Mitchell, stresses the military and corporate origins and logics of the energy and transportation infrastructures that have so shaped North America.

such as the Society of American Foresters, the National Geographic Society, and various academies of sciences, that played influential roles in conservation education and in the establishment of parks and protected areas (51).<sup>168</sup> The lectures, conferences, and newsletter articles that take place in such societies are enacted within a professional milieu where participants are expecting to apply their knowledge. This can create a variant of Tsing's (16) "travelling forms of politics," described later in this chapter: when a compelling discourse of ideas passes through such a professional network, audience members are already primed to work it through and convert it to an "engaged universal" (Tsing 8) that applies on the ground in their places of practice.

Quoting Benjamin Lee and Edward LiPuma, McLagan and McKee argue that "circulation is a cultural process with its own forms of abstraction, evaluation, and constraint which are created by the interactions between specific types of circulating forms and the interpretive communities built around them" (McLagan and McKee 16). The interpretive communities not only of early professional organizations but also of the new naturalist societies and public groups that became concerned with conservation (such as the General Federation of Women's Clubs, active in opposing the Hetch Hetchy dam (Allin 46)) included not just "armchair naturalists" but action-oriented individuals accomplished in outdoor pursuits and general projects of social betterment. For instance,

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<sup>168</sup> Allin (29, 42, 48) credits the work of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) and the American Forestry Association with leading to early forestry legislation, the American Civic Association for the creation of the National Park Service in 1916 (Young, 1996 also discusses this in detail), and the National Geographic Society and the Geographic Society of America with playing major roles in public awareness raising over the Hetch Hetchy dam. Allin, Nash, and other environmental historians view the Hetch Hetchy dam controversy as a seminal moment in the development of the twentieth century American conservation movement.

the American Civic Association, which came to play a key role in the creation of the National Parks Service, “included socially prominent, powerful individuals such as the landscape architect and urban planner, Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., the director of Harvard’s Arnold Arboretum, Charles Sprague Sargent, the sociologist of play, Charles Zueblin, and the mayor of San Francisco, James D. Phelan” (Young 461), none of whom hesitated to leverage their various civic and societal roles to forward policies supporting urban and rural beautification and its associated moral uplift. The “culture of circulation” (McLagan and McKee 16) produced in such interpretive communities persisted and grew throughout the twentieth century; glimpses of it — and particularly the ways that medias such as photography, newsletter articles, books, and films were integrated into these networks — are visible in the work of numerous environmental historians. Nash as well as Allin, for example, recount how the Sierra Club undertook extensive public action campaigns that included both media saturation (articles in magazines and newsletters, letters to the editor, etc.) and mass letter writing and other appeals to politicians. Dunaway focuses specifically on how the propagation of landscape imagery (primarily paintings and photographs) played a role alongside the writings of authors such as John Muir, Henry David Thoreau, and George Perkins Marsh in cultivating a popular sentiment for conservation and national parks,<sup>169</sup> while Murphy traces a media ecology in which *Silent Spring* went “from book to consequence” through “an intricate, intervening process of public attention and response” (183) that largely took place in the mass media,

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<sup>169</sup> Similar to Rancière’s argument which I outlined earlier, Dunaway forwards that these artistic and cultural activities served to bring aesthetics and emotion into national politics and decision making.

but also within specific targeted publics such as book-of-the-month club readers and communities of concerned scientists.<sup>170</sup>

In tracing the development and circulation of the Sierra Club's "Exhibition Format" series of coffee table books, Dunaway makes a powerful argument concerning the first uses by large conservation organizations of specific platforms of circulation within the context of campaigns. Dunaway describes, antecedent to the "Exhibition Format" series, the Sierra Club's development of a culture of circulation of imagery from the Sierra Nevada, and later from Dinosaur National Monument and other wild places, that originated in the outings programs and "high trips" that members took to hike, camp, and raft together in the backcountry. Sierra Club members who undertook such expeditions began to write in the *Sierra Club Bulletin* and other conservation magazines about endangered areas they had visited; the accompanying photography of monumental vistas and delicate flora stood in visual resonance with texts that echoed many of the tropes of Romantic nature writing, with the wilderness as a place of majesty and spiritual awakening.<sup>171</sup> *This Is Dinosaur*, the first book published by the Sierra Club in the context of a national conservation campaign, aimed to create a visual gallery simulating a journey

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<sup>170</sup> Murphy's study is largely focused on the circulation of *Silent Spring*'s messages through mainstream media networks, from book publishing through magazines, TV, and other prevalent mass media forms of the 1960s. However, particularly in discussing the controversies surrounding the book and the public relations campaigns of chemical companies in response, she addresses questions of the public sphere, high and low culture, and the importance of the circulation of ideas in communities of influential decision makers, be they gardeners (heavy pesticide users) or scientists.

<sup>171</sup> Dunaway points to moments in conservation history where this philosophy of photography, bringing a spiritual and emotional awakening and attunement to the power of landscape as an almost "secular religion of nature" (130), was explicitly stated in prominent conservation movement platforms, such as in Ansel Adams' speech to the Sierra Club's 1961 Wilderness Conference.

through canyon lands which were threatened by plans to dam the Colorado River and its tributaries. Released during the postwar boom in travel to national parks and monuments,<sup>172</sup> and the concomitant popular emergence of nature and wildlife films, *This Is Dinosaur* took advantage of evolving cultural currents. The glossy book's "armchair tourism" appropriated yet subtly redirected the mass culture "Disneyfication" of the natural world that Alex Wilson describes as emerging through a continuum from the touring Wild West vaudeville shows of the nineteenth century to Disney films of the 1950s and 60s and twentieth century wildlife television, and from the mass-marketing of parks and "big nature" viewing destinations to the consumer uptake of recreational services and commodities including hotels, drive-ins, spas, ski resorts, sea-side retreats, mobile homes and campgrounds.

*This Is Dinosaur* and the coffee table books that followed were mass-marketed — for example, the Sierra Club distributed 75,000 winter catalogs promoting *In Wildness the Preservation of the World* as a Christmas gift in 1962, with bookstores sending out 150,000 brochures featuring a photograph from the book, while 340,000 subscribers to *American Heritage Magazine* viewed a kind of preview portfolio of photographs and Thoreau quotes (Dunaway 167). In so doing, and in embedding the Exhibition Format books within a repository of activities circulating similar imagery and ideas — whether through the eponymous *This is the American Earth* photography exhibit that the United States Information Agency promoted and circulated internationally as part of what

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<sup>172</sup> Dunaway, making a similar point to Wilson (1990), highlights that by 1955 attendance had soared to nineteen million across the national parks system (Dunaway 122).

Dunaway describes as the “cultural cold war” (132), or as part of the 1962 commemorative centenary events celebrating the life of Thoreau that the conservation community promoted heavily in association with efforts to pass the Wilderness Bill — the Sierra Club ensured that their conservation messages would be broadly taken up in consumer culture. The early Exhibition Format books were widely reviewed and previewed in newspapers and magazines, with editors playing a key role in ensuring that the conservation message was placed in dialogue with events of the day and on the political pages, as opposed to relegated to adventure travel sections.

Sierra Club executive director David Brower led the initiative to make coffee table books and conservation photography central to campaigning efforts because he believed that the aesthetic experience of conservation photography aroused emotion and reawakened spiritual connections in viewers, creating a moral imperative and ethical sensibility towards conservation and responsible resource stewardship. Very much in line with Rancière, under Brower the Sierra Club’s campaign strategies invested heavily in evoking emotion to transcend existing debate, bringing environmental values into the public sphere and transforming the limits of environmental politics and policy.

Brower specifically targeted a cultural elite with the Exhibition format series. *In Wildness the Preservation of the World*, which the Sierra Club published and promoted “as propaganda for the Wilderness Bill” (Dunaway 158), was described as “the most beautiful book of its kind ever produced” (159), with a high-end price of \$25 USD.<sup>173</sup> While a later paperback version also achieved mass circulation, Brower believed there

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<sup>173</sup> Dunaway (167) notes that this was roughly equivalent of about \$150 in 2005 US currency.



were two distinct markets for the book, with the first being “people who could afford expensive art books . . . to reflect their taste” (167). Brower’s comments resonate with Bourdieu’s outlook on the role of “high art” in curating taste and building cultural hegemony;<sup>174</sup> the aesthetic gaze was a crucial vehicle for the production of belief, and for introducing a different appreciation of nature to a cultural elite. The coffee table books functioned to bring distinction and cultural capital to wilderness conservation by broaching it as the vanguard of an up-and-coming set of values integral to American heritage and identity. This sanctioning of wilderness’s cultural distinction, as evidenced by the arrival of the photographs of Ansel Adams, Eliot Porter, and others in major museums and cultural institutions, gained greater currency through the circulation of the coffee table book imagery within the private/domestic spheres of cultural elites. The books extended the work already being done by conservation organizations to build professional and personal relationships with judges, business elites, members of Congress and governors, and others of the political class by giving wilderness cachet as “cultural capital.” In August of 1960, a time of heated debate on the Wilderness Bill, several Congressmen directly quoted passages from their complementary copies of *This is the American Earth* or referred to it in their political speeches (Dunaway 145).

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<sup>174</sup> Brower’s work with the Sierra Club preceded Bourdieu’s research. However, his comments on whom the Sierra Club needed to reach through its coffee table books, and how this work to influence culture would have political payoffs, closely matches what Bourdieu worked out on the dynamics of elites in relation to culture and politics. I have found Bourdieu’s work most salient because his focus is both on “networks” of individuals and on more general flows/distribution of art and its reception in high and low culture. Few theorists successfully analyse cultural flows between elite subcultures and the broader body politic.

Bourdieu highlights how the social machinations of cultural capital serve to mask the real economic interests at play behind the curation of taste. An advertisement for the very first Exhibition Format book, *This is the American Earth*, declared "to own this book, to know it, to display it, to give it — this in itself is conservation." (Dunaway 147) In conflating support for conservation with acts of consumerism, and in promoting a vision of wilderness as evacuated of labour and everyday human life, a place to be preserved and only visited for recreational purposes, the messaging of the conservation movement fit smoothly into the dominant postwar imagery, discourse on American prosperity and identity, and infrastructure boom (favouring highways and a particular structuring of urban/suburban/rural exchange) promoted by iconic American media of the time, such as *Life* magazine.<sup>175</sup> The Sierra Club, the Wilderness Society, and other major mainstream American environmental organizations, in using a discursive strategy that was reasonably consistent with mainstream values, and in combining community organizing and direct appeal/marketing style techniques, were able to effectively move large segments of the American public towards electoral support of conservation, especially in the lead-up to the passage of the Wilderness Act in 1964 (Turner; Allin; Dunaway; Nelson). However, the deficiencies of such an approach — especially the ways in which it served to erase the presence and rights of indigenous peoples — became more

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<sup>175</sup> Drawing on testimony of *Life* magazine's first editor, Henry Booth Luce, LeMenager (34-44), who provides an extensive analysis of the magazine's coverage of a 1969 oil spill in Santa Barbara as an expression of dominant American discourse at the time, describes this approach as a "corporate modernism" that synthesized nationalism and consumerism with twentieth century visual culture. Like the coffee table books, *Life* Magazine brought the aesthetic of the photography exhibit into America's living rooms.

and more apparent as major conservation organizations turned their sights towards Alaska.<sup>176</sup>

## **A State of Conservation: Creating Alaskan Protected Areas**

Alaska, with its vast roadless areas, its spectacular scenery and wildlife diversity, and its late entry into statehood — which presented the possibility for conservationists to become involved as legislation for the new state was put into place beginning in the 1950s — held a special place within the conservation community. Some of the most prominent conservation activists of the late twentieth century, including Olaus and Margaret Murie and Edgar Wayburn, were repeat visitors to Alaskan wilderness areas, had a strong personal investment in the fate of these areas, and had worked to secure them since the 1950s.<sup>177</sup> In the lead-up to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA), conservation leadership in Washington began to devote serious efforts to influencing the legislation's provisions related to land selection and to the evaluation and

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<sup>176</sup> As Turner (19-23) points out, a significant portion of the “public lands” that conservationists wished to preserve were indigenous lands in the American west or Alaska gained by treaty, purchase, or conquest, with little regard or recognition of indigenous title.

<sup>177</sup> In 1956, Margaret Murie, often referred as the “grandmother of the conservation movement”, along with her husband Olaus set up a bush research station near the Sheenjek River and began baseline conservation studies as well as political work to support setting aside lands in the Alaskan coastal plain. Banerjee (*Arctic Voices*; Banerjee and Matthiessen, *Arctic National Wildlife Refuge*) and Nelson both discuss the instrumental role played by the Muries in the establishment of the Arctic National Wildlife Range, which was later expanded to become the refuge. Wayburn, who lived to be 103, was repeatedly elected head of the Sierra Club, and was described by President Clinton in 1999 as the man who had “saved more of our wilderness than any other person alive,” became dedicated to Alaskan wilderness preservation after his wife Peggy, the author of several Sierra Club books, insisted that they vacation in Denali in 1961 (Gillam; “Remembering Edgar Wayburn”).

provision for protection of lands of high conservation value (Nelson 101-3). With the passage of ANCSA slated to remove the main stumbling block to Alaskan resource development, in the summer of 1971, approximately a dozen significant American environmental groups began to concentrate their resources and formalize their cooperation under the umbrella of the Alaska Coalition (Clusen,<sup>178</sup> Nelson 103-4).<sup>179</sup> In the mid 1970s, with 17d(2) of ANCSA—which temporarily set aside eighty million acres of land—set to expire with Congress was no closer to making a final decision to create any permanent parks or other protected wilderness areas,<sup>180</sup> the Alaska Coalition began one of the most ambitious conservation campaigns in American history. To avoid an area-by-area battle over each designation,<sup>181</sup> a strategy that would drain resources and work to the advantage of opponents who could decry each designation as yet another concession, strategists at the Alaska Coalition decided in 1976 to draft an omnibus bill, the first version of H.R. 39, legislation that eventually led to the passage of the Alaska

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<sup>178</sup> My choice to annotate research interviews in the same style as written texts was made to give equal weight to written text and the oral histories and analysis of First Nations and Inuvialuit who agreed to participate in the research. Within this chapter, however, the notation may serve to obscure the differences between original primary research and secondary sources. In addition to the Gwich'in quoted in this chapter and earlier, I conducted personal interviews with movement actors Chuck Clusen, Lennie Kohm, Peter Mather, and Bob Childers, who are referenced in this chapter.

<sup>179</sup> Both Clusen and Edgar and Peggy Wayburn (Nelson 103) have described the regime of selection, evaluation, and implementation of ANCSA as incredibly complex. From a conservation perspective, once the legislation was passed, years of work went into attempting to have the prescribed land allocations for conservation implemented.

<sup>180</sup> Originally the formalized withdrawals should have been recommended for approval within nine months of the passage of ANCSA, but this never happened (Nelson 107; Clusen)

<sup>181</sup> This would be the normal process under the Wilderness Act for designating new lands into the national wilderness preservation system.

National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) in 1980 (Clusen).<sup>182</sup> To support this single largest addition of lands to the U.S. protected areas system, the Coalition and its member groups orchestrated a mass movement, uniting elites and everyday Americans behind a vision of Alaskan wilderness as part of the nation's core heritage.

Representative Morris K. Udall, who sponsored H.R. 39, described this effort as “head and shoulders above anything put together in the public interest field since the civil rights movement” (Hornblower).

The Coalition and its member groups mobilized an incredibly broad base of bipartisan support. For example, a prominent group of Republicans, including Cathy Douglas (wife of Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas) as well as members of the Firestone and Rockefeller families, formed the group “Americans for Alaska” which lobbied on the Alaska Coalition's behalf, getting meetings with every sitting US Senator before a crucial Senate vote (Clusen).<sup>183</sup> The Coalition developed long-term relationships with prominent lawmakers, helping their allies manoeuvre into leadership positions on

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<sup>182</sup> While H.R. 39 was also called the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act, it differed substantially from the bill that was finally passed more than five years later. Drawing on official Congressional records, news reports from the era, as well as the papers of the Alaska Coalition, Sierra Club, and other relevant “gray literature,” Nelson (181-248) provides an extremely detailed and compelling account of the various machinations in Washington and Alaska that led to passage of the final bill.

<sup>183</sup> Levitt (1-21) points to early precedents for the involvement of industrialists and private investors of means in conservation efforts. These include the role of railroad financiers in pushing for Yosemite (cited by numerous environmental historians, including Nash), and the initiative of independent philanthropists, associated with the American Ornithological Union and some state Audubon Societies, to finance warden positions at sanctuaries in Florida where poaching was a significant issue. President Roosevelt had established the first national bird sanctuaries by federal order, but without a federal appropriation to pay for wardens.

strategic committees (Clusen).<sup>184</sup> Working closely with these Congressional allies, the Coalition and its members built a team of dozens of full-time lobbyists which included a group of approximately fourteen grassroots advocates, whose jobs were to coordinate public support and public pressure in the various Congressional districts.<sup>185</sup> Clusen describes this campaign as the first time that major environmental groups including the Sierra Club, the Audubon Society, the National Resources Defense Council, and the National Parks Conservation Association, combined their mailing lists, sending mailouts to upwards of 750 000 people (Clusen). The Sierra Club, spearheaded by Edgar Wayburn, aggressively organized Alaska campaigns in every state, ensuring each of fifty state chapters and two hundred local groups had Alaska Coordinators (Nelson 188-9).

In order to pressure Congresspeople to support ANILCA, the Alaska Coalition tried both to flood representatives with messages from their constituents, and, early in the campaign, to ensure that conservation voices were strongly represented at the Alaskan and cross-country hearings on H.R. 39. Environmental groups were able to organize for dozens, hundreds, and in the case of Seattle, over one thousand citizens to sign up to speak at the hearings. Alaskan conservation organizations garnered equally impressive public support within the state, arranging for hundreds of H.R. 39 supporters to testify at

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<sup>184</sup> Specifically, Clusen described it as a ‘coup’ that Morris “Mo” Udall became Chair of the Interior and Insular Affairs Committee, and was then able to reorganize the subcommittees so that the entire jurisdiction for Alaska went to one committee headed by ally John Seiberling.

<sup>185</sup> Clusen, who was an original instigator of the Alaska Coalition and whom Nelson describes as its dominant figure during these debates, estimated eighty people were working full time in Washington on the campaign at its height. Nelson is more conservative, estimating twenty to thirty workers from the Alaska Coalition, a half-dozen Alaskan activists, as well as a large number of volunteers, active on the Hill campaign at any given time (Nelson 190).

hearings throughout Alaska in the summer of 1977. This show of support was a game changer: while resource industry supporters mounted significant opposition at the hearings, the conservation community had demonstrated a strong in-state following, and could legitimately claim that the Alaskan public was divided over conservation issues as opposed to in wholesale support of the resource economy (191-197). While the Alaskan member organizations of the Coalition were especially taxed by this organizing effort, and at times experienced significant tensions with the Coalition as a whole,<sup>186</sup> the exercise helped build-in a strong Alaskan presence in the campaign, with regional Alaskan groups regularly drawing on their detailed knowledge of the landscape (political as well as geographic) to advise the larger campaign or to play a direct role in lobbying in Washington. Additionally, through making efforts— begun with ANCSA but continuing through the legislative processes leading to ANILCA — to support the incorporation of subsistence activities within protected areas, the Alaska Coalition strengthened its support within Alaskan native communities.

After hiring political organizer Sandy Turner, the Coalition developed a sophisticated system that tightly coupled developments in Washington to outreach with the grassroots base: at key legislative junctures, teams of lobbyists would report back every day, updating each potential Congressional vote, so that Alaska Coalition staff and volunteers could target and intensify lobbying efforts, and work the phones long into the evening to ensure that vulnerable Senators and Representatives would receive a flood of

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<sup>186</sup> The horse-trading that went into negotiating with Republicans over modifying ANILCA so it would pass resulted in concessions on individual parks and protected areas that were in some cases hard for regional Alaskan groups to swallow. The Southeast Alaska Conservation Council (SEACC), for example, experienced significant discontent and leadership turnover in the 1977-9 period (Nelson 223-4).

feedback from their local constituents (Nelson 205-6). The Alaska Coalition developed a ‘mailgram’ system to complement these efforts, spending up to fifty thousand dollars per individual mail-out to send urgent alerts to key grassroots organizers (Clusen).<sup>187</sup>

Over the course of the 1970s, the Alaska Coalition successfully built a fluid, responsive, and tightly organized voter activation structure that could be called upon at a moment’s notice to unleash a deluge of supportive phone calls, letters, visits to Congresspeople, presentations at committees, and even demonstrations. By 1979, during the frenzied lobbying that characterized the final months leading up to the passage of ANILCA, the Alaska Coalition had assembled and was actively using a three million name computerized database, organized by congressional district (Hornblower).<sup>188</sup> Grassroots support could be quickly and effectively mobilized en masse: as Arizona Representative Morris Udall marveled, “I’d say ‘so-and-so is wavering’. They could push a button and have 800 mailgrams to the guy the next day” (Hornblower). Long before the arrival of Twitter, Facebook, or sophisticated voter tracking databases and software, the Alaska Coalition was pioneering the kind of direct, voter-engaged, district-by-district grassroots lobbying that, decades later, software like Nationbuilder, integrated with social media platforms, has made mainstream for both political parties and civil society organizations in the United States.

The persistent efforts of dedicated local volunteers — some of whom hounded their “swing” representatives for months to secure votes — played a significant role in

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<sup>187</sup> According to Clusen, the conservation movement pioneered this technique, with the NRA the only other major organization using mailgrams in this way in this time period.

<sup>188</sup> This use of computer database technology, particularly in terms of its integration and use within the Alaska Coalition network, was quite advanced for its time.



these efforts (Nelson 225-6). Arising in an era with fewer mediating technologies, the Alaska Coalition networks were underscored by a high degree of person-to-person conversation and connection. For example, before email, the cheapest and quickest way to reach a large mass of supporters was through a phone tree system. Phone calls are inherently two-way, and create more ad-hoc opportunities to deepen a relationship, to ask questions, to learn, and to receive training than responding to action email. Activists and lobbyists in the network also travelled in-person regularly, whether to strategy and lobbying sessions in Washington, or out to important regional events in Alaska or other states.<sup>189</sup> Bolstered by active working relationships with professional Alaska Coalition staff (be they grassroots organizers, media people, researchers, or lobbyists), the volunteer base over time became increasingly sophisticated. For instance, organizers in every state learned to put together coalitions of influential community members willing to visit individual elected officials and link their future electoral support to the representative's Alaskan conservation voting record (Hornblower).

With the passage of ANILCA in 1980, the work of the Alaska Coalition turned more and more to the Arctic Refuge. While ANILCA had expanded the Arctic National Wildlife Range into the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, offering greater protection to more lands, Section 1002 of the Act designated the coastal plain for further study,

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<sup>189</sup> This emphasis on person-to-person interaction and the building of networks of influence fits with much of what communications research, especially within the subfield of development communications, has revealed about the importance of social relationships in the successful diffusion of innovation or new ideas. Since Katz and Lazarsfeld's development of the two-step flow model of communication in the 1940's, and Roger's work on the diffusion of innovation, social connection has been an important focal point in the study of how ideas get adopted.

allowing oil development conditional on future Congressional approval.<sup>190</sup> To the oil and gas lobby, and its supporters in the federal government, opening the Arctic Refuge to oil and gas leasing was an important strategic and symbolic goal: almost immediately upon its election, the Reagan administration began what Nelson (251) describes as a “systematic campaign” to circumvent Section 1002 through a series of escalating measures, such as cancelling required negotiations with the Canadian government over the protection of the Porcupine caribou. Throughout the 1980s and 90s, the Alaska Coalition regularly revitalized and reactivated its networks and campaigns in response to calving ground threats. Especially germane to Gwich’in efforts, in 1987 when Hodel’s recommendation galvanized the Gwich’in to take action, “Washington representatives of major environmental organizations were meeting weekly to exchange information and plot strategy” (Nelson 253).<sup>191</sup> These environmental organizations, with the support and advice of their Alaska contacts, provided seed funding for the 1988 Arctic Village gathering, helping to lay the groundwork for a powerful partnership with the Gwich’in.

### **“In a Good Way”: the Work of the Gwich’in Steering Committee**

Back in 1988 . . . it was to this day one of the most powerful experiences that I’ve ever witnessed, when all the Gwich’in Nation, especially our oldest

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<sup>190</sup> The conservation community was stringently opposed to oil development in ANWR, but Ronald Reagan’s 1980 election victory along with the swelling of Republican Congressional ranks significantly weakened conservationists’ power. In the rush to ensure ANILCA passed before the end of the Carter administration, Section 1002 was one of many late amendments that were reluctantly accepted as part of a choice for a weakened act rather than no act at all.

<sup>191</sup> Nelson (251-256) describes in some detail the pitched battles between the Alaska Coalition and its opponents throughout the 1980s over efforts to open the Arctic Refuge to drilling.

elders, were gathered in one small log building and we talked for days  
(Elias).

The Reagan administration's 1987 declaration that it was prepared to take concrete steps to open the 1002 lands to oil and gas leases sent shock waves through Gwich'in communities. In the words of Norma Kassi, the MLA for Old Crow at the time, who received word of the announcement from her colleague, Yukon Environment Minister David Porter:

I was shocked . . . Not knowing very much about what could happen there yet, just thinking and picturing oil rigs, pipelines, roads everywhere and nasty things like that in the heart of the calving grounds, really? This devastated me. The first person came to my mind was my grandfather who had taught me many incredible things living on the land, about our entire eco-systems . . . I started talking to him in my language, seeking his guidance from the spirit world. Many thoughts and memories started coming to me. . . I will always remember vividly the caribou coming by in masses through our camps in the springtime, in May and June. I was raised with that and how important all that is to us, this is our life sustenance. Then, I called my mother . . . I talked to her and I told her, "Ma, the President of the United States wants to develop oil in the calving grounds in the nijin vadzaih edigii gwà'àn (*where caribou give birth*) Alaska side and there was a silence on the other end. And then she said "Well, you're MLA now. You got to do something." And there was this long silence again, and I said yeah well what are we going to do? "You've got to talk to

lots of people about it. You've got to tell lots of people about it. Talk to lots of white people, as many as you can.” And she said, “come home first.”

And so I go home and Jonathan Solomon who is the leader in Fort Yukon, Alaska called me at my office and said “did you hear?” I said yes. He said we've got to meet, we've got to meet right away and we're going to meet downriver in Fort Yukon, Alaska and you've got to come (Kassi).

Almost immediately, Gwich'in from across the north began consulting with each other and making plans to gather. Throughout the 1980s, Gwich'in communities in Canada and Alaska had strengthened their interrelationships and shared visioning as they worked together to help shape an international management agreement on the Porcupine caribou.<sup>192</sup> In devising the way forward, Gwich'in leadership followed traditional protocol by consulting with elders. Myra Kyikivichik, a venerated elder who was approximately one hundred years old, advised that the entire Gwich'in nation come together to address the threat to the calving grounds.<sup>193</sup>

Myra Kyikivichik . . . was one of the last people that lived in Arctic Village actually from Old Crow. We all have family connections to Arctic Village,

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<sup>192</sup> The “Agreement between the Government of Canada and the Government of the United States of America on the Conservation of the Porcupine Caribou Herd” was signed on July 17<sup>th</sup>, 1987 by Canada and the United States, and came into immediate effect. It was to provide important leverage for the Canadian government and the Gwich'in calling for calving ground protection as the United States had obligations to Canada to protect the Porcupine caribou herd, and the research work produced to manage the herd through the Agreement validated Gwich'in concerns about development in the calving grounds. In the years leading up to the Agreement, Jonathan Solomon, who helped spearhead the 1988 Arctic Village meeting, had travelled and consulted extensively throughout Alaska, Yukon, and NWT (Childers).

<sup>193</sup> For example, this was the conclusion of the elders and leadership at the Fort Yukon gathering that Kassi refers to.

Alaska. She said you guys got to meet in Neets'aiti gwich'in (*people who live in and around Chandalar Country*<sup>194</sup>), you've to meet on that side, close to the caribou. So, that meant Arctic Village. That was the direction that was given. We've never met since I was a little girl, she said, we've never met there, so you guys got to meet there now. Our future will be no good if this happens. (All of this dialogue takes place in our language.)

This means our whole way of life (Kassi).

In June of 1988, after months of organizing, Gwich'in representing over a dozen villages<sup>195</sup> in Alaska, NWT, and Yukon gathered in Arctic Village, Alaska for a five day long assembly. Although environmentalists and the international press were invited, the event was primarily a dialogue of Gwich'in. The atmosphere of the gathering was very welcoming, with an abundance of traditional foods, and dancing and storytelling in the evenings (Njootli Sr, 2012). The meeting itself was held in the community hall in the Gwich'in language, and followed traditional protocols:

Automatically, it was done in the old way, where all the elders sat around on the benches and we all sat on the floor with the little ones and all the men stood up around. It was amazing how it all just formed in such a spiritual and traditional fashion. For four days we had a talking stick, a

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<sup>194</sup> Thank you to Andre Bourcier at the Yukon Native Language Centre for this and other translations.

<sup>195</sup> The Gwich'in Niintsyaa, the original declaration from the gathering, lists the villages as Arctic Village, Venetie, Fort Yukon, Beaver, Chalkyitsik, Birch Creek, Stevens Village, Circle, Eagle, Old Crow, Fort McPherson, Arctic Red River, Aklavik and Inuvik. Fast (79-83) argues that many northern Athapascans in Alaska, especially those from communities outside of the more caribou-dependent Arctic Village and Venetie, are considerably more pro-oil and gas development, but simply do not actively enter into the debate or interfere in the advocacy effort.

very powerful talking stick, ceremonies were done and then for four days people, children, adults, elders got up and told stories about the caribou and their connection to the caribou and how important it is and how sacred an animal the caribou is to our people (Kassi).

Much as had happened in the lead-up to land claim negotiations in Canada, decision-making on crucial questions of land and governance began with recourse to traditional knowledge and traditional ways, with storytelling— days of it — as an important way that knowledge was shared and consensus built. After days of dialogue about the caribou, the land, the water, and the place and responsibility of all northern indigenous people who lived off of caribou, but especially the Gwich'in, to stand together in unity to protect the calving grounds, in the latter part of the meeting

The elders left, and they came back, and everybody was there, and they were all speaking in Gwich'in ... The elders went around, and they pointed at certain people, I believe it was seven people<sup>196</sup> from around the Gwich'in Nation, and they said to come to the front. They said, basically, you're now tasked to tell the world about our relationship with the caribou and why we have to protect their calving grounds. And you do it in a good way. You don't hurt anyone. And that was the first Gwich'in Steering Committee (GSC). That was the beginning of our partnership with governments, NGOs, environmental groups, associations, churches, aboriginal groups as far down as New Mexico (Elias).

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<sup>196</sup> Eight spokespeople were appointed at the meeting (Kassi).

To give clear direction to the GSC, and reaffirm the basis of unity of the communities, the gathering unanimously passed the Gwich'in Niintsyaa, a formal resolution which described the Porcupine caribou as essential to the nutritional, cultural, and spiritual needs of the Gwich'in people, and cited international covenants on human rights supporting the Gwich'in right to their way of life. The declaration called upon the American government to formally protect the calving and post-calving ground of the herd, and to designate the 1002 lands as wilderness (*Gwich'in Niintsyaa*).<sup>197</sup>

Unlike the Porcupine Caribou Management Board (PCMB), or the various Gwich'in governance organizations established in Alaska and Canada as part of claims settling processes, the GSC emerged as an important governance mechanism outside of Western governance structures. It was a new kind of structure for the Gwich'in nation, tailored to meet circumstances that were unforeseeable before colonization. At the same time, the methods for arriving at this new structure, through protocols that engaged Gwich'in in the careful consideration of past experience, wisdom, knowledge and stories, had strong continuities with traditional culture and values. The GSC arose from the renewal of a kind of gathering of Gwich'in from many communities that was a feature of life before contact,<sup>198</sup> and part of the way that the GSC and the Gwich'in Niintsyaa are maintained is through biannual Gwich'in Gatherings,<sup>199</sup> hosted on a rotating basis by

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<sup>197</sup> An updated statement, reaffirmed in 2013, is available on the GSC website at <http://ourarcticrefuge.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/GG-Resol.-2012-1.pdf>.

<sup>198</sup> As Myra Kyikivichik had alluded to, before 1988, there had not been a gathering of this kind for approximately one hundred years (Njootli Sr).

<sup>199</sup> The biannual Gwich'in Gatherings offer communities a chance to gather to address common concerns, which include but are not limited to the Porcupine caribou. For example, decision-making around the Peel watershed planning process featured heavily in discussions at the 2012 gathering in Fort McPherson (Ryder). These gatherings are

different Gwich'in villages.<sup>200</sup> These Gatherings include dances, feasts, and other activities that reaffirm the ongoing importance of Gwich'in culture.

The GSC can be understood as emerging within the frame of what Val Napoleon terms an indigenous legal order, or an approach to addressing a relationship or obligation that is rooted in shared norms developed through shared culture, history, social life and structures within an indigenous community.<sup>201</sup> The GSC was, however, just one expression of Gwich'in governance, an expression that was developed when there was a need to re-evaluate the bigger picture and add in new strategies. Before, during, and since the formation of the GSC, Gwich'in have actively used the other levers at their disposal — especially the powers gained through land claims negotiations — to forward protection of the calving grounds. For example, Vuntut Gwitchin dipped into its land claim negotiation funds in order to charter a plane for the Arctic Village gathering to ensure that community members from Old Crow and Fort Macpherson could attend (Njootli Sr). Many of the leaders who shared scientific and other information with their elders about what oil development might look like and its implications for the calving grounds had been heavily involved in negotiations to create the PCMB and the

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organized by the individual communities that offer to host them, but the original instruction from elders to gather every two years to report back on the caribou campaign originated in 1988 (Kassi). The GSC itself is a “single issue” organization focused on the Porcupine caribou, with the Gwich'in Gatherings acting as an important consultation and report-back mechanism.

<sup>200</sup> The GSC is not the only organization to arise in the region from northern indigenous leadership from different communities gathering to address a common livelihood threat. The Yukon River Inter-Tribal Watershed Council, formed in 1997 by representatives from communities in Yukon and Alaska that border the Yukon River, is a grassroots organization that unites over seventy First Nation and tribal organizations in the common goal of cleaning up the Yukon River and ensuring it is healthy.

<sup>201</sup> This is an incomplete paraphrasing of Napoleon's concept, which will be reviewed more thoroughly in Chapter 7.



international conservation agreement, jointly signed by Canada and the US in 1987, that led to the establishment of an International Porcupine Caribou Management Board (Njootli Sr).

Several Yukon Gwich'in who had been in leadership positions such as MLAs or chiefs, emphasized to me that they had negotiated into their final agreements nation-to-nation obligations on the part of the territorial and federal governments, in their international dealings, to represent the Gwich'in right to the protection of their culture and its material basis in the caribou herd. Thus, as the GSC ramped up efforts to bring attention to the calving grounds issue in Washington, Gwich'in leadership drew on these guarantees to mobilize all possible recourse within the forms of the democratic state (Bruce; Elias; Schafer). MLAs from Old Crow ensured that successive Yukon Territorial Governments, regardless of their political stripe, supported efforts to protect the calving grounds (Kassi; Netro), and Gwich'in leadership worked directly with Yukon MP Larry Bagnell to ensure that the Government of Canada actively advocated for protection of the calving grounds. This relationship was especially strong in the 2004-6 period, when Stephane Dion was Environment Minister (Bagnell).<sup>202</sup>

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<sup>202</sup> According to Larry Bagnell, during Stephane Dion's tenure, the caribou issue was discussed at the highest levels, including a meeting at the house of future Prime Minister Paul Martin, with Prime Minister Jean Chrétien in attendance, as well as at least one influential representative of a major organization that was part of the Alaska Coalition/Alaska Wilderness League organizing efforts. Also while Dion was minister, Sierra Club records refer to a September 8, 2005 meeting at 24 Sussex (the Prime Minister's official residence) attended by, among others, Prime Minister Paul Martin, Yukon MP Larry Bagnell, Sierra Club head Elizabeth May, Norma Kassi, David Suzuki, Ken Madsen, Larry Bagnell, WWF Canada executive head Monte Hummel, and philanthropist Glen Davis. See <http://www.sierraclub.ca/national/postings/pm-meeting-09-2005.html>.

In 1988, the GSC became a key organization in coordinating the educational and public storytelling efforts of Gwich'in spokespeople working on the caribou issue. It was instrumental in building alliances with environmental groups and with the broader civil society networks in which Being Caribou stories came to be heavily circulated. From the outset, environmental organizations provided financial and logistical support for GSC efforts. Alaskan environmentalist Bob Childers did important bridging work between the GSC and the conservation community. He had worked for many years with Jonathan Solomon on getting Gwich'in communities effectively involved in negotiating an international Porcupine caribou agreement. As Solomon, an important leader of Alaskan Gwich'in who became a key GSC spokesperson, shifted his energies towards the GSC, Childers provided important support, especially in the GSC's start-up period but continuing for many, many years (Kassi).<sup>203</sup> For example Childers was instrumental in securing grants and in-kind donations to support the Arctic Village gathering (Fast 79-82), and helping to arrange logistics. However, such cooperation between Gwich'in and their allies was contingent on the ability of partners to work together "in a good way."<sup>204</sup> The instructions of the elders, and the form which the GSC took, were very carefully thought out in order to ensure a distinctively Gwich'in presentation of the issues and orientation towards dialog.

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<sup>203</sup> Sarah James of Arctic Village, a founder of the GSC, was also a key player in organizing these efforts from their outset. Norma Kassi emphasized that Bob Childers played an important role. Some of the details about Childers's role that I have added were described by Childers himself.

<sup>204</sup> This phrase came up many times in my conversations with Gwich'in who had acted as spokespeople on calving grounds issues in the continental United States.

The GSC's was structured to take on just one part of caribou stewardship: the common basis of unity that the calving grounds needed protection.<sup>205</sup> Mechanisms such as reporting back every two years to all the Gwich'in communities, and choosing GSC's spokespeople who were representative of a broad spectrum of communities, ages, life experience, and genders were also put in place to ensure that this unity of purpose remains strong. In their initial direction to the new GSC spokespeople, the elders in Arctic Village

told us that you go home to your community, and you talk to every person in that community. From there you go to your outside communities and outside government. That meant for me to come to the Yukon Territorial Legislative Assembly, bring this awareness there, get Yukoners on side. From there I worked outwards to get the Government of Canada on side, and from there the United States. That's exactly what I did in my lobbying efforts and education and awareness efforts: we started at home and then we built the support there, and then we moved out. Like a drop in water, a pebble in the water approach. We kept going back and forth like that: international, local, international. So those were the direction given and taken (Kassi).

This "pebbles in the water" approach clearly anticipated the translocal movements and movement building necessary to effectively counter the oil and gas lobby. More locally,

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<sup>205</sup> Over the years there has been significant diversity of opinion on other aspects of managing the caribou herd, for example with regards to hunting regulations on the Dempster Highway. Most of the stewardship issues on which there is a diversity of opinion are worked through at the PCMB.

this instruction also reflected a very high standard of consultation and involvement within the Gwich'in nation for what was deemed an essential survival issue. Having everyone in the community know about what is going on, with multiple different perspectives represented and involved in the dialogue, fosters ongoing resolve for Gwich'in to work together and identify closely with the calving grounds issue. According to a Canadian official (Confidential 2), the work of the PCMB was especially instrumental in ensuring Gwich'in communities were not only informed but also organized. It was within the mandate of the PCMB to both educate and consult on caribou issues within Gwich'in communities in Canada, and to establish formal mechanisms to do so. These not only included creating regular newsletters and other communications materials and having delegates from the PCMB empowered to act in each community, but extended to the PCMB organizing events to bring the broader community together, including American Gwich'in, along with important allies and decision makers. One important example was the 2000 Millennium Trek, which travelled across NWT, Yukon and Alaska from the easternmost to the westernmost ranges of the Porcupine caribou, bringing together Gwich'in, government officials, and a small number of invited conservationists in on-the-land experiences.<sup>206</sup> Gwich'in work within the villages as well as without continually brought talk of the calving grounds and their importance into the rhythms of community life, a process reinforced by caribou hunts as the caribou migrated—or failed to migrate—through communities. Although personal connection and having a personal

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<sup>206</sup> Although it included two separate youth treks (Gorrill, *Protecting the Caribou*), the Millennium Trek was invitation only (Confidential 2). The Trek took more than a year to prepare and included well-attended events in many communities and on the land (Gorrill, *Carrying a Torch for the Caribou*).

touch came to be an important facet of broader movement-building storytelling on the calving grounds issue in the continental United States and Canada, this kind of community organizing did not and could not come close to the level of community coherence and involvement achieved by the Gwich'in. It was paralleled, but not replicated, in the public storytelling efforts outside of the north.

However, this coherence in Gwich'in presentation came through in how Gwich'in shared their stories with others:

In Arctic Village we were strongly advised by our elders as speakers to step back a bit: when you go out there, you guys are going to speak on our life, on our future generation's lives that, from here on in you're going to do it with respect, you're never going to call down anybody on the campaign, you're going to walk with pride, and respect, and carry the spiritual ways when speaking about our vadzaih, ch'atthai' (caribou). The way we talk about our caribou, you guys are going to carry this with you at all times, and you will not talk anywhere without calling upon the ancestors to guide your words (Kassi).<sup>207</sup>

Although individuals travelled and spoke on the calving ground issue, they were doing so in the interests of future generations and as representatives of the Gwich'in (Schafer).<sup>208</sup> Spokespeople prepared themselves mentally and emotionally. This could include, as Norma Kassi described, speaking with elders and hearing their stories, reflecting deeply

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<sup>207</sup> I have chosen Norma Kassi's quote because it is especially succinct in covering many aspects of working 'in a good way' to which I will return. However, several Gwich'in, including Darius Elias, Esau Schafer, and Lorraine Netro made very similar comments.

<sup>208</sup> A fuller quotation from Schafer is included in Chapter 6.

on one's connection to the caribou, and also preparing appropriate regalia and formal clothing (Netro; Schafer). Spokespeople were expected to show respect to those they met with and spoke to, and to conduct themselves with a friendly demeanor (Elias, 2012),<sup>209</sup> as this would form the basis of building good relationships, ensuring the Gwich'in would be recognized and listened to (Schafer). To effectively make their case to journalists, to elected officials, and to the great swathe of communities that they encountered as they began to travel further from their home communities, Gwich'in representatives over time came to significantly adapt the formats in which they shared their stories in order to be more relatable to North Americans and more legible within North American public culture. However, the core disposition of respect, presence, and speaking from the heart remained constant, and inflected the politics and perceptions of those with whom they came in contact.

## **Transitions and Transformations: Public Storytelling and Movement Building**

In 1988, as part of what had developed into a decades-long effort to ensure that the Gwich'in story about the need to protect the calving grounds became a well-known and predominant narrative throughout North America, the GSC identified and began to work collaboratively with allies across North America. Allies helped Gwich'in people to reach new constituencies, including both the public and lawmakers, and to deliver their

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<sup>209</sup> While this may sound simple, in addressing issues that they believed essential to their survival, spokespeople sometimes faced ignorance, dismissal of their concerns, and language that was potentially inflammatory, such as the comments of George Bush that are seen in the opening minutes of the *Being Caribou* film. To always respond graciously in these circumstances required a great deal of self-composure and restraint.

message effectively in cross-cultural settings. Additionally, in their own outreach work on the Arctic Refuge, allies popularized narratives of Gwich'in as "caribou people" with a historical and present day stewardship role to play in determining the fate of the Arctic Refuge.

Tsing offers a productive framework for thinking through the frictions inherent in working in sprawling transnational and translocal coalitions. Within her analysis, travelling forms of story allow for difference while diminishing the distance between those engaged in a common cause. In her ethnography of the complex chains of interactions and actors at play in conflicts in the Indonesian rainforest — ranging from local villagers to urban students, global investors, UN agencies, and translocal environmental networks — Tsing argues that "scholars have had difficulty in imagining how to trace traveling forms of politics; the two most available models, national history and global circulation, territorialize and universalize, respectively, each erasing travel" (216).<sup>210</sup> Yet Tsing describes social movements as growing from "traveling forms of activism as well as the transformation of consciousness," and suggests that these processes are often interrelated: the circulation of compelling new ideas and inspiring leadership can be the spark for novel collaborations, transforming spaces of political

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<sup>210</sup> This is perhaps too easy a generalization, especially when considering scholarship published since 2005; Heise (6-8), in her summary of theoretical alternatives to nationalist identities, draws on the work of numerous anthropologists, philosophers, sociologists, literary critics, and political scientists to discuss how concepts of migration, diaspora, and exile are increasingly part of a more nuanced theorizing of "cultural forms of identity and belonging that are commensurate with the rapid growth in political, economic, and social interconnectedness that has characterized the last few decades" (6). Heise develops the concept of "eco-cosmopolitanism" to theorize the cross-cultural travel of forms of environmental politics. Tsing's point, however, remains germane: mobile forms of politics remain difficult to account for and trace.

possibility. Tsing puts forward the notion of "charismatic packages ... allegorical modules that speak to the possibilities of making a cause heard . . . (which) feature images, songs, morals, organizational plans, or stories" (227) to help describe how activism travels. These packages recalibrate—often shifting their timbre and meanings—as they resonate in each new political and cultural location. This is a complex and freighted process. As stories become unmoored from their origins and, "powerful carriers reformulate the stories they spread transnationally," Tsing highlights the tendency for transnational activists to unwittingly reproduce a colonial heritage as they repurpose stories to appeal to "universalist" values.<sup>211</sup> The work of the two multimedia initiatives discussed later in this chapter, the Last Great Wilderness Project slideshow tours and Caribou Commons, were unusual in that their constant reconnection with and inclusion of local indigenous and northern narratives served to constrain such unmoorings, ensuring that Gwich'in stories reached various communities either directly through Gwich'in or through intermediaries whose regular interactions with northern communities and landscapes kept their tellings accountable.

Gwich'in leadership was well aware of the risk of Gwich'in stories becoming the purview of others. Norma Kassi describes how, citing the harm caused by the animal rights movement, elders had been insistent that

we speak for ourselves as Gwich'in that our stand on the human rights aspect of our own means of subsistence, was our job, to protect the caribou calving grounds and the 1002 lands from development . . . That

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<sup>211</sup> Tsing is referring to liberal humanist values, such as those codified in the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, that activists often appeal to in order to strengthen their claims for change.



was a very strong direction that I was a little bit confused about as I took off with my first trip [as a spokesperson for the GSC], and then later on saw exactly what the elders were saying, that we had to somewhat stay at arms' length, but maintain our true self in connection to our caribou as we have lived for over 30,000 years, and tell our stories with truth and honour, and that we always must seek direction at all times. (Kassi)

By directing that spokespeople keep open regular formal and informal channels of communication with their home communities, and return periodically to elders for guidance, Gwich'in elders had helped ensure that spokespeople maintained a faithfulness to northern Gwich'in realities, which they carried forward in the accounts they circulated transnationally. Through speaking engagements — which very often accompanied slideshow tours or other multimedia events such as those organized by Caribou Commons or the Last Great Wilderness Project — they helped foster local-to-local (or translocal) connections, and nurture a kind of "happy collaboration" that allowed for what Tsing (246-7) describes as "difference within common cause."

Tsing argues that such overlapping, linking difference is important to culturally productive kinds of collaboration that can foster new subjectivities. She cautions, however, that "common cause is also a cultural encounter, and the objects in which they appear to agree are most successful if they appeal simultaneously to divergent cultural legacies." In Tsing's view, robust coalitions include divergent and even contradictory interpretations of their common cause, especially as their generalized goals become distinct "engaged universals" (8) as they are reworked within particular

communities or socio-cultural settings. However, as local configurations become more attenuated from one another, social movements may unravel.<sup>212</sup>

The various speaking tours and other events that brought Gwich'in people into regular contact with their southern allies contributed to meaningful overlap and the sharing of themes and values between different coalition narratives about the calving grounds, shortening the attenuations that Tsing cites as often causing coalitions to fracture.<sup>213</sup> This was especially important given the difficult histories between indigenous peoples and non-indigenous populations, as mediated through American and Canadian state-indigenous relations. As reviewed in Chapter 2, this shared past included not only particular grievances that remained unredressed or only partially redressed,<sup>214</sup> but a pervasive set of misconceptions, prejudices and demeaning stereotypes of aboriginal peoples. Given the hardship and taxing nature of speaking tours and trips to Washington, it was essential that Gwich'in spokespeople be as

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<sup>212</sup> Tsing, who views social movement collaborations as contingent (perhaps tactical in the sense of De Certeau), and promotes “productive confusion” (Tsing 247) within them as a creative force for political possibility, is less concerned with the forging of long-term alliances. If the tension of increasingly incommensurable interpretations cannot be held within a cohesive movement, then the unraveling and exposures of the ‘frictions’ of the gaps, erasures, and abrasions at the heart of global interconnections is itself a politically productive exercise. Her argument differs from my approach, which is more concerned with long-term, incremental change to politics through a repeated circulation of ideas that gradually builds consensus among communities of concern.

<sup>213</sup> Lenny Kohm strongly emphasized to me how important constant contact was between aboriginal partners and conservation groups, and how it is always at risk of being neglected. The twenty-fifth anniversary for the gathering in Arctic Village, which took place in August of 2013, is an important example. Important coalition members, such as conservation and faith groups, sent representatives, but Mr. Kohm voiced concern that the major conservation groups placed enough importance on their attendance, and that there was not enough renewal taking place in the movement connecting younger generations of southern organizers with aboriginal communities. Confidential 2 also stressed the importance of cultivating such translocal and intergenerational connections.

<sup>214</sup> An example of this would be the multi-generational impact of residential schools.

effective as possible, and the ‘cultural’ knowledge of Washington insiders that southern allies had was invaluable in supporting Gwich’in in better crafting their stories to reach southerners with little understanding of northern subsistence lifestyles.

At the same time, a great deal of trust needed to be built in order for such sharing to take place. So, for example, behind-the-scenes suggestions by Canadian embassy staff about dressing with appropriate formality for Congressional meetings were taken up by Gwich’in spokespeople adopting a protocol of bringing traditional regalia as they felt appropriate. Pre-existing relationships, built through land claims negotiations, and the hybrid governance interfaces northern indigenous nations had created, facilitated the cross-cultural re-orienting of approaches while still remaining true to Gwich’in identity and experience.<sup>215</sup> For instance, early on in their collaboration with Gwich’in, Canadian government officials had arranged a meeting with various people in Washington who had the potential to act as interlocutors with US government officials. Unlike the wildlife biologists and other northern officials that Gwich’in more commonly dealt with, many of these individuals, especially Congressional staff, had little experience with rural culture or northern subsistence. A Canadian government staff person took aside then PCMB secretary Doug Urquhart to suggest

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<sup>215</sup> Given the long history of indigenous people being forced, for example in hospitals and residential schools, to wear the clothes of settler culture while indigenous dress was plagiarized and misappropriated in popular culture (for example, in innumerable sports team logos such as the Atlanta Braves’ warrior in a headdress), by default a suggestion about an indigenous person’s attire enters a charged context. Creating a different context of more respectful relationship was required as a precursor to having such conversations.

That people need to talk about their subsistence needs and the fact that they are living off the land. They don't need to talk to people who don't even go to a butcher to get their meat, (but) buy it packaged in packages... about the blood or the guts steaming in the morning air or fur being ripped off or taken off flesh and dried ... he [Doug Urquhart] got it and he started to introduce those terms, not in a way that diminished what the community had to say, but in a way that was immediately accessible to the brains in Washington without the immediate walls being put up when people hear about hunting (Confidential 2).

The PCMB not only acted as a conduit for shifting the terminology Gwich'in used to convey their reality to outsiders, but helped to select and build the capacity of suitable Gwich'in (beyond the small number of GSC spokespeople) from the communities who could go on speaking tours or act as representatives at meetings in Washington.<sup>216</sup> Additionally, it was through events such as the PCMB organized Millennium Trek, where participants had northern, on-the-land experiences of storytelling, that allies gained cultural sensitivity and understanding of the potential of Gwich'in storytelling such that they were able to open productive dialogues on how Gwich'in could maximize that potential in cross-cultural settings (Confidential 2).

In the context of the long-term struggle to prevent oil and gas leasing in the Arctic Refuge, the regular circulation over decades of “charismatic packages” of

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<sup>216</sup> In the 1990s and early 2000s, the Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation specifically funded the PCMB's educational and capacity building efforts on the Arctic Refuge issue (Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation).

storytellers and their music, slides, and other multimedia, helped invigorate and expand grassroots activist networks, and unite people in a shared vision. In his detailed comparative analysis of factors promoting successful transboundary conservation initiatives, Chester (xiv, 217-238) notes that perhaps the most important lesson from his research was that Yellowstone to Yukon (Y2Y)'s distinctly cohesive and effective coalition was marked by the fact that its leadership would respond to his research questions not in terms of delineating a particular history, but by returning to the idea/animating vision of Y2Y to contextualize their efforts. His interviewees, representing a wide swathe of conservation leaders in the Y2Y region, regularly credited the organizing vision of landscape connectivity behind Y2Y as creating "a mind-set change in the environmental community" (Parks Canada official Kevin Van Tighem qtd. in Chester 166) in which agency personnel and academics took up the vocabulary of Y2Y, connectivity and conservation science as a kind of common framework. Harvey Locke, to whom the popularization of the Y2Y concept is attributed, describes his role as helping to make a "coherent mosaic" of "yearnings and ideas and intellectual concepts" (Chester 145) such that they could persuade decision-makers, while conservation advocate Steven Legault describes the creation of the Y2Y concept as contributing to a "landscape of hope" that reinvigorated, energized, and inspired conservationists by reinterpreting small-scale initiatives, and their day-to-day struggles and attritions, as a connected and meaningful part of a far bigger picture. In Ganz's terms (Ganz and Lin), the Y2Y vision helped individuals rearticulate their stories as stories of a much larger "us" at the vanguard of a political zeitgeist, a "story of now." In building support for their localized causes, Y2Y provided activists with "a

compelling name, image, and vision that is capable of garnering the awareness, interest and engagement of large sectors of the public both within the region and beyond” (former Greater Yellowstone Coalition Executive Director Ed Lewis qtd. in Chester 171).

Similarly, the Last Great Wilderness Project, Caribou Commons, and other comparable multimedia initiatives used a form of social movement storytelling to involve and connect communities across North America under a common vision of protecting the Arctic Refuge. Moreover, these projects continually bridged this grassroots support with the high level national and international political work spearheaded by Gwich’in and conservation groups, especially during George W. Bush’s presidency.<sup>217</sup> They helped ensure that local individuals were continually reconnected with a larger vision, and that through their physical presence in campaigning and in high-level activities such as Alaska Wilderness Week, local

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<sup>217</sup> I have offered two pertinent examples of this work, Caribou Commons and Lenny Kohm’s slideshows, as opposed to the entire history of campaigning efforts since 1988 to protect the Arctic Refuge; it is unfortunately beyond the scope of this dissertation to fully address some other quite compelling initiatives that contributed greatly to building civil society interest, such as the work of Subhanker Banerjee. Also, while my research is focused specifically on the work done to build a network in civil society, it should be acknowledged that journalists and documentary producers produced a vast array of films, print articles, radio documentaries, and other media about the ANWR land use dispute that was diffused in this time period through many mainstream and alternative media channels, and which often included or focused on Gwich’in perspectives. Additionally, I have not focused on the counter-campaign, which was extremely well funded. Standlee (73-85), for example, delves into some depth on Arctic Power, a “grassroots” group which he describes as an “oil front NGO”, supported by millions of state of Alaska taxpayer dollars every year. This counter-campaign can itself be situated within what Brulle labels the “climate change counter movement”, which his research demonstrates to be funded by industry and wealthy individuals at a level of about \$1 billion a year since 2003 (Goldenberg).

realities of community activists were made to count as, in Tsing's terms, a productive friction within the broad umbrella coalition that was largely organized and directed by large American conservation groups.

By the early 2000's, when Sarah James, Norma Kassi and Jonathan Solomon jointly won the Goldman Environmental Prize, the most significant award of its kind, for their awareness-raising work, the Arctic Refuge issue had gone from a relatively obscure regional issue to one of the most recognized resource development conflicts in North America, with a 2004 poll by Zogby International finding that Americans opposed drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) by a margin of 55 to 38 % (National Wildlife Federation).<sup>218</sup> On the ground, grassroots educational efforts in all fifty states and Canada, tied into the high-level strategic work of major American environmental groups working in coalition with each other and with Gwich'in leadership, had generated and maintained political pressure on individual Representatives and Senators voting on drilling in the Arctic Refuge. To give a sense of the breadth of these networks and how prior multimedia tours created receptivity for the Being Caribou project, the next sections briefly outline two significant initiatives: the tours organized by Lenny Kohm, and some of the major initiatives of the Caribou Commons.

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<sup>218</sup> As previously noted, although not widely known to the public, within conservation circles the calving grounds area was conservation community priority at least as early as the 1950s. An hour long documentary episode of the Yukon Native Broadcasting current affairs show NEDAA, "Walk to Washington" (2002), concerning the Caribou Commons organized tour, alludes to similar if earlier polling data.

## **“Our Little Caribou Brother”: the Work of Lenny Kohm**

In 1987, freelance writer and photographer Lenny Kohm travelled to Old Crow because of a chance encounter in a laundromat in Dawson City, where he had got to talking about the calving grounds with some Gwich'in youth in town for a softball tournament (Kohm).<sup>219</sup> He then visited the Arctic Refuge for a few days and, stopping in Arctic Village in the same week as a US Congressional field hearing, was shocked at how Gwich'in representatives, some of whom had travelled great distances to attend, were marginalized within the hearing process.<sup>220</sup> Kohm travelled to Old Crow for ten days that same summer, becoming more and more interested in the Gwich'in people and their stake in calving grounds protection. Through the Sierra Club, Kohm was given the opportunity to testify in Congress (at a Senate hearing) on the issue in the fall; this experience caused him to wonder

What would happen if I really tried to do something? So I put together this slideshow and talked to local colleges, in living rooms, and one thing led to another and pretty soon I was travelling around the country with a Gwich'in person – as much as I could with a Gwich'in person – talking to everything from the independent oil producers of Texas, all the way to a hippy group in northern Arkansas that had to bring a generator in because

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<sup>219</sup> At the end of September 2014, Lenny Kohm passed away at his home at the age of 74. I am grateful for his generosity in sharing his stories with me, which he did in order to help the Gwich'in. He was a great friend of the Gwich'in people and is sorely missed.

<sup>220</sup> Kohm was very aware of the history of colonization and its impacts on indigenous people. As discussed in more detail in Ch. 7, he framed his thoughts on the hearings with “500 years ago Cortes and Pizarro wiped out the Aztecs and the Inca. And 150 years ago, we wiped out the buffalo and displaced the Native people. Here we are, you know, almost 2000 at that time, and we’re getting ready to do it again” (Kohm).



they were all off the grid, but everything in between there – Rotary Clubs, Kiwanis Clubs, Sierra Clubs, garden clubs, colleges, anything, anybody, church groups, anybody that would listen to me (Kohm).

In the spring of 1988, when Kohm was first starting to do presentations, he invited Norma Kassi, who was heavily involved in the Gwich'in organizing efforts, to join him on tour in a targeted Congressional district in Sonoma County, California.<sup>221</sup> Because Kassi was such a powerful and moving speaker, he realized that having an indigenous person tell his or her story had the potential to greatly increase the effectiveness of presentations.

Kohm spent all of summer 1988 in the north, largely in the village of Old Crow and visiting families at their hunting camps in Crow Flats, and he attended the 1988 Gathering in Arctic Village. At the end of his stay, Kohm went to the elders of Old Crow with his idea for the speaking tours:

I told them what I was going to do, or what I had in mind, and I said I don't know how to do this – and they said, don't worry, all you have to do is talk from your heart, and whatever you do, do it in a good way (Kohm).

Kohm took these words to heart, with the “good way” becoming central to his work as an activist. His story offers an example of Gwich'in leadership inflecting outreach efforts to protecting the calving grounds by encouraging campaigners to build a movement consistent with Gwich'in outlooks and values. “Translocal” individuals — people who

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<sup>221</sup> As discussed later in this chapter, the election of George Bush had emboldened Republicans to introduce new legislative measures to open the calving grounds to oil and gas leasing. The Alaska Coalition spearheaded district-by-district efforts to sway individual Senators.

had strong local connections in Gwich'in communities, but could also function effectively in the locales of political power (especially in Washington DC), and create strong local-to-local bonds with the many small and large communities they reached out to — were key to these efforts. GSC spokespeople/board members regularly joined speaking tours and met with government officials, while other Gwich'in, such as Chief Joe Linklater of Old Crow<sup>222</sup> also grew into translocal roles through their responsibilities in other political structures.<sup>223</sup> A small number of non-Gwich'in individuals also maintained close, long-term ties to northern communities while campaigning vigorously outside of the North. Kohm, for example, traveled north three to four times a year during the fifteen years that he dedicated to the campaign. He tried to visit every single Gwich'in community each year, and still considers many Gwich'in, especially from Old Crow, to be family (Kohm).

With these close ties, translocal individuals such as Kohm mediated between traditional Gwich'in values and North American politics, attempting to realize the Gwich'in "good way" far from its home place. These individuals were exercising what Ganz might label "leadership in practice" (Ganz and Lin 354), building a social movement through "the interaction of five core practices: building relationships committed to a common purpose; translating values into sources of motivation through narrative; turning resources into the capacity to achieve purpose by strategizing; mobilizing and deploying resources as clear, measurable, visible action; and structuring authority so as to facilitate the effective distribution of leadership" (Ganz and Lin 354).

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<sup>222</sup> Who has been chief, with one interruption, for well over a decade.

<sup>223</sup> For example, various chairs of the PCMB have advocated on behalf of the caribou in a variety of settings, including in Washington DC (Joe Tetlich, PCMB Chair, personal conversation, Dec 2012).

Kohm, for example, believed that “organizing is about one person talking to another person” (Kohm), and that stories — particularly Gwich'in stories — were a powerful way to forge initial connections. Kohm found that his public presentations “really became all storytelling ... just telling stories about my experiences there and with the people” (Kohm). He began to structure his slideshows

to create kind of a framework for them (Gwich'in people) to speak in. So they really didn't have to talk about the technical parts of the issue. That was up to me. But it gave them space, I think, just to tell stories, to tell stories about hunting caribou or why caribou was so important, and just about their lives in general because that's what people seemed to really be interested in (Kohm).

As about half of the presentations that Kohm did were not for environmental constituencies but for Rotary and Kiwanis clubs, church groups, schoolchildren, or almost any other community group that showed interest, the biggest point of connection and engagement with audiences tended to spring from curiosity about the Gwich'in speakers and their ways of life: how many children did they have? What was the education system like? In speaking truthfully and from the heart about the things of greatest importance in their lives, Gwich'in speakers fostered goodwill and made their very far away lives relatable: wanting certain opportunities for one's children, wanting to pass on one's culture, and being concerned for the future and one's livelihood were common concerns even to audiences living very different daily contexts. Shared stories surfaced shared values and cultivated a sense of solidarity. As Ganz (“Public Narrative”; “Leading Change”) has described, such social movement storytelling accomplishes

powerful affective work by connecting individuals' stories to a "story of us" that becomes a "story of now" when it presents a challenge or choice, by which social movement participants, through becoming implicated, can actualize common values, overcoming the dissonance between the world as is and the world as they believe it should be.<sup>224</sup>

Kohm focused on quickly transforming a sense of solidarity into concrete community building: his goal was to leave a given presentation with a list of individuals who already had or were empowered to take a next step (such as donating money, calling their elected representative, or organizing another awareness raising event), and a means to connect them into a structure that would support the self-perpetuation of this new community of concern (Kohm). To show trust and encourage initiative, Kohm would always leave this list for a new volunteer to mail back to him.<sup>225</sup> Kohm chose this approach because he wished to emulate the "good way"/ strong focus on community that had so inspired him in spending time with the Gwich'in, whom for centuries had had to find ways to live in relative harmony with each other in isolated villages and camps, as they depended on one another to survive in a harsh environment (Kohm). Interestingly, Kohm's approach modeled the practices that Ganz and Lin (353-361) describe as creating "cascading leadership" within social movements: in maintaining a personal mentoring

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<sup>224</sup> A number of researchers in social movement theory broach similar themes. Within what Heijden labels the "social-constructivist approach", there is considerable emphasis on the role of discourse and framing in movement building. Gamson's work in particular parallel's some of Ganz's themes: he describes collective action frames in social justice movements as emerging from feelings of injustice, a belief in the possibility of agency, and an identity component which "refers to the process of defining a 'we', typically in opposition to a 'they' who have different interests or values" (Gamson, 1992: 7 qtd. in Heijden).

<sup>225</sup> Kohm claims that no one ever failed to mail the list back.

connection to fellow activists, but also immediately encouraging people to step up and take action and ownership of the movement, Kohm was teaching leadership by having individuals develop leadership skills in practice through action.

Kohm built a rotating list of approximately 300 ‘AAA’ or ‘Ardent Arctic Activist’ volunteers whom he would personally call to instigate participation in Arctic Refuge campaigning activities; he maintained connection to these volunteers by personally congratulating or reporting back to them on the outcomes of the initiatives that they took on. Kohm’s technique was so effective that he was able to cultivate a core “drop everything” list of approximately 60 people who could be counted on at a moment’s notice for big tasks such as getting 500 calls to a congressional office within a day, or organizing five slideshows in a week.

While his focus was largely grassroots awareness raising, from the outset, Kohm worked with major environmental groups that had a strong lobbying presence in Washington. Whenever he brought Gwich'in people on tour, if it was feasible Kohm would include a stop in Washington DC, where, with the logistical support of the Alaska Wilderness League and/or Alaska Coalition members, Gwich'in would speak with elected representatives. From the time it began in 1991 with the “Celebrate Wild Alaska” gathering,<sup>226</sup> Kohm encouraged both Gwich'in and local organizers to attend what became the large biannual Alaska Wilderness Weeks that Heuer and Allison later took part in.

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<sup>226</sup> Nelson (264) provides more detail on this first gathering, and how it fit within the larger picture of the legislative efforts of the Alaskan conservation movement in Washington DC.

Kohm used slideshow tours to help connect local activists not just with each other but also with the Sierra Club, Alaska Coalition, Alaska Wilderness League, and other large conservation movement organizations that coordinated major actions on the Arctic Refuge file. Conversely, at high-level Alaskan conservation movement meetings, Kohm frequently advocated for the grassroots, and particularly northern indigenous people, to be consulted more often and earlier in the design of campaigns and campaign events (Kohm). While it was and remains difficult to bridge between community level grassroots activism and the complex political negotiations among power brokers in Washington DC, Kohm mediated between these realities not just by moving and communicating between them of his own accord, but by actively supporting grassroots activists to move into and through national and international environmental group networks, becoming themselves points of translocal connection. The intensive experiences of travelling together and delivering up to several presentations a day was also important to creating strong bonds; in my interviews with Gwich'in leaders, the non-native movement leadership that they mentioned most often consisted of people such as Lenny Kohm ("our little caribou brother"), Ken Madsen and his son Malkolm Boothroyd (see next section), and MP Larry Bagnell, who had travelled and lobbied by their side, sometimes in extremely difficult circumstances.<sup>227</sup>

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<sup>227</sup> One incident mentioned to me in interviews and that came up in an informal conversation with PCMB chair Joe Tetlich, was Gwich'in becoming stuck in Washington during the 'lock-down' on September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001. Larry Bagnell and some Gwich'in delegates had checked out of their hotels at the end of Wilderness Week and gone on one last set of meetings on Capitol Hill when planes struck the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. The Gwich'in and their supporters doubled up in the remaining hotel rooms as Canadian Gwich'in became stuck in a highly militarized capital. They were able to leave only because Larry Bagnell, working with Canadian Embassy staff,

Kohm estimates that over a fifteen-year period he presented over 2000 slideshows, with an average audience of between 50 to 200 people (Kohm),<sup>228</sup> which translates to his efforts reaching between 100,000 and 400,000 people. Moreover, by bringing hundreds of sympathizers into active roles as local organizers, and encouraging those organizers to build relationships and circulate both laterally within the movement and through its upper echelons, Kohm was helping to build both strong and weak ties within the movement, facilitating trust, motivation, and commitment, as well as access to information, skills, and learning (Ganz, “Leading Change” 532). Slowly but surely, grassroots educational initiatives such as Kohm’s were building pan-North American awareness about the Arctic Refuge.

## **Building a Caribou Commons**

The Caribou Commons initiative, a local initiative from within the Yukon, in several ways directly patterned or prepared the path for the stories of the Being Caribou expedition to circulate through non-commercial civil society networks. Caribou Commons grew out of the Yukon Wildlands Project, a partnership which began in the early 1990s between musician and sound artist Matthew Lien, and writer and photographer Ken Madsen, a whitewater paddler who had been instrumental in helping to

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managed to find space for them on a bus chartered by some Environment Canada staffers who had been at a conference in Washington. When Bagnell and the Gwich’in delegation crossed the border into Canada at three in the morning, the bus erupted in cheers and spontaneous expressions of relief.

<sup>228</sup> Audience size varied between one and 2500.

establish the Tatshenshini-Alsek Wilderness Park (Caribou Commons).<sup>229</sup> Originally, to raise awareness of threatened northern wildlands, the project produced a yearly multimedia show of visual content and music (either recorded or played live by the multi-instrumental Wildlands Band) which was put on in small Yukon and Northwest Territories community venues such as the Guild Hall, a community theatre and event space in the Porter Creek subdivision of Whitehorse. Source materials and inspiration for the shows came from time spent in northern wildlands. Madsen was especially affected by his extensive expeditions in the “caribou commons,” an area of the Porcupine caribou herd’s range which includes protected and unprotected areas in Canada and Alaska.<sup>230</sup> Madsen photographed the landscape, and invited other artists, including Lien, to join him on parts of his treks. Lien made field recordings which he incorporated into his compositions, and became more and more drawn into the calving grounds issue as he developed relationships with Yukon First Nation communities and began a project of recording stories and songs in aboriginal languages.<sup>231</sup>

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<sup>229</sup> Madsen later co-authored a guide to paddling Yukon rivers with Peter Mather, also a photographer who took part in Caribou Commons.

<sup>230</sup> The ‘caribou commons’ as a local term referred to the idea of a continuous, cross-border protected area for the Porcupine caribou herd. University of Alaska (Fairbanks) professor Gary Kofinas used this term in his doctoral thesis about the PCMB, and has also used the term in public presentations.

<sup>231</sup> In another interesting twist on the translocal —and in an interesting parallel to the trans-local story trajectory of *Pluie the wolf* (see Ch. 3) — during this time frame Lien became a pop superstar in Southeast Asia after a small new age and ethnic record label in Taiwan in 1996 picked up the “Bleeding Wolves” CD that Lien had created in response to a Yukon government wolf kill program. The CD moved 200 000 units by the end of the year and launched Lien on a journey to becoming a much-lauded cultural figure in Taiwan, and a prominent musician whose performances have attracted audiences in the tens of thousands. Lien’s two albums to raise awareness of the calving grounds and benefit Caribou Commons, 1999’s *Caribou Commons* and 2005’s *Arctic Refuge*, have found their primary audience in Southeast Asia, where Lien is more widely known for his



By 1999, a small cadre of musicians, artists, wilderness enthusiasts, environmentalists and Gwich'in were working consistently on Caribou Commons, which had turned its focus specifically to advocacy to protect the calving grounds. Norma Kassi became a Caribou Commons spokesperson, and the group had begun to work more and more with a broad range of allies, which over time came to include local conservation groups such as the Yukon Conservation Society (YCS) and the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS); local agencies such as the PCMB;<sup>232</sup> environmental and arts funding bodies, such as the Banff Mountain Culture Program at the Banff Centre for the Arts; major American environmental groups such as the Alaska Wilderness League; and even the Canadian government.<sup>233</sup> The project gradually gained momentum locally, continuing to tour shows in small communities and to sponsor events such as school contests and photography exhibits (Mather, "Northern Rivers Coordinator"), but also selling out shows at the Yukon Arts Centre (Mather, Interview). In 1998, the project began to tour not just locally in the north, but across Canada and into the United States. In 2002, supported by an advisory board that included heads of the Sierra Club, the World Wildlife Fund, and the Wilderness Society, the Gwich'in chiefs of Old Crow and

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foreign and local advocacy work for conservation and for indigenous people. See Gill and also Levin.

<sup>232</sup> Which supported the 1998 Last Great Wilderness Slideshow which toured South Carolina and Georgia in June of 1998 ("Porcupine Caribou Herd").

<sup>233</sup> For example, as part of the Canadian government's lobbying efforts to protect the Arctic Refuge, Caribou Commons was asked to play an invitation-only show at the Canadian Embassy in Washington in 1999 (D. T. Baker). In 2003, through the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT), the Canadian government funded the production of a DVD of the Caribou Commons slideshow. DFAIT itself retained copies to use in its diplomatic and educational efforts, and 700 copies were funded for Caribou Commons members and allies to be able to make presentations more widely (Mather, "Caribou Commons Update—May 1, 2003").

Arctic Village, Norma Kassi, and David Suzuki, Caribou Commons organized an ambitious “Walk to Washington” in which three separate teams began self-propelled journeys from different parts of America, creating a “three month human migration” (Lien quoted in Halifax) intended to raise awareness about the caribou’s plight. Along the 8000 miles of journeying, participants (including Gwich’in people) carried out approximately 135 public events including, concerts, slide shows, press conferences, book signings, and rallies.<sup>234</sup>

From January to May 2003, as Allison and Heuer were beginning their trek, Caribou Commons organized slideshow tours with Gwich’in speakers in eight American states, including five states with Senators identified by the Alaska Coalition as key to a March Senate vote on drilling provisions in the 2004 budget. Caribou Commons also took the lead — working mainly with organizers in America, including members of the Alaska Coalition — in organizing the first Arctic Action Day, in which 21 organizers in 20 states planned Arctic Refuge events for the Saturday before Earth Day (Mather, “Caribou Commons Update—May 1, 2003”). 2003). In 2005 and 2006, *Being Caribou* was distributed and shown extensively by the Alaska Wilderness League and its allies as part of its support efforts for Arctic Action Days ahead of crucial Congressional votes.

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<sup>234</sup> I have based this number on the events listed on schedules of the three routes that were posted along with local organizer contacts to the Caribou Commons website in 2002 at [http://web.archive.org/web/20021229102530/http://cariboucommons.com/walk/route\\_cross\\_continental.php](http://web.archive.org/web/20021229102530/http://cariboucommons.com/walk/route_cross_continental.php). Portions of all three legs of the tour are filmed in the NEDAA documentary “Walk to Washington,” and reported on in other media and other ‘grey literature’ such as the Alaska Coalition’s Summer 2002 Newsletter; so while not every event can be confirmed it is reasonable to assume most events in the final schedule took place.

## **Arctic Refuge Action on the Cusp of the Being Caribou Expedition**

By 2003, when the Being Caribou expedition began its media and public outreach efforts, Gwich'in leadership and the environmental community (both in the north and in the continental United States) had been coordinating their efforts on the Arctic Refuge for more than 15 years. Together, they had built both a massive network of grassroots volunteers in communities across the US and Canada, and one of the most long-standing and effective civil society lobbies in Washington.

Over the course of the late 80s and 90s, Gwich'in had gradually grown to have more of a presence in Alaska Coalition activities. In 1991, Gwich'in representatives participated in the first Alaska Wilderness Week. Through to the present day, Gwich'in representatives continue to play several important roles in the Week, including leading panels during the educational portion of the week, taking on a prominent ceremonial role in the reception arranged by the Canadian Embassy, and fully participating in the visits with Senators and Representatives in the latter part of the week.<sup>235</sup> When, with the support of key Alaska Coalition members, the Alaska Wilderness League (AWL) was formed in 1993 to act as a solely Alaska focused environmental NGO, able to concentrate

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<sup>235</sup> In the early to mid 2000 period in which the Being Caribou expedition took place, the Alaska Coalition included among its Canadian members official government organizations such as the Canadian Embassy Environment section and the Porcupine Caribou Management Board, as well as the Vuntut Gwich'in government and the Tr'ondek Hwech'in government (listed with the outdated designation "Dawson Indian Band") (Standlee 97). The Coalition was not just a coalition of NGOs and citizen's groups: over the years as it grew, government bodies, unions, and churches also became prominent members. Church groups in particular became so involved at a grassroots level that the Episcopal Church sent its own representative to the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary Arctic Village gathering (Kohm). As previously mentioned, the Canadian government also played a prominent role in the Washington activities of the Coalition for many years, although this role has diminished since the 2006 election of the Harper government.

all its research, coordination, outreach, and lobbying efforts on Alaskan concerns, Norma Kassi (a GSC spokesperson) was a founding member, serving on the board between 1993 and 2007.<sup>236</sup>

The Alaska Wilderness League (AWL) became extremely adept in processing rapidly shifting legislative developments related to Alaskan conservation and the Arctic Refuge, and at cultivating inside connections even in offices of members of Congress who were unsupportive of Alaskan wilderness causes.<sup>237</sup> AWL tracked not only relevant developments and legislation, but exactly where Congresspeople stood on Alaskan conservation issues and what constituencies, if any, would have the most leverage to change their votes. The Coalition was able to inform the GSC of important hearings and legislative processes in which Gwich'in might want to intervene, to support Gwich'in advocates in working through strategic approaches for influencing legislators and legislation,<sup>238</sup> and to help Gwich'in leadership secure meetings on the Hill (Netro; Fast, 79-83). While northern aboriginal voices played a key role in convincing decision-

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<sup>236</sup> Initially, the Alaska Wilderness League was formed for this purpose; however, over the years it de facto took over more and more responsibilities for coordination of the Alaska Coalition. In 2007 AWL officially integrated with the Alaska Coalition, becoming the main facilitator and coordinator of the network. See <http://www.alaskacoalition.org/about-us/our-history/>.

<sup>237</sup> My sources discussed specific examples, but due to their sensitivity I have omitted these details from the text.

<sup>238</sup> I witnessed an example of this at Alaska Wilderness Week 2012, where I was in a meeting group that included Clarence Alexander of the Gwich'in Steering Committee (and a very accomplished leader) and native Hawaiian leader Chuck Burrows. The preparatory meeting we had before meeting with Congressional representatives involved some very intensive and detailed discussion between these leaders and AWL's Arctic Refuge campaign director Lydia Weiss.

makers, in some cases the more powerful discourses were either those of international diplomacy or those of conservation science (Confidential 2; Bagnell).<sup>239</sup>

By the early 2000s, AWL was the main coordinating body for Alaska Wilderness Week meetings on Capitol Hill, and it coordinated strategy not only within the League but with other key players — for example, a Canadian official attended key strategy meetings, making sure Canadian strategy on the calving grounds issue was attuned with the work of the coalition (Confidential 2). In September of 2003, when Allison and Heuer participated in Alaska Wilderness Week, they plugged into the Alaska Wilderness League and Alaska Coalition networks, greatly expanding the reach of the Being Caribou expedition and effectively targeting individuals and communities willing to take action to protect the Arctic Refuge.

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<sup>239</sup> Although it should be noted that indirectly Gwich'in had a role in both of these: through land claims, Canada became the de facto diplomatic voice in Washington for Gwich'in concerns about the calving grounds, and many of the most influential scientific reports, such as 1993's "Sensitive Habitats of the Porcupine Caribou" which was commissioned by the International Porcupine Caribou Management Board, came about because Gwich'in had negotiated to create the governance bodies which commissioned them. Yukon MP Larry Bagnell also played a large role in Canadian diplomacy. He frequently travelled to Washington at his own expense to support efforts to protect the calving grounds, and he convinced both Prime Minister Martin and Prime Minister Chrétien to raise the calving grounds issue in their bilateral meetings with the US President.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Being Caribou, Being Part of a Social Movement**

The previous two chapters have sketched the social process of storying into which the Being Caribou project entered in 2002, when Allison and Heuer began actively consulting with potential stakeholders. Recognizing that the Being Caribou project is both emergent from and imbricated with a broader set of stories about the Arctic Refuge, this chapter concentrates on the interface between the Being Caribou project, and, in particular, social movement storytelling about the calving grounds in the 2003 to 2004 period. As Alison and Heuer were undertaking their arduous journey following the migrating caribou across a frozen landscape, the Alaska Wilderness League and its allies, including Gwich'in organizations, were steadily ramping up their calving grounds work. Much as had been the case of 1970s campaigns for legislative protection of Alaskan wilderness, the increasing level of threat was prompting Arctic Refuge campaigners to rapidly evolve new forms of advocacy and education, particularly by availing themselves of the possibilities offered by new technology.

This chapter begins with a short introduction to some film and media theory that can help extend my 'lifecycle methodology' to include these new patterns of social movement storytelling and action. Next, it concretely describes the outreach begun by the Being Caribou project during its expedition phase, before outlining how the outreach work of the Alaska Coalition in the 2001-3 period set the stage for Heuer and Allison's appearance at Alaska Wilderness Week in the fall of 2003. The interactions Heuer and Allison had as they showed film rushes and told stories about their journey during Wilderness Week and during a subsequent northern communities tour profoundly shaped

the Being Caribou expedition story. After briefly turning to some recent writings which theorize participatory media-making in the age of the internet, the chapter analyses the concrete ways in which interacting with northern community members and advocates for Alaskan conservation altered the story arc of the Being Caribou expedition, and the trajectories that the *Being Caribou* film, book and other expedition media products were to follow.

### **Moving Images: the Materiality and Affect of Cinematic Lifecycles**

In recent decades, a range of technological innovations have converged to radically reconfigure how media circulate within North American culture. These include but are not limited to much more portable film, video, and sound equipment, as well as new digitally-based viewing and listening platforms that create a variety of quick, easy, and cheap ways to communicate. In attempting an ecocritical reading of the augmented possibilities of film within this expanding media environment, Ivakhiv challenges readers to think of the “movement” of films/moving images through the lens of relational ecologies which

entail the material production and consumption of those produced images; the social or intersubjective relations of people whose efforts shape and inform those images; the people and things portrayed or represented by them; those delivering, receiving, interpreting, and being moved by them; and the cognitive, affective, and perceptual relations connecting bodies, sensations, desires, sensory organs, and media formations (Ivakhiv, *Ecologies of the Moving Image* 5).

While communications and cultural studies have long been concerned with media reception, in recent decades, the study of visual culture and moving images has yielded new methods for tracing the affective and material journeys of media through the circuits of culture. In her influential “Jurassic Park Post-Fordism”, Balides invited researchers to reconsider the enduring popularity of the commercial film *Jurassic Park* as arising within the mutually reinforcing circuits of publicity and product tie-ins that contributed to the film’s success and cultural longevity. She detailed the continuous circulation of over five thousand licensed *Jurassic Park* products, ranging from multi-media spin-offs such as books, video games, and DVDs, to lunch boxes, Halloween costumes, watches, screensavers, lip balm and any number of other consumer products segmented to reach specific audiences. Germane to Chapter 5’s discussion of the “Disneyfication” of wilderness as it is rendered in popular North American culture, Balides linked the production and reproduction of a seemingly endless chain of Jurassic-themed consumer goods to the “imbricated relations between economics and the film as cultural text” (Balides 141). Even as the film critiqued the theme park mentality, its careful placement of spin-off products<sup>240</sup> and easily reproducible logos and tropes (notably the T-Rex narrative image/merchandizing logo (144) paved the way for a cross-over between film-world and “real” world of a themed *Jurassic* juggernaut of consumer goods whose value was linked to their status as storied objects in a cinematic universe.

Balides’ research introduced a new way of understanding links between cinema’s affect and its material effects, as indexed through consumer capitalism. Her study offered

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<sup>240</sup> An example is the long shot of the *Jurassic Park* theme park gift shop, containing many products actually retailed in conjunction with the film.



evidence that “Cinema produces worlds which interact with the extra – cinematic world” (Ivakhiv, *An Ecophilosophy* 88). This interaction takes place both in the formation of cinema through “a social, material, and perceptual appropriation of the pre-existing world” (Ivakhiv, *An Ecophilosophy* 89), and in the ways that the cultural capital produced through cinema finds expression – be it via a reinforcement of consumer capitalism or through the kinds of testing and destabilization of the social order that Bourdieu describes as sometimes arising within artistic subcultures.

In the past decade, moving image studies have extended Balides’ methods of tracing the materiality of cinema effects, first to further scrutinize the trajectories of Hollywood blockbusters (Schatz; Baumann), and more recently to open the study of genre films by integrating these films within their screening milieus, be they the institutional contexts of many educational films or the makeshift venues and ‘pop-up’ spaces of micro-cinema. Acland and Wasson coined the term “useful cinema” (3) to frame “a body of films and technologies that perform tasks and serve as instruments in an ongoing struggle for aesthetic, social, and political capital.” In a collection that spans a range of screening sites from UNESCO to amateur film clubs, industrial film producers, public schools, and labour training programs, Acland and Wasson argue that “useful cinema has as much to do with the maintenance and longevity of institutions seemingly unrelated to cinema as it does with cinema per se” (4): it is not just the trajectory of cinema and its associated media products that matter, but the ways in which cinematic narratives undergird institutional narratives and bind organizational cultures together.

In developing a “lifecycle” methodology to supplement extant kinds of analyses of the use of media in conservation campaigns (as reviewed in Chapter 5), I have aimed

to trace not just how stories arise from other stories, and the full path these stories follow as they build, but—as is so integral to Gwich'in worldviews—the conditions in which stories are shared, and how these conditions contribute to building community, and often community support for a particular cause. Recent work on “participatory culture”, much of which is a rebranding of cultural studies work on subcultures, offers ways forward in this respect.<sup>241</sup> Particularly in the last decade, filmmakers and film scholars have begun to investigate how “transformation in the technical apparatus of production and distribution” of film has reshaped documentary filmmaking (and to a lesser degree, other types of films) such that a documentary “is now structurally presumed to have different forms of life, to exist in different modalities, extended across multiple platforms and networks” (McLagan 306). The Being Caribou expedition, which took place on the cusp of such changes, including the widespread uptake of Facebook and Youtube, is very much a part of the cultural shift in which these multiple modalities “present a challenge to our

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<sup>241</sup> In the 2000's, Henry Jenkins began to take his studies of the ‘participatory cultures’ of fandom in new directions in response to the emergence of digital culture, suggesting that ‘convergence culture’ was facilitating the creation of subcultural communities of fans who individually and collectively appropriated and reworked cultural texts to generate new cultural products and narratives such as film spoofs, cartoons, and fan fictions (Jenkins, *Confronting the Challenges*). This work built both on the study of subcultures, as evolved in early British cultural studies, for example in the work of Angela McRobbie, and on research in cinema studies specifically focused on fans. More recently, working with the MacArthur Foundation, Jenkins has been evolving his research to establish how new technologies can or do function as tools for the promotion of civic culture and/or democratization. This participatory culture work is part of a much larger trend in funding, policy development, and academic research that deploys social media tools to build citizen engagement and social movements. For example, US AID's June 2013 strategy document (US AID 4) includes promoting “democracy, human rights, and governance through innovative use of technology” as a key strategic direction. However, because to date there is a lack of research convincingly demonstrating that a technological emphasis can promote civic engagement over the long term unless coupled with already strong organizations and social movements, I have not drawn heavily on such research.

understanding of the ontology of film by rendering the boundary between the inside and outside of the work increasingly porous" (McLagan 306).<sup>242</sup>

Such shifting boundaries certainly characterized the development of the Being Caribou expedition's narrative arc.<sup>243</sup> Allison and Heuer, toured repeatedly with the film and book, creating a continuum between the texts and their lived presence, which embodied the very passion for the caribou that permeates the Being Caribou project in all its forms. Other important *Being Caribou* 'actors', ranging from people to caribou to the sentient landscapes of north Yukon/Alaska and Washington, also at times came to be 'in relation' to audiences and readers in ways that exceeded the boundaries of film and text. This extended from Randall Tetlichi's elder in residence work preceding the One Book One Campus events discussed in Chapter 8, to the ways in which Arctic Action Day activists entered the 'story' of calving grounds advocacy through their own interactions in the same halls of Congress featured prominently in the closing minutes of *Being Caribou*, as discussed in Chapter 7.

From its outset, through extensive consultations with potential stakeholders, the Being Caribou expedition created a flow between the subjects "inside" its stories and the audiences/subjects "outside". The project followed through with this approach via the ways that Allison and Heuer continued to reach out to stakeholders and audiences even as

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<sup>242</sup> There is also a continuity between this presumption of different 'forms of life' for media and similar constructions in the past, such as the Victorian serializations discussed earlier (often later published as books, with adventurers touring their stories on the lecture circuit), or the production and distribution of newsreels in the earlier part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>243</sup> This boundary work can also be understood in resonance with the shifting boundaries discussed in Chapter 5 between government and the forms of politics that exceed it, recuperating or releasing what is to count in the public sphere.

they were out on the land, migrating with the caribou. Visitors to the Being Caribou website could ‘journey’ in relation to or alongside the expedition along a number of website pathways,<sup>244</sup> and the routes through which a visitor might come upon Being Caribou became increasingly imbricated in linkages with the other civil society websites and networks that shared the Being Caribou expedition’s stories.

## **Expedition Phase Outreach**

Initial media outreach for the Being Caribou journey dovetailed nicely with publicity from Heuer and Allison’s Y2Y expedition; having won the Banff Mountain Book Festival Jon Whyte Award for Mountain Literature Media at the end of October 2002, Heuer’s book *Walking the Big Wild* gained significant media coverage in Canada in the months before he and Allison set out on their next journey. The newly released paperback<sup>245</sup> received an enthusiastic review in the *Calgary Herald*, and the book charted among non-fiction bestsellers in Calgary from late November 2002 into mid-January 2003. The *Globe and Mail*, a major national newspaper, favorably reviewed *Walking the Big Wild* at the end of January, while Heuer and Allison continued to do Y2Y related local public speaking engagements into February of 2003.<sup>246</sup> In western Canada, local media interest in the Y2Y expedition and book picked up late in the winter of 2002-

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<sup>244</sup> These methods were quite primitive compared to what is possible now, but the basic premise holds in terms of the visitor choosing points of encounter and shaping her or his own narrative arc.

<sup>245</sup> The hardcover Canadian edition was published by McClelland and Stewart in October 2002, the paperback in October 2003. *Walking the Big Wild* was published in paperback in the US by Mountaineers Books in 2004.

<sup>246</sup> As late as February 18<sup>th</sup>, 2003, Heuer and Allison did two speaking engagements in Lethbridge, Alberta about the Y2Y trek (“Cutlines”).

2003,<sup>247</sup> and spilled over into pre-trip publicity for the Being Caribou expedition in March. Alberta media were early to report on the Being Caribou journey,<sup>248</sup> with the *Calgary Herald* and *Alberta Views Magazine*, as well as the *Yukon News*, all covering the expedition and its trip updates from the outset. These missives, sent out by Karsten Heuer every few weeks by plane during their resupplies,<sup>249</sup> were circulated by expedition publicist Erica Heuer. *Backpacker* magazine, which gave the project one of its first \$5000 Adventure Grants and reported on the expedition in the print magazine,<sup>250</sup> also carried the updates on its website alongside other supporting materials largely originating from the Being Caribou website and media releases.

In spring 2003, Erica Heuer had put together a simple, “common sense” website on the journey:<sup>251</sup>

It seemed like, if anybody said to anybody else "yeah I'm going to migrate with the caribou for five months", wouldn't a person's first question be "Uh,

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<sup>247</sup> For example, Factiva and Eureka database searches revealed that the *Edmonton Journal*, the *Lethbridge Herald*, and the *Winnipeg Free Press* all ran stories about the Y2Y expedition in this time period.

<sup>248</sup> Kim Heinrich Gray's stories on the Being Caribou journey, which first appeared in the *Edmonton Journal* and *Calgary Herald* in March, were picked up by CanWest News Service and appeared in media reports in Vancouver and Windsor. Carol Harrington wrote about Being Caribou for the CP wire service, but uptake of her work appears to be limited to smaller community newspapers not indexed by major search engines. The information here is from Factiva and Eureka database searches.

<sup>249</sup> Karsten Heuer wrote six updates that were flown by plane once the trek had begun.

<sup>250</sup> In addition to the announcement of the grant, *Backpacker* carried a short article on the expedition in its June 2003 issue. However, an entire section of the Backpacker website was devoted to the journey. This section not only included six of Heuer's updates, but backgrounders and editorial material explaining the route, the goal of the expedition, and the political stakes.

<sup>251</sup> The basic layout, format, and main topics of the website remain today, as they were migrated over to the Necessary Journeys website which includes Heuer and Allison's expeditions, films, writings, and related public speaking endeavours.

why?” So that was really the question we answered. You can say everything that's important under the answer to that question. It doesn't really need to get any more complicated than that (E. Heuer, Interview).

The front page featured a photo of Karsten Heuer and Leanne Allison next to the Being Caribou tagline, an extremely brief summary of their expedition nested within a circular diagram that highlighted the different stages of the caribou migration,<sup>252</sup> and a few links on the left side of the page leading to further background information, beginning with a “why?” link. Other links followed that dropped down to gradually answer the “why” question in more depth:

In the backgrounders, we just tried to answer the question why in more detail . . . lots of people might not know that caribous migrate, and then that leads you to the caribou people, and why the caribou are important, and then why the calving grounds are important, and then why development might not be such a good thing . . . then we had a map of the route, and a bit of a schedule, the preparations for a trip like that, which included eating french fries . . . we tried to have a little bit of a sense of humor, be a little bit light about it (E. Heuer, Interview).

The backgrounders included updates on the ongoing votes in Washington, and ways for people to take action, because without this information the root of the “why” of the journey—protecting the calving grounds—would be lost; however, the website design

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<sup>252</sup> As one moved the cursor to each node on the circle, representing a part of the journey/migration cycle, the short text inside the circle changed to summarize that phase of the journey. Images of the site from 2003 onwards are viewable via the Internet Archive by searching under [beingcaribou.com](http://beingcaribou.com) and its subdomains such as [beingcaribou.com/film.htm](http://beingcaribou.com/film.htm).

deliberately avoided pointing fingers or getting caught in the intricacies of machinations in Washington, instead foregrounding the story of the journey and the caribou. For example, all of Karsten Heuer's expedition updates were posted to the website, as well as slideshows from the journey.

Building on her contacts as Y2Y publicist, Erica Heuer had spent approximately a month putting together a large database of over 900 media contacts that included TV, radio, newspapers, community media, and more eclectic sources (such as environmental and social justice groups that would include Being Caribou information in their newsletters and other communications with members), as well as approximately 300 individuals linked to the project in various ways, including funders and others to be kept abreast of the project (E. Heuer, Interview).<sup>253</sup> Karsten Heuer's updates, as well as further media releases put together by Erica Heuer, were sent to the full Being Caribou media and contact lists. However, beyond "local" radio, newspapers and magazines in Alberta and Yukon,<sup>254</sup> while Allison and Heuer were en route following the caribou, their story received little media uptake. Instead, while keeping traditional media in the loop, Erica Heuer grew interest in the journey largely through the other contacts on her list and her networking and outreach on the journey's behalf. As Erica Heuer followed up with these

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<sup>253</sup> Cameron Johnson, Erica Heuer's partner at the time, also did a tremendous amount of legwork for the project. He is thanked in the Being Caribou film's credits, and in the acknowledgements of the Being Caribou book, where he and Erica Heuer are jointly credited as being the most helpful expedition supporters who "not only assisted with preparations beforehand but continue to work on the website, media communications, photo distribution, and publicity during the trip — all tasks they continue to do today." Heuer, *Being Caribou* 233)

<sup>254</sup> Allison and Heuer were resident in Alberta and at times BC, but as the journey took place largely in the Yukon and the trip's publicist was based there, Yukon media covered the journey as a local story.

contacts and/or they followed up with her, the “story” of the journey quickly spread, with agencies and networks linking to the Being Caribou website, publishing Being Caribou materials on their own websites, and circulating expedition information in their own communications, both online via their listserves and networked communications, or in print. For example, the Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative added a Being Caribou feature to the front page of its website in May of 2003<sup>255</sup> which linked to Being Caribou’s website, and discussed the project in its May e-update (Yellowstone to Yukon, *What’s New*). As Chester (186-7) has described, Y2Y’s list-serves reached hundreds of subscribers by the early 2000’s and, in the pre-social networking era, were cited by numerous of his research subjects as being vital to strengthening and maintaining the Y2Y network and to sharing activist information.<sup>256</sup> While some organizations shared Being Caribou photos and updates in their newsletters and other print materials,<sup>257</sup> many

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<sup>255</sup> The feature remained on the front page through June and July, as per Internet Archive records of the site in 2003.

([http://web.archive.org/web/20030715000000\\*/http://y2y.net/](http://web.archive.org/web/20030715000000*/http://y2y.net/)).

<sup>256</sup> The vast majority of members of the Y2Y listserves were people with official roles in conservation organizations or agencies that were part of the Y2Y network. So the listserve effectively reached hundreds of groups through their active members, with these members further circulating listserve information in their home communities or offices as appropriate.

<sup>257</sup> For example, the Porcupine Caribou Management Board (PCMB), as described by Kofinas, very deliberately used more grassroots strategies to ensure their updates—which occasionally featured Being Caribou—reached the communities via a newspaper column in the Yukon News and via the Board’s own newsletters. For example, the June 20, 2003 Caribou Update column by Darcie Matthiessen that appeared on page 27 of the *Yukon News* promoted the expedition. It is apparent from this column, which includes a reference to Heuer and Allison’s layover in Katkovik (which Erica Heuer did not publicize), that the Board had direct communication with the expedition beyond media releases. The Yukon Conservation Society, which first featured Being Caribou in its Summer 2003 issue of its member newsletter *Walk Softly* (E. Heuer, “Being Caribou”), in an example of a community environmental group publishing Erica Heuer’s materials in its internal communications.



more conservation agencies and NGOs integrated the project into their web presence. For example, the children's educational website Journey North, a web-based educational effort to involve school children in tracking the spring migration of wildlife in North America, included updates from the expedition in a modified form in its caribou tracking section.<sup>258</sup> Conversely, as she began to work with Journey North and other significant stakeholders in a more integrated way, Erica Heuer added links to their websites on the Being Caribou front page, as well as incorporating their political work into the site via a "take action" link and via updates in the "Washington" section of the site.<sup>259</sup> By far the most important connection Erica Heuer made in this regard was to the Alaska Wilderness League (AWL).

Lexi Keogh, AWL's communications director, to whom Erica Heuer had sent a Being Caribou update in late March of 2003, was immediately excited by the storytelling possibilities of the journey and how it could fit with AWL campaigning (Keogh, Interview). Erica Heuer and Keogh began corresponding on how to publicize the journey.

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<sup>258</sup> Information from the journey was incorporated into the regular updates for schoolchildren in the "caribou" section, but simplified and reformatted for educational purposes. For example, the March 12, 2003 update included the "Challenge Question" "Karsten and Leanne have made and dehydrated 6 different dinner menus. Since they are planning to be out on the migration trail for 210 days, how many times will they eat the same dinner? Would you like to eat these menu items for 7 months?" See <http://www.learner.org/jnorth/spring2003/species/caribou/Update031203.html>.

<sup>259</sup> Descriptions of the website in 2003 are based on Erica Heuer's description as well as representative archives of the pages in 2003 as shown via the Internet Archive ([http://web.archive.org/web/20030501000000\\*/http://www.beingcaribou.com/](http://web.archive.org/web/20030501000000*/http://www.beingcaribou.com/)). The conservation groups added to the front page were: the Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS—a branch of the federal government), the Canadian Parks And Wilderness Society (CPAWS), Taiga Net (the network of the Arctic Borderlands Ecological Knowledge Co-op, linking together various communities and agencies involved in ecological monitoring), Journey North, Wildcanada.net (which built and shared online tools in support of Canadian environmental campaigns and environmental networking), Caribou Commons, The Wilderness Society, and Alaska Wilderness League.

Keogh featured the trek in the June 5 edition of the “Arctic Truth” bulletin that she sent to AWL’s media contacts (Keogh, personal communication, 2008), and added a link to Being Caribou to the AWL website in June of 2003 (Keogh, “Some More on Being Caribou). Most crucially, Keogh invited Leanne Allison and Karsten Heuer to Alaska Wilderness Week (AWW) in fall 2003, setting the stage for the Being Caribou project to become directly involved with the influential Alaskan conservation lobby at a crucial time in the history of the refuge.

### **Resurgent Stories, New Forms: Redoubled Efforts to Protect the Arctic Refuge**

Since the election of President George W. Bush, the Alaska Wilderness League and other conservation groups had been forced to heavily scale up their work to protect the calving grounds. President Bush had campaigned hard on opening ANWR to exploration,<sup>260</sup> and in the early months of his presidency convened an energy task force that began actively looking for ways to open drilling in the calving grounds. This agenda was in line with the legacy of President Bush’s father, President George H. W. Bush, who had also pursued opening the Arctic Refuge to drilling. If Alaska took on emblematic value as a “last great wilderness” for American conservationists, to an important faction of industrialists and resource extraction promoters, particularly “big oil” interests that were in ascendance during Bush’s presidency,<sup>261</sup> access to Alaskan oil and gas became a symbolic battle for access to affordable energy resources, considered key to continued American prosperity

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<sup>260</sup> Bush said as much in his own words (McCarthy).

<sup>261</sup> Standlee details the links between the Bush administration and oil companies, and important staffers who had interests in the oil industry or had worked in the oil industry.

and industrial growth.<sup>262</sup> In the buildup to the Iraq war in 2002 and early 2003, concerns about energy independence achieved particular resonance with segments of the American public.

As described in the previous chapter, much of the legwork done by Gwich'in and American conservation groups to protect the calving grounds involved activating and growing a base of volunteer advocates, willing to petition elected officials to vote in favour of calving grounds protection. After President Bush's election, calving grounds advocates continued to use travelling roadshows to help cultivate personal connections and grassroots contacts across Canada and all fifty American states. Additionally, campaigners redoubled their efforts both to obtain mainstream media coverage, and to take advantage of increasingly accessible technologies such as self-publishing and internet distribution in order to directly disseminate their own media on the Arctic Refuge both to their supporters and to elected officials.<sup>263</sup>

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<sup>262</sup> As LeMenager describes, twentieth century discourses of American modernity, prosperity, and industry are deeply tied to a 'petroculture' of access to cheap oil. These discourses are every bit as powerful and central to American national identity as discourses on American wilderness.

<sup>263</sup> It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to fully account for the significant national media coverage of the ANWR debate from the 1980s to the present, however, a cursory search of the Factiva database yielded 1255 results for the appearance of the term "ANWR" in major American news outlet publications in 2003. The issue also received significant coverage in broadcast media. Examples in northern media included the previously mentioned 2002 NEDAA documentary, and Episode 5 ("Language of the Caribou People – Gwich'in") of Muskeg Media's series "Finding Our Talk", broadcast on APTN in 2002. In Canada, the documentary *Locked Horns, The Fate of Old Crow* (Gregg and Linklater), received nationwide coverage when it aired on the CBC program *Witness* on June 4<sup>th</sup> of 2003. See [http://www.mushkeg.ca/fot2%20episodes/Se2\\_Ep5/fot\\_season\\_two\\_ep5.html](http://www.mushkeg.ca/fot2%20episodes/Se2_Ep5/fot_season_two_ep5.html) and <http://windsor.concat.ca/eg/opac/record/2035094?locg=106;expand=marchtml> for more information on these two productions.

Following the tradition established by David Brower, books of wilderness writing and landscape photography, edited and in some cases produced by wilderness advocates, played significant parts in the campaign. Just three months after President Bush had taken office, one such book, *Arctic Refuge: A Circle of Testimony* was presented to Congress. After a press conference on March 28<sup>th</sup>, 2001, a copy of the book of writings by respected wilderness advocates—including former President Jimmy Carter, several prominent Alaskan and American conservation writers, and contributions from Gwich'in people—was given to every Representative and Senator (*Writers Speak Out; To Drill or Not to Drill*). The collection was a grassroots effort put together by two Alaskan residents in less than two months, using print-on-demand technology. As well as being offered in paperback, the book was also made available for digital download via the Milkweed Press website, with all proceeds going to the campaign to protect the Arctic Refuge.

As described by co-editor Hank Lentfer, the project came together quickly because it linked into existing networks of American conservationists working on the Arctic Refuge (*Writers Speak Out*). The book-launch events, which included a press breakfast at Senator John Kerry's office, coordinated both by the office and by the Alaska Wilderness League (*Writers Speak Out*), were connected into a larger media strategy. They came just after a two-week, \$150,000 television advertising campaign by the National Audubon Society against drilling in ANWR (*Both Sides*), and before another \$650,000 television advertising campaign, coordinated by a consortium of major environmental groups,<sup>264</sup> which was set to run in major US cities including New York

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<sup>264</sup> These groups were working together through the Partnership Project, formed in 1999 and by 2001 including the following: American Oceans Campaign, American Rivers,

and Los Angeles, as well as in Indiana, Nebraska, Oregon, Arkansas and Louisiana—states targeted in order to influence key Congressional swing votes (Gupta). These advertisements tied into the “Save Our Environment Action Centre” website, where individuals could find out their Senator’s stand on the Arctic Refuge, and write a letter or take other actions targeting their individual electoral district. Along with its Protect the Arctic kits—which were promoted on Audubon’s “protecttheartctic.com” domain<sup>265</sup> as well as in newsletters and other communications within Audubon’s many chapters—the National Audubon Society offered the option of including at no charge the 12 minute VHS video *Bring Home Alaska/Protect the Arctic*. Activists were encouraged to use the video to “help get your family and friends involved in the fight to protect the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.”<sup>266</sup>

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Center for Marine Conservation, Defenders of Wildlife, Earthjustice Legal Defense Fund, Environmental Defense, Greenpeace, Izaak Walton League, League of Conservation Voters, National Audubon Society, National Environmental Trust, National Wildlife Federation, Natural Resources Defense Council, National Parks Conservation Association, Physicians for Social Responsibility, Sierra Club, the Wilderness Society, the State PIRGs, Union of Concerned Scientists, World Wildlife Fund. See <http://web.archive.org/web/20010424171440/http://www.saveoureenvironment.org/about/>. Supplemental information on the Partnership Project and the Save Our Environment campaign was gleaned by viewing Internet Archive snapshots of the [www.saveoureenvironment.org](http://www.saveoureenvironment.org) domain pages in 2001 and 2013.

<sup>265</sup> Several environmental groups devoted sections of their websites, or in Audubon’s case an entirely separate domain, to the Arctic Refuge campaign. Typically, like the “protect the arctic” domain, these sites included backgrounders, news updates, and opportunities for taking action and for networking/joining the organization. Typically, also, organizations drove traffic to these sites via their regular communications. So, for example, the October 2001 issue of *Audubon* Magazine had the Arctic Refuge on the cover along with a feature story and the magazine’s editorial, and included “What you can do” copy that pointed readers to [protecttheartctic.com](http://protecttheartctic.com). See <http://archive.audubonmagazine.org/content/content0109.html>.

<sup>266</sup> This quote is taken from an Internet Archive capture of <http://www.protecttheartctic.com/helpnow.asp> from April 6, 2001. An example of the promotion of the Bring Home Alaska & Protect the Arctic campaign kit by local

This use of integrated campaigning, and particularly the inclusion of video as part of activist toolkits, precedes the examples documented by Aufderheide, McLagan, and other film scholars who credit Robert Greenwald with developing a "grassroots socially networked documentary practice centered on his house – party model" (McLagan 307) through his co-operation with Moveon.org and the Center for American Progress. Much as it had pioneered the use of mailgrams and direct mail in advocacy a generation earlier, as the Alaskan government and private oil interests stepped up their financing of lobby efforts in support of the Bush administration's multiple efforts to open drilling in the Arctic Refuge,<sup>267</sup> the American environmental movement innovated quickly and across multiple platforms to activate, energize, and grow its base of public support and pressure elected officials. As had been the case in the 1970s, it was not technical innovation that drove a structural transformation of environmental activist networks. In the face of critical legislative challenges to wilderness designations, activists used every means necessary to increase the power of their messaging, including integrating emergent

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Audubon chapters can be seen on page 3 of the March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2002 *White Bird*, Vol 25, Issue 8 of the newsletter of the Peace River Audubon Society (*Help Save*). The VHS video, produced by the National Audubon Society in cooperation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, also goes by the title *Alaska's National Wildlife Refuges: a Natural Treasure*. Major environmental organizations had been involved in making and distributing videos on the Arctic Refuge at least since the early 1990's, with Meryl Streep's *Arctic Refuge: Vanishing Wilderness?* produced in 1990 by Audubon (Wilson 148), and the NRDC in 1991 also producing a 15 minute long Arctic Refuge video, *Arctic Refuge*, that was executive produced by Paul Allen and written and produced by Robert Hirshfeld.

<sup>267</sup> Seeing opportunity with the new Bush administration, in mid-March of 2001, the Alaskan government bolstered its annual contribution to the Arctic Power lobby group, whose purpose is to open the Refuge to oil and gas drilling, to \$1.85 million (Rosen). Arctic Power quickly announced its own \$200 000 TV and radio ad campaign in the Washington market, and began scaling up its other Washington lobby efforts ("U. S. Arctic Drilling").

platforms and adapting the possibilities they offered to invent creative means of connecting and inspiring people. These networks and their inherently dynamic forms of social organization, which could respond rapidly to nascent developments and at the same time cultivate deep, long-term connections, drove the direction of innovation. While the changes were transformational, they were also an organic reworking of extant systems and structures that remained the same in their essential qualities.<sup>268</sup>

This held true not only for conservation organizations, but for faith, labour, and other partners within the Alaska Coalition: some of the most valuable interventions drew not on new technologies, but on the depth and powerful presence of long organizational histories. For example, the Episcopal/Anglican church<sup>269</sup> proved a hugely influential Coalition partner. Most Gwich'in are Episcopal (Carpenter), and the church has had an enduring presence in Gwich'in communities since at least the mid 1800s, with Episcopal missionaries being the first to do extensive work in creating a written Gwich'in language and literature (Alaska Native Language Center). While the church's legacy is mixed,<sup>270</sup> due to its historic and present relationship with the Gwich'in, the church took an especially strong position on preventing development in the Arctic Refuge. The Episcopal 1991 General Convention and all subsequent House of Bishops

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<sup>268</sup> This point will be taken up more thoroughly in the next chapter. A similar analysis can be brought to bear on how "activist media", from slide shows and coffee table books to immersive digital websites, evolved in the early 2000s. While, in the case of long-form documentary, structural transformations of the film industry cannot be discounted, the *Being Caribou* project is an example of activist documentary that developed outside conventional distribution and financing networks.

<sup>269</sup> The church is called Episcopal in the United States and Anglican in Canada, but it is the same organization.

<sup>270</sup> For example, in 1993 the Canadian church officially apologized for its role in residential schools. The full text of the apology is available in English, French, and nine First Nations languages, at <http://www.anglican.ca/relationships/apology>.

meetings called on Congress to protect the refuge as “a question of human justice and the fundamental rights of the Gwich’in people” (Episcopal Church, *The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge*). These efforts were and are an example of powerful translocal connection and organizing: in addition to the speaking tours discussed in the previous chapter, the stories of Gwich’in travelled throughout the Episcopalian church via church newsletters and magazines,<sup>271</sup> and through the efforts of individual clergy. They reached all the way to the highest echelons of the Church and from there, as is discussed in Chapter 7, to the highest levels of industry and government. This work was subtended by a strong church relationship to Gwich’in communities built on a long-term commitment that goes far beyond the calving grounds issue to ministering to Gwich’in parishioners’ community and spiritual needs. Church leadership interpreted supporting protection of “the sacred place where life begins” as central to the church’s mission of service to God and to the spiritual well-being of God’s people. In the early 2000s, in the face of harsh criticism (“Gwich’in Gather”), the Episcopal Church was the only well-respected Alaskan institution to stand strongly by the Gwich’in position on the calving grounds.

### **Storytelling at a Crucial Time**

The fevered pitch of campaigning to counter attempts to open the Arctic Refuge became even more intense following the 2002 mid-term elections—one of the very few examples in American history of an incumbent party, in this case the generally pro-drilling Republican party, gaining mid-term seats in both the Senate and the House of

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<sup>271</sup> *The Witness* magazine, for example, ran articles on protecting the refuge in its Jan/Feb and Sept 2000 issues.



Representatives. As Heuer and Allison prepared to leave on their journey in late March of 2003, a vote to strip provisions for drilling in the Arctic Refuge from the budget bill<sup>272</sup> passed in the Senate by a mere two votes, after Sen. Barbara Boxer made an impassioned plea on the Senate floor, as several of Subhankar Banerjee's massive photographs of polar bears and other flora and fauna of the Arctic Refuge were projected behind her (Banerjee, "Senator Barbara Boxer"; Sischy). Just before the vote was called, Boxer held up a copy of the book that the images had been taken from, *Arctic National Wildlife Refuge: Seasons of Life and Land*, and urged everyone present to visit the identically titled exhibit of Banerjee's photographs set to open at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History in May.<sup>273</sup>

The controversy around Banerjee's photographs perhaps best epitomized the power that visual media and storytelling tools brought to efforts to prevent drilling in the Arctic Refuge. In July and August of 2002, the Sierra Club had sponsored the touring exhibition "Endangered Treasures: Our Arctic National Wildlife Refuge," which featured more than 50 photographs, taken by eleven internationally recognized photographers including Subhankar Banerjee, of the flora, fauna, and landscapes of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Behind the scenes, Alaska Wilderness League Executive Director Cindy Shogun had smoothed the way to securing the Embassy of Canada in Washington, in the height of the summer season, as the opening venue for the exhibit (Confidential 2). This

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<sup>272</sup> In this time period, drilling advocates made several attempts to attach language opening the Arctic Refuge to development to a variety of non-energy bills, including not only a budget bill but also legislation on military procurement.

<sup>273</sup> The Alaska Wilderness League had provided Boxer with an advance copy of the book (Sischy, 2003).

was a political coup on many levels,<sup>274</sup> with the *Washington Diplomat* in its coverage noting the “political overtones” of the exhibit as Congress continued to debate opening the Arctic Refuge to development (Gawel). In the minds of many in Washington’s political circles, Banerjee’s photographs became associated with the conservation community’s efforts to prevent drilling in the Arctic Refuge.

Through completely different channels—Banerjee himself had made direct contact with Smithsonian curator Robert Sullivan before even completing his Arctic photography project—in the winter of 2003, the Smithsonian made plans to include an exhibit of Banerjee’s photographs in the context of a long-planned 2003 celebration for the hundredth anniversary of the national wildlife refuge system in the USA (Luke 194).<sup>275</sup> However, after Boxer’s use of Banerjee’s photographs, and shortly before the

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<sup>274</sup> The Embassy of Canada in Washington D.C., an impressive Arthur Erickson designed building, is not located with most other embassies on “Embassy Row” but occupies pride of place on Pennsylvania Avenue as the only Embassy within view of the Capitol. Given Canada’s stature as the U.S.’s largest trading partner, and the prominence of the Embassy in the Washington social calendar (the sixth floor view of the Capitol has been described as the “best view in town” by current Ambassador Gary Doer. See [http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2013/01/28/canadian-embassy-washington-parties\\_n\\_2568516.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2013/01/28/canadian-embassy-washington-parties_n_2568516.html). Displaying the exhibit in the Embassy art gallery ensured not just a broad audience (as the Embassy is easily accessible to tourists) but an elite one of Washington insiders, and sent a strong message that the Canadian government valued the Arctic Refuge as habitat for migratory animals protected by U.S.-Canada treaties. Such a bold statement was only possible given a cooling of Canada-U.S. relations during this period (Confidential 2).

<sup>275</sup> This exhibit was in no way associated with the Alaska Wilderness League or other conservation groups. Early on in Banerjee’s photographic career, Curator Robert Sullivan, who had worked in the Brooks Range, was impressed with the quality of Banerjee’s initial Alaskan portfolio (Sischy). However, although Luke suggests Banerjee’s work was to be shown in relation to the commemoration of the National Wildlife Refuge system, and it could have been shown in the lead-up to this exhibit, the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary exhibit was shown in Hall 10 from November 2003 to April 2004. See <http://www.si.edu/Exhibitions/Details/America%27s-Wildest-Places-Our-National-Wildlife-Refuge-System-4442>.

exhibit was to open, Banerjee received a call that, counter to recent discussions at design meetings, the photographs would not be displayed in Hall 10, the main floor rotunda which is “one of the museum's more prestigious and central locations.” Instead, the exhibit would be mounted in the Baird Gallery, which Sischy describes as “a glorified corridor with track lighting that serves as a lobby for the museum's auditorium.”<sup>276</sup> Mention of the exhibit disappeared for a time from the museum website (Bryson), and was not listed at the museum entrance with all the other exhibits (Burke and Whitney).<sup>277</sup> Additionally, although Banerjee had worked with the museum on both selecting and captioning the photographs, with the Smithsonian contracting Banerjee’s book editor at Mountaineering Books, Christine Clifton-Thornton, to help develop the exhibit texts (Sischy), these captions were to be scrapped and replaced with extremely short descriptors of locations and subject matter. A revised draft of the exhibit’s introduction replaced the one jointly written by Banerjee and the Smithsonian’s staff, removing a quote from former President Carter that “It will be a grand triumph for America if we can preserve the Arctic Refuge in its pure, untrammelled state” (Shogren). Sischy and Shogren both document the intimidating lawyer letters sent to Banerjee attempting to dissociate the exhibit from the eponymous photography book. They also provide evidence that the museum acted to minimize the exhibit and strip it of political content, with Sischy’s research pointing to perceived threats to the Smithsonian’s budget allocation, which

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<sup>276</sup> An already mounted photo essay exhibit on South Korean immigrants was moved from the Baird Gallery to Hall 10 so that Banerjee’s photographs could be installed there (Shogren).

<sup>277</sup> According to Bryson, while he was covering the controversy, during the week of May 25, 2003, Banerjee’s exhibit did not appear on the Smithsonian site’s list of all current national museum exhibits.

depended on the Senate Appropriations Committee chaired by Alaskan Senator Ted Stevens, a strong pro-drilling advocate. The perception that Senator Stevens was behind the scaling back of Banerjee's exhibit was shared by staff at the Canadian Embassy; when asked whether Banerjee's photographs, which the Embassy had hosted, played a role in the close votes on opening up the Refuge, a staffer from that time replied "whether or not it was my impression, it was certainly the impression of the powerful chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee" (Confidential 2).<sup>278</sup>

Rather than burying the exhibit, the changes to its location and to the information it included garnered nationwide political attention. The controversy was covered by a breadth of media from the liberal-leaning society magazine *Vanity Fair* to the New York and Los Angeles *Times*. The Alaska Wilderness League brought the controversy to the attention of minority Senators on the Senate Committee on Rules and Administration (Shogren). Led by Ill. Senator Richard J. Durbin, who before the May 20<sup>th</sup> Committee hearing released a letter from thirteen senators urging the Smithsonian board to fully investigate the controversy, Democratic Senators on the normally sleepy Committee grilled Smithsonian director Lawrence Small, claiming that "the issue is the integrity of the Smithsonian" (Olson), and formally asking the Smithsonian to clarify its policy on exhibition captions (Trescott).

The media coverage brought the controversy to the attention of California Academy of Sciences in San Francisco, which decided to sponsor the exhibit in its

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<sup>278</sup> Investigative reporters such as George Bryson of the *Anchorage Daily News* reported a similar sentiment that "Washington insiders wondered out loud if Stevens was responsible for the Smithsonian's sudden change of heart" ("Unsuspecting Photographer's Arctic Explorations Spark Political Fire")

original version, complete with captions. Under its auspices, both the full exhibit of 49 photographs and a smaller version of 30 images toured Alaska and the United States continuously from September 2003 to September 2006, hosted by museums with a natural history mandate and by universities. The exhibit garnered a wide audience and significant local media coverage wherever it went. To this day, the California Academy maintains on its website a selection of photographs from the exhibit, as well as backgrounders and links to major conservation organizations and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Banerjee's *Arctic National Wildlife Refuge: Seasons of Life on the Land* not only sold well as a coffee table book for the general public, but also was widely reviewed and became a staple of public and university library collections. Banerjee's personal profile grew as he toured the country showing his work, giving talks, and speaking with journalists; as a young immigrant who abandoned a lucrative engineering career to photograph the harsh and fragile beauty of the arctic, his story made conservation writing and photography more accessible, and broadened the definition of who had a stake in taking up the conversations sparked by Ansel Adams, Eliot Porter, and Henry David Thoreau (Hackett; Burke and Whitney).<sup>279</sup> Following the controversy, Banerjee received the first Cultural Freedom Fellowship of the Lannan Foundation; the \$100 000 award accompanying the fellowship supported his ability to continue his photographic work (Cline), while an additional \$400,000 from the Foundation went towards funding the publication and circulation of *Seasons of Life on the Land*, ensuring the gifting of copies to Arctic native communities and to schools across the United States

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<sup>279</sup> Banerjee cites Adams, Porter, and Thoreau as particular inspirations for his first Arctic project.

(Hackett). Banerjee has continued to collaborate with the conservation community on many projects, including the 2012 anthology *Arctic Voices*, and *Climatestorytellers.org*, launched in August of 2010. Banerjee's Arctic photographs also continue to tour the United States and influence public discourse on the Arctic Refuge.

It was as the Smithsonian controversy was first rippling through Washington that the Alaska Wilderness League's Keogh and Being Caribou's publicist Eric Heuer opened their dialogue on incorporating the Being Caribou expedition into the Arctic Refuge campaigning of the Alaska Coalition and its member organizations. Once Keogh had invited Heuer and Allison to AWW, Eric Heuer worked with Erik Dumont and Keogh on including *Being Caribou* in the programming, and on orchestrating an ambitious series of meetings with activists, elected officials, and media.

### **Alaska Wilderness Week 2003: Squaring the Circle**

What I remember was that it took me a long time to realize how mean I was to make them go straight to Washington. I really didn't ever fully understand that . . . I was kind of like "oh, come on, suck it up". And then I went into the back country for a longer period of time it was like "Oh my God I can't believe I did that to them. It's brutal" (E. Heuer, Interview).

From arriving in Old Crow on September 9, each considerably thinner than when they had left in April<sup>280</sup>, it was a scant few days until Allison and Heuer found themselves in

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<sup>280</sup> Heuer lost approximately twenty-five pounds and Allison fifteen pounds (Manning).

the hubbub of Washington DC for Alaska Wilderness Week.<sup>281</sup> Randall Tetlich, who met Allison and Heuer on the Porcupine River the day before they returned to Old Crow, had drawn on traditional knowledge to support the couple's re-integration into the peopled world. He had ensured that the two had a last undisturbed night before returning to the community, where they were greeted by a cookout on the riverbank, and he made efforts to create physical and mental space for the couple to assimilate their experiences and spiritually prepare to return to the much different pace of settled human life (Tetlich). However, as will be further discussed in Chapter 8, over months of living on the land and following the caribou, Allison and Heuer had evolved into a completely different rhythm of life and attunement to the unfolding of the landscape. Thus, despite the initial care taken to support their transition, Allison and Heuer experienced extreme culture shock in entering into the fast-paced high stakes tenor of campaigning on Capitol Hill with the ambitious schedule of talks and meetings with politicians, media, and campaigners that AWL's Keogh and Erik Dumont had helped Erica Heuer put together.

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<sup>281</sup> In *Being Caribou*, Heuer sets his Epilogue in Washington "five days and seven airports" after his and Allison's arrival in Old Crow (Heuer, *Being Caribou* 227), while he is quoted in a February 12, 2004 AP article published in the Anchorage Daily News as having arrived in Washington three days after leaving Old Crow (see [http://www.wolfsonnews.org/news/Alaska\\_current\\_events\\_553.htm](http://www.wolfsonnews.org/news/Alaska_current_events_553.htm) –the article appears not to be archived in Factive or other accessible databases). Crowson, who interviewed Heuer while he was in Whitehorse en route to Washington, states that Heuer and Allison arrived in Whitehorse in the evening of Monday the 15<sup>th</sup>, and would leave on Friday the 19<sup>th</sup> for Washington DC. The film shows Heuer describing Sept. 7<sup>th</sup> as their last day on the journey, while *beingcaribou.com* lists the last day as September 8<sup>th</sup> and gives their schedule as "Karsten and Leanne will be in Old Crow until Monday, September 15, in Whitehorse September 16-19, and in Washington, DC Sept. 20-26 to present their observations to lawmakers, Canadian Embassy staff and environmental delegates from across the United States." See <http://www.beingcaribou.com/news/n3.html>. Alaska Wilderness Week was held September 18-22, 2003.

As described in both the *Being Caribou* film and the book, Allison and Heuer found their time in DC extremely difficult and disorienting. They were unable to effectively convey their experiences to lawmakers, as these were irreducible to five minutes of talking points that would weigh powerfully against constituent demands for cheap oil. The experience solidified their belief that only a grassroots movement of ordinary Americans could move American elected officials to protect the calving grounds. Paradoxically, as circumscribed as Allison and Heuer's influence was over Congressional officials, their appeal to community activists far exceeded AWL organizers' expectations.

While Keogh had been eager to bring the couple to AWW, she had been concerned that, as Canadians, their story would have less impact (Keogh, Interview). Just the same, she scheduled for them to present after Subhankar Banerjee<sup>282</sup> at an evening AWW event at the Canadian Embassy. Allison showed rushes from the three hundred rolls of film and fifty hours of videotape of the journey,<sup>283</sup> and the couple also shared their photographs and stories. Allison and Heuer were moving speakers, and they had a lot of personal appeal: while their adventure was extraordinary, to most activists they came across as genuine, regular people—people that ordinary Americans could relate to (Keogh 2008; Degnan 2008). Banerjee (*Arctic Voices* 418) described their presentation as mesmerizing. For AWL, the energizing and inspirational charge that the *Being Caribou* expedition brought was exactly what was needed: while Wilderness Week served to

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<sup>282</sup> Who was obviously a significant draw, given his recent Smithsonian controversy and his acclaimed photography.

<sup>283</sup> According to Diane Wilson, the film's co-director, Allison had roughly seventy hours of raw footage (*Movie Gives*).



educate and train activists both in how to lobby politicians and how to campaign and grow support in the community, its most important function was to build passion and enthusiasm that would fuel grassroots activists as they went home to take on the long fight ahead. Days at Wilderness Week can be very long, often with trainings or meetings from 8:30 or 9 am to between 4:30 and 5:30 pm, followed by evening events.<sup>284</sup> As participants socialize well after the end of the formal programming—a vital part of the ‘bonding’ and solidarity building experience of AWW—they can become run down and particularly taxed by the demanding and often discouraging end portion of the week, where teams visit the offices of ‘swing’ Congressional officials.<sup>285</sup> A Canadian official described the annual (or bi-annual)<sup>286</sup> Canadian Embassy evening event at AWW as generally catering to

an audience of the converted. That was usually the way with events of the embassy. That doesn't make them any less valuable, because after a week of lobbying, or running around Capitol Hill and everywhere else that is

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<sup>284</sup> At AWL's invitation, I attended Alaska Wilderness Week in the spring of 2012. My descriptions of AWW are based on my own experiences, the feedback of attendees and AWL and other conservation organization staff that I spoke with, and ‘gray literature’ on AWW from various years.

<sup>285</sup> Meeting schedules are actually surprisingly physically taxing. The layout of Capitol Hill, combined with the security clearance measures put in since 9/11, mean that attendees often have to scurry significant distances, easily half a kilometer or more, between meetings, under time pressure to get through security clearance (it can be shorter to leave and re-enter the buildings than to navigate the warren of underground tunnels). The marble floors of the Capitol are surprisingly hard. As a person who has done long backcountry journeys carrying a pack, I did not expect foot problems from walking about the Capitol. However, like most other participants that year, after the first day of meetings I had to jettison my formal shoes for more comfortable ones in order to keep to the schedule.

<sup>286</sup> During the most intensive periods of concern for Alaskan wilderness, AWW would be held in both March and September.

done by folk who come to Washington ... it was a wonderful community building experience for people to come to the embassy and be together after that, and to see the that the Canadian government still supporting them and ... for people to enjoy what they were working on and to revive their passion and to restore them (Confidential 2).

Allison and Heuer's appearance at the fall 2003 event was successful enough that AWL invited them back to screen Allison's finished film in 2004.

Through their Washington experience, Allison and Heuer established a personal base of connection with Canadian Embassy and government officials; with Lexi Keogh, Erik Dumont and a slew of important national level and community organizers working on Alaskan conservation; and with crucial media contacts that began to drive publicity about the Being Caribou journey to another level. While in Washington, Allison and Heuer finished an ABC TV profile, took part in a British documentary series, and finalized plans with a National Geographic crew (Keogh, "Some More on Being Caribou").

Equally importantly, in Washington Allison and Heuer entered into dialogue with the potential North American audiences for their stories. They were able to feel out whom their story could reach most effectively (regular people, as opposed to hardened political operatives), and what elements of their journey most resonated with audiences. Allison and Heuer received training in how to communicate their experiences in American political forums, whether in terms of prep for their Congressional meetings, or

in terms of support for appearing on live TV.<sup>287</sup> But more importantly, Allison and Heuer got to practice sharing their stories in different environments. Through gauging the response—whether in the form of a media report highlighting certain elements from an interview; of the energy and obvious audience feedback given through clapping and questioning of some aspects of the journey; or of personal interactions with activists and in meetings at Wilderness Week —Allison and Heuer honed their sense of audience, and of what approaches most helped to meet their objective of “instilling awe and respect for the caribou in people who, at this time, have little idea about what these animals already go through” (Allison and Heuer).

### **A Spiraling Story: Growing the Caribou Journey**

Allison and Heuer’s decision to end the expedition phase of their journey early to attend Alaska Wilderness Week in Washington not only changed the trajectory of their journey, but materially reshaped the narrative of the *Being Caribou* film, book, website, and other media products. The original project application that Allison and Heuer had put forward to the Vuntut Gwitchin Heritage committee and the Gwich’in Renewable Resource Board<sup>288</sup>, titled “Full Circle”, proposed that “The Gwich’in people will also figure prominently in the stories relate to the media, especially during the fall harvest at Old Crow near the end of the proposed trip” (Allison and Heuer). However, in cutting their

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<sup>287</sup> For example, Allison and Heuer appeared direct from Washington on Canada AM, CTV’s national Canadian morning show, on September 24<sup>th</sup>, 2003 (O’Regan).

<sup>288</sup> Among other northern groups. I have here cited the submission given to VGfN Heritage. However, a similar submission was given to other northern groups, as documented by the Being Caribou project. Material traces of the submissions remain in the grey literature, for instance on the Gwich’in Renewable Resource Board website. See [http://www.grrb.nt.ca/pdf/newsletters/news\\_2003.pdf](http://www.grrb.nt.ca/pdf/newsletters/news_2003.pdf).

northern trek short—leaving Old Crow as the caribou returned there—Allison and Heuer were forgoing footage of the fall hunt and community activity associated with the return of the caribou in favour of expanding their “circle” to include the circles of decision making in Washington.<sup>289</sup> This choice, which resulted in only the hunting and stories of Randall Tetlichí and James Itsi being included in *Being Caribou*, and only glimpses of other day-to-day village life incorporated, has led Monani to conclude that the film “promotes the Gwich’in as ecological Indians ... thereby reducing Gwich’in experiences to a stereotype” (Monani 113).<sup>290</sup>

In moving a good part of the emphasis from the “caribou people” towards the democratic responsibilities of North Americans to ensure that Congress protects the calving grounds, Allison and Heuer were shifting what Massey refers to as the “geography of responsibility” (Massey, *Space, Time, and Political Responsibility* 93) of

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<sup>289</sup> Allison and Heuer’s choice to discontinue the trip was as much as practical as a strategic one: as highlighted in the film but more particularly in the book, the physical toll of the trek had become extreme. After considerable weight loss, and one incident of being without food for several days, Allison and Heuer had few physical reserves left as the fall weather and conditions were growing increasingly challenging. To continue when they had questionable stamina to cope in case of an unexpected obstacle (which as Randall Tetlichí emphasized, must always be expected in wilderness conditions—(Tetlichí; Allison and Wilson)) would have been rash and risky (Heuer, *Being Caribou* 196-199).

<sup>290</sup> Monani (112-116) offers a more complete explication of the argument that *Being Caribou* tends towards supporting certain narratives of Western culture, such as the white adventurers, Edenic nature, and “ecological Indians” that pigeon-hole aboriginal people. While there are certainly resonances between *Being Caribou* and these longstanding tropes of the Western imagination, as I will argue both here and later, these same film narratives also had resonances with Gwich’in and Inuvialuit culture and cultural goals. As a result, in general, the communities that Allison and Heuer consulted with were happy with the film and felt it met the objectives they had agreed to. I aim here not to deny the value of Monani’s assessment, but to offer an alternate interpretation that, taken with hers, fleshes out the complexities facing the *Being Caribou* project as it strove to meet its goals.

their stories and effectively challenging the “political cosmology” (91) that supports linear notions of development in which

the whole uneven geography of the world is effectively reorganised (imaginatively) into a historical queue ... a turning of geography (which, given the initial propositions, is a spatial simultaneity of differences) into history (itself seen as a single succession)” (90).

Massey is referring to poverty and conditions of inequality in ‘undeveloped’ communities being explained away not as a present condition of structural inequality but as communities being ‘behind’ in following a Western model of industrial development. Following Massey’s conception, the actual geographic movement of the expedition is of itself an important type of resistance to the collapse of geography into history. Massey argues that landscape

is not a surface but a constellation of on-going trajectories ... not only of the humans but of the nonhuman too - the buildings, the trees, the rocks themselves, all moving on, changing, becoming. It is that multiplicity of trajectories that it is important to capture - not travelling across space conceived of as a continuous surface, but travelling across stories (92).<sup>291</sup>

By physically putting Washington decision-making about the calving grounds “on the map” of the journey, in a contemporaneous time-frame with the recurring caribou migration, the Being Caribou project presented the fate of the calving grounds as depending on what Massey calls “a simultaneity of unfinished, ongoing, trajectories [in]

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<sup>291</sup> The deeper resonances of this with Athapascan cosmologies will be explored further in Chapter 6.

the dimension of the social,” in which the juxtaposition of spatially disparate yet concurrent realities “poses that most basic of social, political, ethical, questions: how we are going to live together. Space presents us with the existence of others” (92). Through Allison and Heuer’s narratives, the conceptual model of the “Full Circle” migration of caribou, a cycle of seasons and rhythms repeatedly intermingled with Gwich’in and Inuvialuit communities generation after generation, extended to encompass elected officials, conservation groups, non-northern indigenous communities and political organizations, faith groups, wilderness enthusiasts, university students, and simply ordinary concerned Canadians and Americans whose trajectories indeed must be woven into the Porcupine caribou’s circle of life for it to continue.<sup>292</sup>

In their original project applications, Allison and Heuer articulated the value of their project to VGFN and the GRRB as that

it will help to build awe and respect for the Porcupine Caribou Herd amongst voters in southern Canada and the US who currently have little idea of what's at stake in the drill versus no drill debate over the caribou's calving grounds in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. The intent of this project is to do two things: develop an emotional attachment with the caribou amongst people that live far away, and to communicate the idea that these caribou already lead difficult enough lives without the added stress of oil and gas development (Allison and Heuer).

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<sup>292</sup> In their first northern tour in February of 2004, Allison stated clearly that registering these simultaneous geographies was crucial to their project: “We did this to try and feel the geographical and ideological difference between where the caribou live, and where these decisions were being made” (Allison qtd. in Tobin).

This formulation fits smoothly with what Massey proposes as an outward-turning facet "to the geography of the relational construction of identity, of a global sense of place" (Massey, *Space, time and Political Responsibility* 93) that is able to include the distanced in its ethics and politics. The Being Caribou project channeled a multiplicity of trajectories: the recurring migration of caribou (a pattern that cycles, changes, and changes back), and within it the trajectories of individual caribou coming together and breaking apart to form the migration; the trajectories of the 'caribou people' as well as the park wardens, biologists, and friends and supporters in the north who were consulted before, during, and after the expedition; and Allison and Heuer's own pathway as they broke away from the social landscape to follow the caribou, then returned to reweave the caribou story into the "sensible" of a broader human family, beginning with their long journey to Washington. "Trajectory" and "story" are interchangeable here:<sup>293</sup> only a part of the meanings or effects produced by the Being Caribou project can be captured in the traces left by the expedition's media products. The generative power of the expedition is and was located in the "translocal assemblages", both material and imaginative, that the expedition trajectory helped to animate.

As both Massey and theorists of the translocal describe, to forge and strengthen such constellations of connection across vast geographies requires not only "physical movement but also extend[s] to often mutually constitutive acts of visualizing and imagining connections between places and spaces," a process Brickell and Data (18) refer

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<sup>293</sup> Heise, seeking an 'environmental imagination of the global', uses ecocriticism to explore examples of written and filmic texts that develop or describe types of consciousness that, similar to Massey's vision, integrate awareness of distanced or "global" environmental and social justice quandaries into the imaginaries they create.

to as developing a “translocal imagination”. Note that this practice is described as “mutually constitutive”: it took a long chain of affective engagements—with Gwich’in and Inuvialuit people, with caribou, with northerners, and with concerned North American publics—for Allison and Heuer to reach a resonance that rendered the caribou as visible/sensible in the political field/shared reality of the many touched by the expedition’s media products. Meeting and speaking with Americans in Washington helped Allison and Heuer to recalibrate their stories to the emotional registers of everyday North Americans. Returning to northern communities enriched Allison and Heuer’s tellings through an exchange with Gwich’in, Inuvialuit and other northerners whose deep knowledge of caribou and life on the land helped them both reaffirm and reflexively reinterpret their extraordinary experiences on the tundra.

### **Fall 2003 to 2004: Developing a Shared Narrative**

My dad went and picked them up with the boat and when he brought them back, we had a big cookout outside of our place down here . . . They had a lot less weight on them when they came back . . . They looked worn but they looked like, you know, healthy enough and happy to be back . . . You know, we were so proud of them and so grateful for what they’ve done and we knew that because of that expedition that the word on their story would be widespread and that proves to be true today. The material they produced has gone everywhere and it helped a lot of people to understand our culture and how important the Porcupine Caribou is to us and to . . . all the other Gwich’in communities across the North. So it was good to share that



experience with them, or for them to share it with us at the time, and we have kind of followed their story and were eager, I guess, to see the film... It's like yeah, it's not only the Vuntut Gwitchin that are going out there, telling the story and wanting people to understand and believe that our story, our culture, our way of life and how the caribou is important to us, we have other people like Karsten and Leanne who are also advocating on behalf of the Gwich'in Nation (B. Frost).

When Erica Heuer had begun to draw up a plan for publicizing *Being Caribou*, the Canadian Broadcasting Network had been a main target as "it's the perfect CBC story . . . we figured if we could get CBC, or a program even, to follow along and get the updates along the way, that that would really inform the country and things would spread from there" (E. Heuer, Interview). It was thus an important achievement when CBC's *The National* ran a feature documentary on the journey, including significant segments of Allison's footage, on its October 28<sup>th</sup>, 2003 cross-Canada newscast. This proved to be an important step in getting Canada's National Film Board (NFB) to co-produce Allison's film. Allison already had some affiliation with the NFB through her GIFTS mentor, NFB film producer Diana Wilson, who had been helping and mentoring her, both by reviewing plans for what to shoot on the journey and by going over the raw footage sent out on bush planes ("Movie Gives"). Along with Wilson's backing, inquiries and feedback that NFB staff received after the airing of a "Being Caribou" segment on CBC's *The National* was one of the factors that encouraged the NFB to sign on to produce the film (Allison, Interview).

In the months following AWW, Allison and Heuer concentrated their energies on developing their film and book projects, and doing a first tour to northern communities. In the original Full Circle project proposal, “local communities in the Western Arctic” were a specific audience target, separate from the general North American public, and Allison and Heuer had committed to touring a slide show presentation of their journey in the Western Arctic (Allison and Heuer). Allison and Heuer visited northern Canada and Alaska in February of 2004, presenting both in larger communities like Whitehorse—where they visited four schools as well as giving a sold out evening presentation at the Yukon Arts Centre (Tobin; Fedoroff)—and smaller centres such as Inuvik (Unrau).<sup>294</sup>

Visiting northern communities, and in particular those where they had undertaken consultations in 2002, was crucial not just for sustaining a healthy relationship with Gwich’in and Inuvialuit people and organizations, but to the development of the film and book that Allison and Heuer were working on. As a counterpoint to Monani’s appraisal of the film as reducing Gwich’in to a stereotype, it is worth exploring how Gwich’in and Inuvialuit people responded to Allison and Heuer’s stories, as these reactions influenced the making of the aesthetic choices she critiques.

The points that follow, based on interviews I conducted in 2012, primary source materials such as newspaper articles concerning the northern tours, and my experiences

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<sup>294</sup> The actual full presentation schedule for this tour was not published, although in early 2004 the Being Caribou website included in its “Where are they now?” section that the planned tour would include “at a minimum” Inuvik, Aklavik, Tsiighetchic, Fort McPherson, Old Crow, Dawson City and Whitehorse. See <http://web.archive.org/web/20040202072608/http://www.beingcaribou.com/where/whnow.html>. Erica Heuer told me that screenings were held in Anchorage, Fairbanks, and Juneau, but I can’t corroborate that they were part of this first northern tour as the media files Erica gave me are corrupted and none of the major newsstand databases I accessed seem to include the relevant Anchorage press.

living in the Yukon while *Being Caribou* screened multiple times in 2005 and 2006, are offered not as a complete description of Gwich'in and Inuvialuit opinions—which are obviously more diverse than a summary can accomplish<sup>295</sup>—but to give a sense of the general points of consensus around which my northern community research coalesced. In my discussions, I found interviewees, in general, made little distinction between the forms in which they had been exposed to *Being Caribou* (such as seeing the slideshow or the film, or meeting Allison and Heuer on their many trips through the north before or after the expedition), considering the project instead as a whole that they associated with Allison and Heuer, their journey, their interactions in the community, and how these fit with the larger campaign to protect the Arctic Refuge.

As Brenda Frost suggested in the quote that opens this section, an important factor in how the *Being Caribou* stories were received was the pre-existing, negotiated relationship between the project and the communities. There was mutual agreement that the object of the project was to tell the story of the caribou (Allison and Heuer; Kyikivichik), although respectful recognition of the special relationship between the Gwich'in (and other aboriginal communities dependent on the herd) and the Porcupine caribou was a part of that story. There was also a mutual recognition that the publicity and media products of the journey were meant to strengthen and feed the existing social movement and governance mechanisms to protect the herd. Finally, many people in the communities felt, as Brenda Frost expressed, a sense of ownership towards the project.

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<sup>295</sup> In particular, my research is heavily skewed towards the opinions of Canadian Inuvialuit and Gwich'in, as I encountered only a handful of Alaskan Gwich'in during my primary research, and have had to rely on media and gray literature materials and stories told by Canadians about their American counterparts.

While migrating with the caribou, Allison and Heuer had been in regular touch with the PCMB, Parks Canada, and other northern partners, so many heard about their progress either directly or indirectly. For example, staff at the Parks Canada office in Inuvik (where Heuer had worked for two years) kept track of the hikers' progress by moving a pin on a map on the wall every time the expedition called in a spot-check (Joe).

Moreover, Gwich'in and Inuvialuit people knew that the expedition would have been impossible without their support. Some of this support was material, such as when Ivvavik park wardens ran a line across the Firth River to help Allison and Heuer get their gear across (Joe).<sup>296</sup> Much was traditional knowledge. The advice given by Randall Tetlich in the *Being Caribou* film, which bookends both ends of their journey, represents just a small part of the traditional knowledge that hunters and trappers shared with Allison and Heuer. In my talk with him, Randall Tetlich took pains to emphasize that to complete such a long and difficult journey, Allison and Heuer had needed cultural and traditional teachings not only to help them practically (for example in locating caribou), but also to cultivate the stamina and mental fortitude they would require. As discussed earlier, as the first person to greet them at the end of their journey, Randall Tetlich immediately recognized Allison and Heuer's altered states and drew on traditional knowledge to take appropriate action to protect their health.<sup>297</sup>

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<sup>296</sup> Allison and Heuer swam the swift-flowing, ice-cold river, making for some of the film's more dramatic footage.

<sup>297</sup> For example, as described in an expedition update in *Backpacker.com*, Tetlich had "whisked them away for a specially-prepared traditional sweat to help them "turn from caribou people back into people people", explained Tetlich, and handle the depression of leaving the land that he and many Gwich'in foresee" (Backpacker editors, "Being Caribou Returns Home").

Even as he highlighted the caution and reserve people in Old Crow have towards discussing the power of dreams with outsiders, one young band councillor from Old Crow expressed that

When I saw that part in the movie, when Randall Tetlichich told them to pay attention to their dreams and then when I saw them out there in the midst of it all, when they were beginning to dream themselves to the caribou, it had a really big effect on me because for me, that was verification right there that we were on the right path, that we were doing the right thing and that, you know, we don't lie. When we experience things, we tell the stories of our experiences, and there's no hidden agenda, because we're not trying to gain anything out of it or anything like that, we are just recounting the experiences as they happen (Kyikivichik).

As discussed in Chapter 3, despite both lip service and some real gains, empirical studies suggest that scientific narratives continue to, in many cases, be a de facto requirement to undergird northern resource management decision making, with traditional knowledge tending to be marginalized<sup>298</sup> even within co-management contexts. In contrast, the Being Caribou expedition had limited success in using scientific knowledge to track the caribou<sup>299</sup> and had to rely on indigenous knowledge to lead them when the caribou were moving very quickly. Kyikivichik's comment is just one of many examples in which a

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<sup>298</sup> This is not universally the case—for example, there have been numerous attempts by the Porcupine Caribou Management Board to incorporate “let the leaders pass” protocols into caribou hunting guidelines and regulations, although it has yet to be finessed into an effective policy.

<sup>299</sup> This knowledge was very important: Allison and Heuer were regularly in touch with caribou biologists who were tracking the caribou and advising them about the patterns of their movements.

Gwich'in person I spoke with interpreted Allison and Heuer's experiences, and Randall Tetlich's words as featured in *Being Caribou*, as illustrating and confirming the validity of traditional knowledge.<sup>300</sup>

When, on their northern tour, Allison and Heuer discussed their experiences with dreams and, over the course of their journey, achieving a kind of altered state in which they could communicate with caribou, these resonated with the experiences of others in their audience and with Gwich'in and Inuvialuit beliefs. These experiences became an important part of the *Being Caribou* narrative, and one that many commentators have focused on<sup>301</sup> (Banting; Monani; Chisholm; S. Ganz). As Heuer repeatedly documents in his writings and interviews (Heuer, *Being Caribou* 169-70; Heuer qtd. in Esser, 39-40), he was only able to accept and come to terms with experiences so outside of his understanding because the experiences matched closely with what Gwich'in people told him about ancient times and Gwich'in traditional knowledge. Heuer describes that when Randall Tetlich greeted them on the Porcupine River as they returned from their journey, acknowledging immediately their transformation, he

allayed another of our deep fears about returning to civilization: the fear that no one would recognize the profound changes that had happened to us over the last five months. It was as though every cell inside our bodies had been repolarized, and yet we were still trapped in the same skin. The man

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<sup>300</sup> For example, another young hunter and alternate member of the PCMB, David Frost also said that he most remembered and particularly appreciated the segments of the film that featured Randall Tetlich.

<sup>301</sup> And which I will also address in Chapter 6.

who had sent us off with just the right words had welcomed us back in the same way. (Heuer, *Being Caribou* 222)

The support and validation they received from Gwich'in and Inuvialuit people, who could not only relate to their strange experiences, but contextualize them—for example, Luci Beach, Executive Director of the Gwich'in Steering Committee in the fall of 2003, described Heuer and Allison's stories as "a lot like how the old people talk" (Wiebe)—are very likely what gave Allison and Heuer the courage to give space for these experiences in their public presentations and in the texts they produced.

This is particularly true because the core of the *Being Caribou* journey—travelling to the calving grounds while the caribou were giving birth—encroached on an important taboo. The calving grounds are sacred, and Gwich'in people do not go there. This created some friction during the consultation phase, and some Gwich'in and Inuvialuit continued to express unease about the expedition having travelled there (Gruben). Heuer has described how

On the calving grounds, Leanne and I had this terrible feeling we just shouldn't be there, that it wasn't right and we would never go back. The only way we could justify being there was by staying in our tent and by having a firm commitment to bring this story to a lot of people and to make a difference for caribou. We feel a huge responsibility to share our insights (Heuer qtd. in Esser 42).

The calving grounds are treated with reverence in the book and especially the film: Allison and Heuer urinate in cups and endure severe thirst rather than risk disturbing the birthing animals and their newborn calves. Allison's sense of wonder is palpable as the

camera pans to a mother coaxing her newborn calf to feed, the remains of the umbilical cord still hanging from her body, as Allison intones “they’re as fragile as glass right now ... we’ve been walking on eggshells the whole time” (Allison and Wilson).

As one community member living in Aklavik described

It was interesting, my own thoughts were it was a pretty darn good video. I would never have thought anything about the sacred lands until my auntie said something. But it does make you think "that's right, they should never have been in there." But otherwise, who would hear of it? (Gruben).

A majority of northerners who engaged with the project accepted the trip to this sacred place as part of conveying a crucial message about its value. However, the sense of wonder and reverence which permeated community events in which the calving grounds footage was shown—for they were events, often catered by local caterers, and advertised in local media and gathering places—reinforced Allison and Heuer adopting an aesthetic of reverence in portraying the calving grounds.

Exchanges borne of a shared interest in knowing the caribou brought northern audiences and the Being Caribou expedition closer together. Because there is such a depth of knowledge about caribou in northern hunting communities, despite a lot of interest in all things caribou, it is difficult to offer something genuinely new. In following the caribou so closely, Allison and Heuer were able to bring back footage and stories of things that nowadays people only rarely witness up close, such as wolves hunting caribou (Joe). As park warden Mervin Joe described, “No one ever videoed before like that, right close to the caribou. They did a pretty good job of that, showing the world that these caribou they go through rough times” (Joe). Robert Bruce, who has been both an MLA



for Old Crow and a Chief of the Vuntut Gwitchin, noted that he kept a copy of the film and has watched it over and over, and that the footage of the very young calves is unique (Bruce). The calving grounds are a storied place—even if Gwich'in people do not go there, they go there often in their minds. So to see the calving grounds, and witness the cows in their time of birthing, was a powerful experience for many Gwich'in, especially women who had themselves given birth and related to the sense of this being a very sacred time for the creatures with whom their own lives are intertwined: “When a female being is in her time of birth, whether it's humans or animals, we respect that time. It's a very sacred time for a female being”(Netro). The scenes in the calving grounds illustrated a crucial point that respected Gwich'in elder Sara Abel had stressed to those going to speak on protecting the calving grounds, that it is like a nursery or a hospital (Netro).<sup>302</sup>

At the same time, many people could relate to the human adventure story of the movie.

it was really interesting to see people actually doing what we've only ever heard in stories about the area. In that way it was really interesting to actually see the place that was being talked about. To even just see a lot of the scenes where the caribou are interacting, I think that was really special. That really struck me, the community of caribou itself. And just to see what they went through personally, their personal journey. It kind of reflects our own, like how getting out on the land, with the focus of being caribou, you see a whole bunch of relationship issues coming out of that. Sorry, social

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<sup>302</sup> Sarah Abel, born in 1896 in Alaska, lived to be 102 years old, and was a respected spokeswoman and elder. See <http://www.historymuseum.ca/gwichin/storytellers/sarah-abel/>.

interactions, I should say, that come out of that. I think that was a good representation, to see that journey together. I think it really underlines how important, something like an animal could strengthen social bonds, by going through a similar experience. It's kind of what I would imagine hunts being like, it just strengthens a lot of relationships and tests them (Confidential 1).

Gwich'in and Inuvialuit people have only lived in permanent settlements a short time. The parents and grandparents of many people in leadership positions today lived on the land for at least part of their lives. Many of the people I spoke with derived strength and cultural pride from knowing that their parents, grandparents, and ancestors survived with great ingenuity in incredibly harsh, difficult conditions. Watching Allison and Heuer endure snowstorms, predatory bears, high cold river crossings, and other trying circumstances, all while travelling “human-powered” with minimal modern conveniences, reminded many Gwich'in and Inuvialuit of their own history and stories, and reinforced as sense of admiration for their culture and their ancestors (Tetlichik; Kyikivichik).

Though Allison and Heuer's journey, as Monani points out (102-7) certainly fits within the genre of “adventure-nature films”, the theme of a lone individual or small group setting out on a long journey/quest through harsh conditions also has affinities with both historical and “mythic” narratives in Athapascan cultures, particularly when the quest is understood to be something of benefit to the community. As well-respected storyteller Louise Profeit-Leblanc has described:

When I go to the schools I help the teachers to realize the power of story.

Then I begin by sharing these myths with them, these ancestral stories of a great distant past which establishes strength within our children, not just First Nation children, all children. Look around us; how many heroes do we have? The world is bankrupt of heroes. I grew up with heroes. I grew up with giant killers. People, and we were a small bunch of people, used to kill giant beavers, giant jackfish, giants!! I wasn't really scared of anything. I figured, well, my great-great-great-great-grandpa did that, so I can handle it. But the children nowadays don't have this. They don't have the continuous training and education about how not to be afraid of what lies before you, what lies around you, what's in your environment. And certainly they don't have the training to be inquisitive about it, to talk about the fears they might have. Their teachings are embodied in the myths to dispel all those fears, so people realize that we can move ahead. That's one of the first faces. I think that would be the face of ancestral memory.

(Profeit-Leblanc, *Four Faces of Story* 49)

It was very common for Gwich'in and Inuvialuit that I spoke with to express admiration and gratitude that two people from so far away would undertake such a challenging and at times harrowing journey in an effort to help their communities. In villages that all too frequently lose even exceptionally skilled hunters to the inherent pitfalls of challenging terrain and weather conditions, people understood very well that Allison and Heuer risked not just failure but injury or death:

I was there when they returned again to show the film *Being Caribou* at the community center. It was very humbling, emotional to watch. The

community centre was packed, Everyone was impacted with their story, their journey through the harsh terrain, the weather, the dangers and with little food at times. To have people that care that much about our issue, to do what they did, touched our hearts, we are forever grateful. Again, the video brought attention to our issue, sent a strong message worldwide (Netro).

The choices interviewees made to express their appreciation for the project so wholeheartedly can be understood as both sincere and as strategic. Certainly, there were some reservations about the expedition, ranging from issues with travel to the calving grounds, to a sense in some quarters that Allison and Heuer did not do enough to share their plans and the outcomes (Schafer), to the caution and vigilance Gwich'in and Inuvialuit people exercise to keep a clear line on speaking for themselves about their issues. However, much as leadership had entered into land claims with a long-term strategy, in which some compromises were made in order to secure the most important gains, PCMB alternate David Frost stressed "compromising and meeting each other in the middle, and sharing of knowledge and appreciation for one another" (D. Frost) as being key to developing partnerships with government and the conservation community to move the calving grounds issue forward. In my limited experience, Gwich'in political leadership has a highly developed philosophy behind "compromise": core values are not compromised on, while compromises that are made are not necessarily seen as fixed, but rather as part of a two steps forward, one step back dance in which "you have to give up some to gain more ground" (D. Frost).

Thus, although it is quite true that, as Monani points out, certain themes and storylines in *Being Caribou* can lend themselves to interpretations that fall back on not particularly progressive tropes of Edenic wilderness and “ecological Indians” who are stripped of agency/cultural capital the moment they behave as normal twenty-first century people, the Being Caribou project at the same time goes some distance in creating an emotional connection for many viewers with the caribou and the calving grounds, and doing so in a way that is reasonably consistent with Gwich’in and Inuvialuit values and political goals. This is no accident: through a strategy of engagement, the very structures Gwich’in and Inuvialuit had set up through self-government created a framework for Allison and Heuer to be in regular dialog with northerners and thus cognizant of their opinions and values.<sup>303</sup> Much as had been the case with Lenny Kohm, Caribou Commons, Subhankar Banerjee, and countless other examples of conservation community storytelling, the crafting of Allison and Heuer’s stories followed a “concentric circle” model of development, spreading out from and returning to northern communities in a cycling that helped ensure a certain alignment with and faithfulness to Gwich’in and Inuvialuit interests and values.

Over and over, Gwich’in who worked or had worked in some way on caribou advocacy shared that it was very difficult, almost impossible to convey the incredible, sustaining importance of the caribou to Gwich’in, not only mentally and physically, but spiritually (D. Frost; Netro). While a very important task, the significant labour of

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<sup>303</sup> Some of the consultation obligations are quite fixed. For example, Vuntut Gwitchin has a review process not just for researchers but also for media-makers who wish to work in the community, and the process concludes with a signed agreement in which obligations and benefits are clearly articulated.

advocating on behalf of the calving grounds often takes a heavy emotional, physical, and even financial toll on Gwich'in and Inuvialuit people. Having southerners make a significant effort to understand Gwich'in and Inuvialuit culture, and to support their efforts to protect the calving grounds, was a morale booster that strengthened the effectiveness of both parties in the crucial 2004-6 period:

The buzz was still very much alive when I came in. I think I was here when the book and movie came out. So there was a lot of screenings, local screening of it. There was also a lot of communication between the different groups on it, and of course following that you could really see the momentum in the community of starting that awareness and a lot of talk about protecting ANWR, and on the letter writing (referring to some writing that she did) was not too far after that. So there definitely was momentum after, following the movie and the book. (Confidential 1)

In my experience, northern interviewees recognized the *Being Caribou* narrative as being an effective tool for creating an emotional connection between southern audiences and the caribou, and for making those audiences aware of their own responsibility and power to decide the calving grounds' fate. As David Frost described, "Every person in this country, and in North America, the U.S. has a say through their government, how they vote, that directly affects us way up here in the Arctic" (D. Frost). The narrative strategy followed by the *Being Caribou* film and book—to end by 'migrating' the story to Washington, and extending to the political cycles and seasons that determine the Porcupine caribou's fate—echoes the 'concentric circle' model that the GSC has consistently used in its organizing efforts. Allison and Heuer end their stories by making

direct, local-to-local appeals to everyday North American voters. This is exactly the strategy Gwich'in spokespeople have used, and continue to use, in innumerable speaking engagements at rallies, meetings, presentations, and special events (such as *Being Caribou* screenings) held across North America in the lead-up to Congressional votes on the calving grounds. Allison and Heuer themselves made such appeals in person when they returned to Washington to present the finished *Being Caribou* film at Alaska Wilderness Week in September of 2004.

## Chapter 7

### Caribou in the Balance: *Being Caribou* and the 2005 Congressional Votes

In 2005, right-wing Republicans in the United States Senate and House of Representatives launched a series of manoeuvres that repeatedly brought the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) to within one or two votes of being opened up for oil development. In response, grassroots organizers with the Alaska Coalition and Alaska Wilderness League used the *Being Caribou* film to systematically mobilize hundreds of thousands of voters to write letters, call their elected officials, and demonstrate publicly against opening the refuge to development. This chapter attempts, as far as possible, to quantify the impact that the *Being Caribou* film and book had in the period between 2004 and 2006, when the fate of the Arctic Refuge repeatedly came down to a few or even a single vote.

The full effects of the *Being Caribou* expedition on the 2005 calving grounds debates are best appraised in the context of the circulation of *Being Caribou* stories through both mainstream and specialized/targeted channels. This chapter begins by briefly revisiting ways filmmakers and new media theorists conceptualize multiple modes of circulation before exploring how the National Film Board (NFB), which initially did the bulk of film marketing, promoted and disseminated *Being Caribou*. A key turning point in the tenor of this circulation came after Heuer and Allison returned to Alaska Wilderness Week in the fall of 2004, and the Alaska Wilderness League made a strategic decision to buy *Being Caribou* in bulk from the NFB and incorporate the film into Alaska Coalition campaigning. *Being Caribou* was repurposed not just to raise awareness but to build momentum for the movement for calving grounds protection.



This chapter next supplements media studies theories of film impact and participatory culture, which have limited applicability to questions of longer term movement building, through a turn to the research approaches of civic engagement and leadership studies. This hybrid approach is then applied to the phenomenon of house parties, the main form in which *Being Caribou* circulated as a translocal “charismatic package” (Tsing 227) within the Alaska Coalition. The concrete example of community screenings in Yukon Territory is used to illustrate this phenomenon in practice, before a broader analysis describes and quantifies the full breadth of the public storytelling effort in which *Being Caribou* was involved. Finally, a brief coda highlights the *Being Caribou* book tour and book circulation, which bridged a period of intensive civil society action when the Arctic Refuge was under great threat, and a longer-term arc of educational and campaigning work aimed at securing permanent legal protection for the calving grounds.

### ***Being Caribou, Being on the Cusp of Change***

*Being Caribou* had the good fortune to appear in the North American film marketplace just as documentary and outdoor/wildlife films were making unprecedented box office inroads. The commercial success of films like *Super Size Me*, *Touching the Void*, *Fog of War*, and especially *Fahrenheit 9/11*—the highest grossing American documentary ever at the time of its release—marked a resurgence of documentary film towards mainstream popularity (“Political Documentary”). Overall, in 2005, nearly seventy theatrical releases of documentary films grossed over one hundred million dollars (Arthur). DVD sales of documentaries were also on the rise, tripling between 2001 and 2004 (Aufderheide). Wildlife and expedition themed films did particularly well in the 2004-2006 period,

whether in the case of Werner Herzog's critically acclaimed *Grizzly Man*, or in the example of *March of the Penguins*, which went on to gross over \$77 million in ticket sales (Rich).

At the same time as a small number of documentaries were achieving commercial success, however, business models for documentary film production were undergoing a significant transformation. New models of documentary making and viewing were coming into being, influenced by increasingly accessible technologies of filmmaking and distribution, changes in funding models to include more crowdsourcing and non-traditional not-for-profit sources such as tech moguls, and increasing collaboration with advocacy groups and social movements and their associated networks (McLagan). Recent scholarship suggests that much of this new documentary making fuses more traditional models of participatory video projects—wherein a videographer works with a community of concern, or videographers help to train community members to make media—with iterative and/or interactive participatory processes that are facilitated by new uses of social media, and designed to ensure a film's real world impact (Gregory; McLagan; Miller, "Building Participation").<sup>304</sup>

Allison and Heuer's process of sharing their story in the interactive format of a slideshow tour, as they were crafting that story into a film and book, fits very much with Elizabeth Miller's description of how increasingly accessible media technologies and a proliferation of platforms in the 2000s led to politically engaged filmmakers embracing "a perpetual 'beta' or 'always evolving' status" in their projects in which the opportunities for community collaboration extend well beyond the production phase of a

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<sup>304</sup> Several contributions in Hight, Nash and Summerhayes also make this point.

film and into its distribution (Miller, “Building Participation” 3). As noted earlier, repeated outreach efforts by Allison and Heuer led to Gwich’in and other partners feeling a sense of ownership and involvement in the project that might be described as “shared authority ... based on relationships of trust, a clear understanding of a filmmaker’s objectives, and ongoing negotiations between subjects, a filmmaker, and advocacy” (Miller, “Building Participation” 5).<sup>305</sup> This shared authority extended to the ways *Being Caribou* was distributed and circulated to potential audiences, and shaped the impact the film had.

Miller, whose 2007 film *On the Waterfront* incorporated community participation at all levels, explains that:

What I did not foresee when I began the project were the exploding possibilities that online streaming video venues and networking tools, connected to a web 2.0 environment, would present for collaborations with subjects and diverse audiences (Miller, “Building Participation” 1-2).

*Being Caribou*’s “long tail” of passage through multiple iterations (theatre, festival, DVD and online releases of the film; Canadian and American releases of the book; release of the children’s book) happened on the cusp of the emergence of the web 2.0 environment. Yet the patterns of circulation that the *Being Caribou* expedition’s stories followed are a clear precursor to patterns more recently elaborated by both documentary producers and cinema scholars.

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<sup>305</sup> Miller here is drawing on a long participatory filmmaking tradition. The concept of shared authority is important to many forms of participatory research and styles of documentary filmmaking.

The fact that the *Being Caribou* project evolved such comparable networks for distribution and dialogue prior to the rise of Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter—which did not exist as public networks in early 2004<sup>306</sup>—suggests that more than “web 2.0” is at work. Much can be gained from situating changing patterns of media circulation within a broader history of evolving relations between the cinematic and extra-cinematic world. Miller describes how her experiences working with Nicaraguan non-profit Puntos de Encuentro, which uses communication projects to promote women’s and children’s rights, oriented her in her own filmmaking towards “networking strategies based on long-term relationships that predate the more spontaneous and temporary networking taking place on Facebook and other social networking sites” (Miller, “Building Participation” 12). Conceptually, Miller’s philosophy shifted “ [the] emphasis from ‘I am making a film about water privatization’ to ‘I am making a film to strengthen alliances between groups working around race, poverty, and the environment’” (12). A film becomes less a product, and more the facilitator of a process of engagement in which interactive tools extend the collaborative process in an open-ended way across a film’s entire life-cycle. Carefully sequenced releases of film-related media, often through interactive platforms, aim to keep a moment of cultural conversation or “flow” going and growing.

Elmer and Langlois, who have been investigating “the material aspects and social effects of political content networked across Web 2.0,” draw on the concept of “flow” to point to the way, in Barack Obama’s 2008 campaign, “Yes We Can!” was “both a content and a deictic pointer to a broader community of like-minded individuals” (50).

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<sup>306</sup> Facebook was founded in 2004, but began as a small, closed university network. By September of 2006 it had opened up to anyone over thirteen years old with a valid email address. YouTube was launched in February 2005, Twitter in 2006.

Using web traffic tags, Elmer and Langlois developed a methodology that followed the movement of the “Yes We Can!” rallying cry across the web, in order to trace not just engagement across social networks, but points of conjuncture where these manifest in political activity in the “real world.”<sup>307</sup> The nature of Web 2.0 allows for a sophistication and depth to this kind of tracking that is much greater than Web 1.0 hyperlinking,<sup>308</sup> but following “flow” remains a sound methodology. Sam Gregory, program director of human rights NGO WITNESS speaks of how the organization developed a policy of “sequencing”, which Miller describes as the rollout of its videos “to use the momentum or attention generated by one successful method of outreach to open the doors to further distribution” (“Building Participation” 12). “Narrowcasting,” or tailoring media and how it is released in order to focus on specific audiences who are most likely to have the political agency to take action on an issue, became another critical way that WITNESS streamed stories towards where they could have the most effect (Hallas). In such a conceptualization, the flow of stories oxygenates and brings vitality to the body politic, maintaining old pathways and building new ones, and acting as a form of communication between its interconnected systems. In the discussion that follows, *Being Caribou*’s contribution to revitalizing the body politic is fleshed out through following the flow/sequencing of its “long tail” of film distribution, including where this flow branched off to specific, “narrowcast” constituencies.

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<sup>307</sup> A simple example could be following traffic from a “Yes We Can!” YouTube video towards a site where people can sign up to join the Democratic Party. If the party’s membership gets a big boost via traffic driven from the YouTube link, one can conclude that the video drew people into further political engagement.

<sup>308</sup> Elmer, Langlois and McKelvey, as well as Elmer and Langlois discuss the comparative limitations of hyperlink analysis.

## Going Public: Sharing Stories and Forging Connections

The roll-out of the *Being Caribou* film and book from 2004 through 2006 took place across a variety of settings, from prestigious film festivals and exclusive learned societies, to mainstream television and news media, to festivals and events geared towards specialized user communities such as outdoor adventure enthusiasts, to community screenings and talks. From its release in September of 2004 until November of 2005, the *Being Caribou* expedition estimated that over 1 million people in Canada and the United States saw the film in over 5000 screenings,<sup>309</sup> including television broadcasts. Especially in Canada, where the NFB did the lion's share of marketing, the film was circulated to the public and community groups in a "full-spectrum" promotional strategy. The release of the film through mainstream and high-visibility channels—particularly as the film received a successful critical reception and won numerous awards—created "buzz" and media coverage that bolstered interest among local programmers (whether of small festivals, repertory cinemas, or community screenings) to organize screenings. The NFB capitalized on this buzz through its community screening program, and additionally promoted the film at the community level through its nascent multi-media platforms, including the interactive *CITIZENSHIFT* website. This approach is in keeping with the philosophy of "sequencing" developed by the video activist human rights organization WITNESS and discussed later in this chapter. However, while the NFB came to facilitate community distribution pathways for *Being Caribou* that paralleled the kinds of cross-platform, iterative roll-out strategies evolved by WITNESS

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<sup>309</sup> See <http://web.archive.org/web/20051124153738/http://beingcaribou.com/film.htm>.

and other socially implicated documentary producers, these formed but part of its larger efforts to ensure that *Being Caribou* reached as wide an audience as possible.

Since its founding in 1939, the NFB has had a mandate that includes not only commissioning and distributing films, but also maximizing the contribution of Canadian films to public dialogue. Thus, the NFB brought a well-developed network and system to the distribution of *Being Caribou*, which functioned at both a commercial and a community level. As Allison and co-director Wilson were in the process of finishing the film, NFB producer Tracey Friesen applied to have *Being Caribou* entered in dozens of festivals in the 2004-5 season, ranging from large international and industry festivals like the Toronto International Film Festival,<sup>310</sup> to a number of specialized environmental, outdoor, and women's film festivals. While 17 festivals turned the film down, as Appendix 2 details, *Being Caribou* screened at at least 29 film festivals, 23 of which were in North America, in the 2004-5 time period.<sup>311</sup> Additionally, although its inclusion in much of the run was restricted both by licensing issues<sup>312</sup> and the length of the film, *Being Caribou* was selected as part of the Banff Mountain Film Festival World Tour,

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<sup>310</sup> *Being Caribou* wasn't selected.

<sup>311</sup> The spreadsheet list was compiled from several sources, including business correspondence between Tracey Friesen and Leanne Allison, promotional materials and personal correspondence with distributors of the film, and internet and Internet Archive searches.

<sup>312</sup> Licensing of the film for festival use was slow; when the Banff Mountain Film Festival World Tour organizers sent the short list of films to select from to most local organizers, *Being Caribou* was not yet licensed to be screened in the US with the festival. Jim Baker estimates that total viewership of *Being Caribou* at BMFF World Tour stops was only approximately 1 675 people at six stops, which is only 1% of the total viewership of 170 000 people on six continents at 260 locales for the World Tour in 2004-5.

screening in Nelson, Banff and Vancouver in Canada, Reno in the United States, and Cork and Dublin in Ireland (J. Baker).

Early on in its release—virtually at the same time as *Being Caribou* was being screened at the American Academy of Sciences in Washington for Alaska Wilderness Week in September 2004—the film won major audience awards at both Vancouver and Calgary’s International Film Festivals.<sup>313</sup> These successes raised the film’s profile not only through media buzz and personal recommendation, but because, as an audience favourite, the film became more appealing to potential programmers. *Being Caribou* won 16 film festival awards in the 2004-5 period, including four audience awards. These successes, along with strong marketing support from the NFB, contributed to the entire film being broadcast, in two parts, on successive episodes of CBC’s popular *The Nature of Things*, hosted by David Suzuki, in June of 2005, where it garnered approximately 375 000 viewers (Appendix 3).<sup>314</sup> The film was also shown in a number of repeats on CBC Newsworld, and on the non-commercial American satellite network Link TV.<sup>315</sup> In 2005 *Being Caribou* also had a run in repertory theaters, a remarkable feat for a low budget documentary.<sup>316</sup>

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<sup>313</sup> The Vancouver International Film Festival (VIFF) was especially important; along with film festivals in Montreal and Toronto, VIFF has a high profile as both a popular and industry festival.

<sup>314</sup> The CBC main network showings occurred during a CBC strike. The associated ratings figures are somewhat inaccurate because the two parts of the film did not air in all markets in the regular *Nature of Things* time slot, and because it is unclear if different viewers or the same viewers tuned in for both parts of the film.

<sup>315</sup> Appendix 3 lists approximate viewership for Canadian broadcasts of *Being Caribou* in this time period. Figures for Link TV were unavailable.

<sup>316</sup> For example, the film played at the Princess Cinemas repertory theatre in Guelph the week of May 19, 2005 (Bast), and at the Roxie in the San Francisco Bay area the week of September 19, 2005 (Spector). While various articles (Arthur; Aufderheide) document



In Appendices 2 and 3, I have detailed and to some degree quantified the circulation of *Being Caribou* via television broadcasts and film festival screenings. While it is apparent that hundreds of thousands of North Americans saw at least some television footage from the expedition, and that thousands saw the film at a festival screening, it is difficult to gauge the impact of these viewings. A portion of the *Being Caribou* TV audience was affected enough by the film to take immediate action. For example, in its 2004-5 annual report, the NFB highlights the commentary of Mary Elsener that,

In the past three days, my husband and I have watched your film four times on Link TV.... It is a beautiful production and testimony that illustrates perfectly why this wrong action must be stopped. We are trying to get everyone we know to see the film immediately and urging them to respond to their state representatives. My husband leads birding tours to Alaska every year for the Sierra Club and will be sending it to their leaders to show trip participants (National Film Board, *Annual Report 2004-5* 103).

Elsener is not exceptional to Link TV's demographic: 57% of the network's viewers self-reported having taken action based on viewing a Link TV program (Link TV). Because *Being Caribou* was shown in Canada on *The Nature of Things*,<sup>317</sup> a program hosted by

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rising mainstream openness to documentary film and a concomitant rise in box office receipts for documentary films from about 2001 onward, most of these films, such as *March of the Penguins*, were much higher budget and higher profile than *Being Caribou*.<sup>317</sup> In 1999, *The Nature of Things* was rated the top Canadian-produced program of the major networks in terms of "quality" (see Gates—further explication of the data is available at <https://www.friends.ca/files/PDF/factsheets/tvsystemcharts.pdf>). While this is a somewhat nebulous metric, following Bourdieu's research on taste, it likely reflects that the program appealed to more educated and empowered citizens, whom research shows are more likely than average to be politically active (Corrigall Brown, "From the Balconies" 20). Gates' report relied in part on data from the Canadian Media Quality

one of Canada's most well-known environmentalists, David Suzuki, who in 2004 also played a key role in running a prominent environmental foundation that bore his name, it is also likely that at least a percentage of its viewing audience skewed towards people who had Elsener's political savvy, sense of empowerment, and connection to environmental networks, and were therefore likely to channel indignation into action. However, it is likely that for the majority of TV viewers, the film served mainly to raise awareness about the risk posed by oil development in calving grounds.<sup>318</sup> It is somewhat more clear that film festival showings, particularly within the outdoor recreation and environmental communities—roughly 70% of festival screenings fit this category<sup>319</sup>—had a catalytic effect in “narrowcasting” to constituencies with affinities to wilderness preservation and a history of becoming politically involved.

Although the kinds of analyses being developed by Elmer, Langlois, McKelvey, and others<sup>320</sup> could, in a web 2.0 environment, establish “flow” between film festival screening dates and visits to social networking and environmental websites where people could take action to protect the Arctic Refuge, it is difficult to do such an analysis for a

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Research Survey (QRS), a syndicated Canadian TV, radio and Internet audience survey conducted on behalf of Nielsen Media Research and CBC's research department by Canadian Facts. Data were gathered from 2,160 English-speaking adults in October/November 1999.

<sup>318</sup> Film impact assessment surveys, whether done by film funding organizations or by academics, tend to consistently show that audiences are more aware of an environmental issue after seeing an environmental film (Brereton and Hong; Search).

<sup>319</sup> Seventy percent of film festivals that screened the film could be considered environmental, outdoor, wildlife, or mountain film festivals. However, as the larger festivals like the Vancouver International Film Festival screened the film repeatedly and to larger audiences, this figure can be misleading.

<sup>320</sup> I would like to acknowledge the research of Jill Piebiak, whose master's thesis “Shit Harper Did: A Community Speaking Truth to Power?” analysed the impact of the viral campaigns of Shit Harper Did.

decade ago.<sup>321</sup> However, especially in the cases of some of the smaller film festivals, it is likely that screenings were linked to opportunities for the public to take action. Many of the film festivals at which *Being Caribou* was shown had social purpose mandates, and as part of their programming create opportunities for audience members to engage with NGOs and become more involved in the issues presented on film. For example, the weekend that *Being Caribou* screened at Toronto's 2004 Planet in Focus festival, the courtyard of the festival's main venue hosted an Eco-Fair that not only had dozens of tables with NGO, government, and eco-friendly small business hosts, but included a pancake brunch, children's musical entertainment, and a multi-faith celebration that had been planned to encourage people to stay and circulate through the fair.<sup>322</sup>

Similarly, the multiple "local" screenings of the Banff Mountain Film Festival World Tour (BMFF World Tour) had a far more community-oriented character than their parent festival. Rather than the prestigious, competitive event widely attended in Banff by commercial and public broadcasters, distributors, and other agents, BMFF World Tour stops were and are a collaborative effort between the BMFF and local hosts. Although the touring festival has a raft of major corporate and not-for-profit sponsors—for example, in 2004 in Canada, these included Dunham, National Geographic, Patagonia, Mountain Safety Research and Air Canada ("Award Winning" 2004)—local hosts include "not-

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<sup>321</sup> This is both because of a paucity of archival internet records and because, as previously discussed, the major social networking sites were not yet an important factor in communications.

<sup>322</sup> See

[http://web.archive.org/web/20040831160347/http://www.planetinfocus.org/events\\_2003/eco\\_exchange.html](http://web.archive.org/web/20040831160347/http://www.planetinfocus.org/events_2003/eco_exchange.html) and

[http://blog.thismagazine.ca/filmclub/archives/2004/09/september\\_17\\_20.html](http://blog.thismagazine.ca/filmclub/archives/2004/09/september_17_20.html) for more details.

for-profit groups, outdoor retailers, event companies, universities, climbing clubs, environmental organizations, etc.” (J. Baker). Especially in smaller population centres, the festival is a community event, often held at a community library or school auditorium, with organizers raising both funds and awareness for local causes,<sup>323</sup> and sometimes inviting social purpose and community groups to table at the screenings or introduce a film. Local organizers, in conjunction with BMFF, work from a shortlist to select which films will be screened in their communities; the programmers who chose to screen *Being Caribou* likely knew of strong local resonances. For example, in the case of the Nelson stop, the fate of endangered local mountain caribou herds had been in the news the previous fall, with environmentalists blockading a forestry road to prevent logging in caribou habitat (Baron).

*Being Caribou*’s Canadian distribution spread across a continuum from the more commercial to the more community based. In order to deliver the film to as wide an audience as possible, the National Film Board drew on a complex set of pre-existing partnerships, developed over decades. For instance, the NFB partnered with Mountain Equipment Co-op, a large outdoor clothing and gear cooperative with 2.3 million members in 2005 (*Marking Our Route*), to sell the *Being Caribou* DVD for \$20 at its outlets across Canada. While retail sales were MEC’s main contribution to increasing viewership, the Co-op also promoted *Being Caribou* within its organizational culture, especially during the crucial 2005 period of threat to the Arctic Refuge. The film was shown in April 2005 at the catered lunch of MEC’s Annual General Meeting, with co-

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<sup>323</sup> For example, the 2002 and 2004 Iqaluit screenings—which didn’t include *Being Caribou*—raised funds for a food bank and a help line respectively (Geens, 2005).

director Diana Wilson answering questions after the film.<sup>324</sup> *Being Caribou* was also incorporated into in-store conservation displays, such as with the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS)'s boreal forest campaign, and the DVD was informally passed around by staff.<sup>325</sup> MEC partnered with the NFB's Mediathèque facility to launch the film in Toronto in January 2005 with a free public screening (National Film Board, *Annual Report 2004-5* 25).<sup>326</sup> Finally, MEC showed the film in the community, as with another April 2005 screening it hosted for the Alpine Club of Canada, Vancouver section, as part of MEC's Seminar Series with the Club ("MEC Seminar Schedule").

The NFB also distributed *Being Caribou* through its own platforms, which were increasingly incorporating digital distribution. In addition to including the film on the roster of its Mediathèque and CinéRobothèque facilities, the NFB brought *Being Caribou* into its "social impact" programming. When Montreal hosted the 2005 United Nations Climate Change Conference, COP 11, climate negotiations in November and December of 2005, the NFB hosted a number of free public screenings, including *Being Caribou*, as part of its activities at the conference's Canada Pavillion. As the calving grounds campaign was ramping up, the NFB's interactive *CitizenShift* web platform featured *Being Caribou* prominently as part of its dossier for the International Day of Biological

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<sup>324</sup> The agenda of the 34<sup>th</sup> MEC AGM is posted at [http://www.clubtread.com/sforum/topic.asp?TOPIC\\_ID=10483](http://www.clubtread.com/sforum/topic.asp?TOPIC_ID=10483).

<sup>325</sup> See <http://swmw.wordpress.com/2012/02/18/an-ode-to-karsten-heuer/> for one former MEC staff member's recollections of being exposed to the film via MEC. The documentary served as an introduction for her to read all of Karsten Heuer's books.

<sup>326</sup> The press release and invite for the screening are viewable at <http://www.freelists.org/post/cseblast/Being-Caribou-evite>.

Diversity on May 22, 2005,<sup>327</sup> including seven clips from the film as well as an additional twenty interview clips with Allison and Heuer.

Producer Reisa Levine described CitizenShift (CS) and its French counterpart, Parole Citoyenne (PC), as “the digital offspring of the Challenge for Change program, [that] picked up on the spirit of community driven media and were at the forefront of the Web 2.0 revolution . . . among the earliest pioneering websites to aggregate and produce social issue media” (Levine 50). Much as, decades before, Challenge for Change had tried to stimulate dialogue by encouraging communities to make media about issues of concern, CS was part of a larger effort, identified in the NFB’s 2002-2006 strategic plan, to reinvigorate and reinvent the film board’s mandate in the digital age. The *Being Caribou* interviews, uploaded to CS during the 2005 Arctic Refuge campaigning period, were included with other videos, photos, audio, articles, and links as part of a “dossier” to which visitors could upload their own content. CS consisted not only of an interface for interactive multi-media and on-line community dialogue, but of “live events such as screenings, discussions, workshops and film launches” (Levine 50) meant to build real-world community and to empower Canadians to raise their voices, both directly through advocacy on issues, and through producing media.<sup>328</sup> So, for example, during the

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<sup>327</sup> An archived version of this feature is visible at <http://web.archive.org/web/20061010110519/http://citizen.nfb.ca/onf/info?aid=3401>. The dossier, once created, remained on the site into 2014, when the overall *CitizenShift* site ceased to be active.

<sup>328</sup> CS also provided “small production grants to filmmakers, the server space to house their media, training on using social networking and outreach techniques and, perhaps most importantly, a context in which to make their voices heard” (Levine 51). Like Challenge for Change, CS supported community members to become media makers while encouraging professional media makers to open their practice to greater interaction with communities as both subject and audience.

aforementioned COP 11 conference (where the NFB screened *Being Caribou*) CS hosted a series of blog posts by Sierra Club of Canada leader Elizabeth May describing her take on the climate negotiations, and also helped support the “live” NFB community programming for the conference, which included the Sierra Club and May presenting the NFB-produced *Arctic Mission: Climate on the Edge*, and the launch of the interactive climate change quiz game DVD *Arctic Mission* (Hewings).<sup>329</sup>

It is doubtful that CS played a significant role in introducing *Being Caribou* to new viewers: CS’s audience was relatively small but steadily growing—from approximately 147 000 visits to the website in the 2004-2005 fiscal year (National Film Board, *Annual Report 2005-6* 18) to 100 000 visits a month in 2006.<sup>330</sup> However, CS was an early but important link in the chain of NFB initiatives that created continuous flow between the NFB’s community engagement programming and its investments in cutting-edge interactive media.<sup>331</sup> *Being Caribou* benefitted considerably from these flows, such as when the entire NFB film collection was released online for free in Canada in 2009 (National Film Board, “One Year”), and when the NFB developed an elementary

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<sup>329</sup> Full information on NFB programming at COP 11 is archived at [http://web.archive.org/web/20070426002535/http://www.nfb.ca/webextension/cop11/index\\_en.html](http://web.archive.org/web/20070426002535/http://www.nfb.ca/webextension/cop11/index_en.html).

<sup>330</sup> See [http://ts6.cgpublisher.com/proposals/173/index\\_html](http://ts6.cgpublisher.com/proposals/173/index_html) for more information on CS and its participation and viewership in 2006.

<sup>331</sup> For example, Elizabeth May’s blogging at COP 11 was publicized through the NFB film club. See <http://list.web.net/archives/getsmart-1/2005-November/001138.html> for an example. While this NFB program now works mainly with public libraries to ensure wide access to NFB films and projects, when it began in March of 2002 it was simply a free program that helped the NFB cultivate its audiences as it expanded its online presence. The thousands of individual members who signed up not only received more traditional NFB communications, such as the *Focus* newsletter and invitations to film premieres, but were among the first to be offered access to early NFB video-on-demand platforms (Bensimon; National Film Board, *Annual Report 2002-3*). The NFB strategy for its film clubs is discussed in its *Report on Plans and Priorities*.

to junior high school study guide on *Being Caribou* (National Film Board, *Being Caribou Study Guide*). More broadly, over its long-term trajectory, the *Being Caribou* expedition profited from the consistent bridging work and innovation by the NFB in pushing new-media/“transmedia” in directions that encouraged dialogue and active citizenship.

Corrigall-Brown argues that “overlapping networks of individuals, ideologies, goals and tactics,” such as those brought together through CS, form “movement abeyance structures” that often underlie seemingly separate campaigns or movements (“From the Balconies” 19). The “abeyance structure” of the NFB’s linked digital strategies—which included a series of experimental forays into interactive multimedia, primarily focused on drawing out the storytelling possibilities of the documentary form—facilitated connections between activists, filmmakers, and multi-media specialists, and built upon the NFB’s pre-existing community distribution networks.<sup>332</sup> These community networks, which the NFB was actively growing in the 2004-2006 time period, played a huge role in connecting *Being Caribou* to grassroots audiences in Canada. Additionally, because the NFB community screening program was open to working with new partners in new ways, it was able to distribute *Being Caribou* through the vast community network of labour

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<sup>332</sup> In the longer term, these strategies have provided some of the knowledge, access to technology, and organizational infrastructure that continues to support and build audiences for Canadian documentary work, particularly as this work primarily shifts into digital forms. The NFB Film Club, for example, in the 2004-5 period, focused on forging “partnerships with community organizations, public libraries, film festivals, film circuits, repertory theatres, and other organizations” (*Report on Plans and Priorities*) even as it was nudging these audiences to greater comfort and familiarity with digital and online work. There is a clear trajectory between this kind of audience-building and the success of more recent examples of interactive documentary work supported by the NFB, such as 2013’s *Fort McMoney* interactive documentary game about Alberta’s tar sands, and the non-linear interactive film *Bear 71*, co-directed by Allison, that uses imagery from bear radio collars to recreate the life of a bear in Alberta’s Bow Valley corridor.



organizations, faith groups, Rotary and Kiwanis clubs, and environmental and other groups that made up the Alaska Coalition. This collaboration arose after Heuer and Allison's second visit to Alaska Wilderness Week in September of 2004.

### ***Being Caribou, Being Part of a Grassroots Social Movement***

At the same time as *Being Caribou* was beginning to premier at major North American film festivals, Allison and Heuer were invited back to the September 2004 Alaska Wilderness Week (AWW). The Alaska Wilderness League (AWL) training overlapped with the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations of the Wilderness Act, dubbed "Wilderness Week," and a major political mobilization by wilderness advocacy groups in Washington, in the lead up to the November presidential and Congressional elections. Over 350 wilderness advocates attended "Wilderness Week" events from September 18-22, which included a gala dinner at the National Press Club,<sup>333</sup> a "Forty Years of Wilderness Rally," a Congressional reception, and a high-profile screening of *Being Caribou* at the auditorium of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS).

In addition to the public events, wilderness advocacy groups engaged in high-level strategy meetings to position themselves and mobilize their constituencies leading up to the elections. The day planner of one Washington organizer gives some sense of the pace of this behind the scenes activity as it related to the Arctic Refuge.<sup>334</sup> this person attended a special strategy meeting on the Friday, convened by the Alaska Coalition and

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<sup>333</sup> The sold-out gala featured Robert Redford, Terry Tempest Williams, and former Interior Secretary Stewart Udall, and was attended by wilderness advocates, lawmakers, and administration officials. Awards were handed out to wilderness movement leaders (Spangler; Campaign for America's Wilderness).

<sup>334</sup> I have omitted identifying details as they are irrelevant.

attended by a wide swath of wilderness advocacy group leadership; met on the Saturday with the head of one of the groups spearheading the “Wilderness Week” campaign; attended the gala banquet on the Sunday; did an AWL conference call as well as a briefing with aboriginal journalists about the Arctic Refuge on the Monday; and attended the opening of the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian on the Tuesday.<sup>335</sup>

In the midst of this frenetic week of campaigning, networking, training activists, and creating a show of force for the conservation community in Washington, the Monday night screening of *Being Caribou* was an important consolidating event, not only for Alaska Wilderness Week attendees (another several hundred people) but for the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Wilderness Act. As well as activists, conservation leaders, and Gwich’in and other Native Americans, the free screening was attended by Hill staffers, elected officials, and members of the public. Immediately after the screening, Heuer did a question and answer session (Keogh, Interview).<sup>336</sup> The film was extremely well received: according to Lexi Keogh, the Communications Coordinator for AWL at the time, “Everyone loved the film. People were engrossed by it,” and it had a powerful impact (Keogh, Interview). The story seemed to strike a chord with viewers, especially ordinary people in the audience. Michael Degnan, who was the national grassroots campaign manager for AWL from January of 2005 until May of 2008, described the

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<sup>335</sup> This was a key event for American native leadership; many people who had come for Wilderness Week attended the opening, and the timing created a convergence of formal and informal opportunities for native leadership and the conservation community to be in dialogue about their advocacy efforts.

<sup>336</sup> Allison was pregnant at this time with her son Zev, who was born in October. During fall 2004 and part of 2005, Allison was not as heavily involved in public promotion of the film, although she continued to work behind the scenes on the film’s distribution.

movie as having a strong personal appeal; he believed the home-made quality of the film, and the way it told the story of the migration of the caribou through the story of newlyweds whose marriage was tested by their journey, combined to help viewers identify with the caribou and the Arctic Refuge in a powerful and personal way (Degnan). The unusual ending of the film—on the surface deflating (as Heuer and Allison, in Washington, realize that their meetings with lawmakers are having little effect)—was excellent for campaigning purposes: it strongly conveyed that the calving grounds could only be protected through ordinary Americans from all fifty states getting involved and pressuring their elected representatives (Degnan). Degnan described the film as “A call to action, rooted in the personal.”

That call to action became crucially important after the 2004 elections. Not only was President Bush, a vocal supporter of drilling in the Arctic Refuge, re-elected, but his Republican party gained seats in the House of Representatives and the Senate. In her first post-election edition of *AlaskaWild*, AWL’s e-newsletter, Keogh wrote that the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge was facing its greatest threat in at least two decades and that “We will have to be at our strongest, our most focused, our most energized, and our most devoted over the next several month(s)” in order to prevail (Alaska Wilderness League, “Post Election Results”). As a major cornerstone to the campaign they were planning, in December of 2004, AWL ordered just shy of 2500 copies of *Being Caribou* from the NFB (Keogh, “Some More on Being Caribou”).

## Social Purpose Film in Participatory Culture: Frameworks for Thinking through Film Impacts

In 2005, the Alaska Wilderness League (AWL) and Alaska Coalition (AC) set out to systematically punch up the power of their campaign to protect the Arctic Refuge with *Being Caribou*. For these organizations, the measures of success were clear: if their efforts bolstered the ranks of Arctic Refuge supporters, resulted in mass actions such as protests and deluges of letters and phone calls to elected officials, and swayed the outcome of Congressional votes on the 1002 lands, then the campaign had done its job. From a scholarly perspective, however, the role played by *Being Caribou* is more difficult to discern: how much of a difference did the film itself make, and how did it do so? Turning to wildlife documentary scholarship, as well as the newer field of film impact assessment, gives some direction to answering these questions.

Beginning in the 1990s, a number of media scholars (Chris; Horak; Bouse; Mitman; A. Wilson)<sup>337</sup> began to interrogate the wildlife documentary form, with a particular view to understanding the cultural contribution of wildlife and nature documentaries, and whether these have had political effects. These studies generally took the form of cultural studies critiques, emphasizing variously the history of the genre (Chris; Horak; Bouse; Mitman), the conditions of production and the institutional/business industrial contexts in which such films were made and broadcast (Chris; A. Wilson), case studies of films produced in the context of conservation debates and campaigns (Mitman), and critiques that examined how filmic choices (such as

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<sup>337</sup> Burt could be included in this list, although his work cuts a broader swath through the history of film in general—not just documentary—and takes more of an animal studies perspective on the role of animals (through motion studies, for example, of Edison's iconic *Electrocuting of an Elephant*) in the development of film as a cultural form.

narration and choice of subject and shot) fed into and reflected existing cultural tropes (Chris; A. Wilson). While scholars concluded that screen representations of animals both reflect and influence our general perceptions and interpretations of animal behaviour—for example, Chris examines in some detail how the animal sexualities portrayed in wildlife documentaries are filmed and narrated through the filter of human culture and morality—evidence was sparse and anecdotal as to whether wildlife films have specific political effects when broadcast on television or distributed through mainstream theatres.<sup>338</sup> In broad strokes, such filmic interventions were generally seen to reinforce the status quo because they “evade discussion of specific causes and political solutions to environmental problems,” and are at the same time constrained from presenting a radical analysis or blueprint for action because they are “dependent on commercial distribution or corporate sponsorship” (Chris, 2006: 201 qtd. in Horak).

Ecomedia scholars called for further research, particularly within the subfields of reception/audience studies and political economy, to determine if wildlife and nature films can in fact have measurable political effects (Kaapa). However, academic research of this nature is in its nascent stages. A recent special issue of *Interactions: Studies in Communication & Culture*, *Ecocinema Audiences*, contained only one empirical audience reception study. The authors of this study describe existing research and methodologies for ecomedia audience studies as “an uncharted field” in which “engaging audience research is an urgent concern” (Brereton and Hong 176). They argue that the small amount of extant research done to date suggests that the assumptions about “greening

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<sup>338</sup> For example, Burt (188-9) points to financial contributions for efforts to free Keiko, the whale featured in *Free Willy*, and surges in sales of animals after they are featured in popular films.

audiences” foregrounded by textual analysis, which is by far the dominant mode of ecocinema studies, contain “severe disparities” with the on-the-ground realities of audience cinematic perception and experience (176). While it is likely that the widespread television and theatrical circulation of environmentally themed films such as 2006’s *An Inconvenient Truth* have, at the very least, raised the prominence within popular culture of the issues they present, there exists little definitive evidence that viewing of environmental documentaries, on their own, prompts profound political engagement.<sup>339</sup> Indeed, as discussed in Chapter 1, some evidence suggests that the mainstream circulation of many kinds of ecological narratives, such as the “ecocatastrophe” of extreme climate change scenarios presented in *An Inconvenient Truth*, may lead to disengagement and apathy in some audience members, and may reinforce other viewers’ pre-existing political perspectives.<sup>340</sup>

Since about 2005, film funding/producer organizations such as the Fledgling Fund, BRITDOC, and Working Title have begun to devise new methods for measuring the impact of social purpose. McLagan (308-13) describes the push to measure the impact

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<sup>339</sup> For example, in the months after *An Inconvenient Truth*’s theatrical release, Jacobsen found a 50% increase in the purchase of carbon offsets in zipcodes near to theatres where the film had screened. However, this effect proved temporary and disappeared within the year.

<sup>340</sup> This research should not be taken to mean that *An Inconvenient Truth* had little political impact; in fact the film was accompanied by an ambitious marketing and outreach plan with a budget of \$4.5 million (Miller, “Building Participation” 26). Al Gore himself spearheaded an effort to train climate ambassadors to give further presentations in their communities. Frank undertook a detailed examination of the work done by these presenters and the effects produced on audiences. Search also undertook a detailed calculation of the social return on investment and value of the film in the U.K.

of social purpose films as arising from the increasing role of "filmanthropists,"<sup>341</sup> and the creation of numerous foundations since 2005 that have as their missions funding the audience engagement and outreach portions of film project budgets in order to catalyze social change. Drawing on both the language of social entrepreneurship and the processes of evaluation used by more traditional philanthropic foundations,<sup>342</sup> these organizations have moved towards quantitative as well as qualitative metrics to establish the "value" of social justice work accomplished by a particular film. One of the only in-depth such evaluations,<sup>343</sup> the BRITDOC' Foundation's study of *An Inconvenient Truth* is particularly striking in its adoption of classical economics and neoliberal framing:

the first willingness to pay study<sup>344</sup> of a film was conducted to measure the intrinsic value placed on *An Inconvenient Truth* by UK citizens, leading to a public good valuation of over £73 million. This gave a social return on investment ratio of 57:1 (Search 2).

Most film social impact discourse is replete with references to executing strategic communications plans, achieving social return on investment, and evaluating impact through metrics, hard data and assessment frameworks. Such positivist, instrumentalist

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<sup>341</sup> This term is a conflation of the terms philanthropist and filmmaker, and refers primarily to social entrepreneurs such as Jeffrey Skoll, former president of eBay and founder of Participant Media, which is responsible for numerous social purpose films.

<sup>342</sup> Along with non-profit advocacy organizations, such foundations have increased their support of documentary projects in the last decade (McLagan 308-11)

<sup>343</sup> Although BRITDOC, the Fledgling Fund, and other funders have produced more than a dozen case short study reports of film impacts, only the *Inconvenient Truth* report, which was first written as a master's thesis, and the *End of the Line* report are longer and offer more rigorous and in-depth research.

<sup>344</sup> A willingness to pay study is a means economists borrowed from environmental valuation literature in order to estimate the worth that citizens place on a good through asking them. See Search (32-4) for a detailed discussion of his methodology.

approaches have limitations, particularly as they become institutionalized as dominant evaluative mechanisms; *Being Caribou* expedition publicist Erica Heuer, in the context of discussing the piecemeal nature of her project records, articulated one such critique in strongly emphasizing that *Being Caribou* was the project it was only because

There wasn't big funders involved ... To me, that's half of what hampers conservation organizations today, is the fact that they have to go begging for money, and then the funders tell them what they can use that money for, and then they need to spend half their time accounting for the money, and making records for the money, and justifying the money ... it's crazy, it's crazy. And then they live in fear of their funding all the time. No, so we didn't have any of that. We just did it! We did 'er, eh? (E. Heuer, Interview).

As foundations become more prominent in funding social purpose multimedia projects, these projects increasingly risk constraint by what some grassroots activists critique as the “non-profit industrial complex.”<sup>345</sup> Evaluation mechanisms imposed by foundations not only create an administrative burden for grassroots organizers—they also impose direction from above (as projects strive to meet benchmarks) that may conflict with the

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<sup>345</sup> INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence's *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded: Beyond the Non-Profit Industrial Complex* offers a definitive articulation of some of these concerns. Within certain segments of American social justice movements, unease is regularly expressed about the impact of non-community based philanthropic funders. For example, the Sylvia Rivera Law project opens its report, “From the Bottom Up: Strategies And Practices For Member-Based Organizations” (Nepon et al.), with a several-page discussion about the impact of the non-profit industrial complex. As another example, the Anne Braden Anti-Racist Organizer Training Program includes selections from *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded* in its mandatory reading list. See <http://collectiveliberation.org/the-2013-anne-braden-anti-racist-organizing-training-program/> heading 10, “Grassroots Fundraising as Organizing.”



cultivation of grassroots leadership and creative direction from below. Such measures also tend to undervalue or not credit the long-term, deep social change work that sustains powerful movements.

Measuring impact by ascribing it to one film or social media campaign risks reductionism. In the case of the Arctic Refuge, Lenny Kohm suggested that what he witnessed in Arctic Village must be understood as the outgrowth of 500 years of colonialism, and that even 25 years of Arctic Refuge activism is only a brief segment in a far longer time span—he pointed to the 150 years it took to get the Civil Rights Act passed—necessary to cultivate deep social change. Past experiences have led many indigenous communities to be especially wary of partners who do not demonstrate a longer term commitment. As Confidential 1 explained:

you really see the winds change within the environmental world to where the money is, and that raises a lot of questions for why the caribou issue might become important flavour of the year and then the next year it'll be ice caps melting and you'll see everybody flock on over to that issue. So the commitment level is—we'll always be here, we'll always be involved. If there are going to be partnerships, that commitment is important for that relationship together to move forward.

“Retail environmentalism” (Kohm), which measures only the temporary uptake of an idea rather than sustained community empowerment and capacity to engage in social change, misses an important part of the picture.

Reductionism also creeps into such evaluation metrics in other ways. For example, a detailed paper on impact evaluation developed by the Fledgling Fund

provides a concentric circle diagram, at the heart of which is the term “story.” The report then describes that stories must be evaluated for their “quality:”

we look at measures such as festival acceptance, theatrical success, broadcast, internet streaming, online ‘buzz,’ international and national DVD sales as well as traditional film reviews and awards. All of which, we believe, create energy around a film and begin the process of building awareness about both the film and the issue. This in turn can make it easier to engage partners in outreach and community engagement efforts (Barrett and Leddy 16).

Such indicators can certainly measure a film’s general popularity. However, on their own they do not measure whether a story resonates with its subjects and target communities. For example, Participant Media’s 2009 release *The Cove* does exceptionally well by the Fledgling Fund measure (it won an Oscar among other awards, and screened widely) but was highly controversial in Japan, where many felt that its depiction of the Japanese dolphin hunt was inflammatory and racist (Heise and Tudor 278-9).<sup>346</sup> Similarly, while *Being Caribou* deployed a “buzz” creation strategy that is captured by the Fledgling Fund metric, the film reflected Allison’s careful effort to tell the expedition story in a way consistent with Gwich’in and Inuvialuit values. To describe *Being Caribou*’s “quality” by empirical measure alone is incomplete, as it fails to address the cross-cultural component

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<sup>346</sup> This perception created a lot of resistance among Japanese audiences, and reduced the film’s impact on domestic dolphin hunting as media coverage and public dialogue often focused on the racism controversy. The film producers later adjusted their campaign to be more appealing to Japanese sensibilities; however, the root problem with the film (a kind of “thriller” in which Japanese dolphin hunters are the villains and Rick O’Barry and his stealth team of white filmmakers are the heroes) limited the film’s appeal and could have been avoided if a more collaborative approach had been taken from the outset.

of what Gwich'in and other Athapascan master storytellers characterize as the elements of a powerful story<sup>347</sup>.

Tools like surveys and focus groups have made impact analysis relatively robust when it comes to measuring short-term attitude change among consumers,<sup>348</sup> but high quality indicators to measure more concrete social change effects remain elusive. In the more than a dozen short impact case studies produced by BRITDOC and the Fledgling Fund in the last several years, the actual delineation of concrete social change impacts is largely anecdotal (such as a screening of a film with policy makers who later changed a policy) and/or based on the enumeration of partnerships, events, and influx of participation in networks and NGOs that correlate with the use of a film as a community animation tool. It is difficult to establish the degree to which these correlations are indicative of causality, particularly in the case of social movement campaigns geared to overarching issues, where efforts are diffused across a wide variety of initiatives that multiple actors are working on. In contrast, efforts associated with the use of *Being Caribou* by American conservation organizations in the 2004-2006 period very directly channeled people toward specific acts of participation in support of particular actions on defined dates, all with the singular aim of influencing specific votes on drilling in the Arctic Refuge. Here, the concept of media flows introduced earlier is useful: the channeling of *Being Caribou* viewing to time-sensitive, measurable actions taken (often at the venue) in concert with peers and social network contacts set up a clear causality

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<sup>347</sup> Please refer to the discussion in Chapter 6 “Fall 2003 to 2004: Developing a Shared Narrative” for further discussion of how dialogue with Gwich'in and other northern First Nations people shaped the narrative arc of *Being Caribou*.

<sup>348</sup> Both Search's report on *An Inconvenient Truth* and the *End of the Line* report use these methods to successfully document effects.

chain between film viewership and spurring individuals to action. Flow offers a more dynamic way of thinking through media sequencing than more atomized metrics such as “quality.” The surges of activity associated with each media release build upon one another and have measureable short-term effects; equally importantly, these individual “sprints” contribute to overall, long-term effects of energizing/exercising the connections that bind social movement actors to a common passion and purpose.

But how exactly do sequences of storytelling, played out through multiple platforms and forums, tie into community organizing? To further consider such processes, I have looked to a relatively recent strand of social movement studies that focuses on an integration of social media platforms with traditional community organizing techniques. Much of this research credits Barack Obama’s successful 2008 Presidential campaign as inspiration or source material. However, Obama’s grassroots organizing strategy, which Marshall Ganz is widely attributed to have devised and coordinated, was simply an articulation into electoral politics of the extensive methods and teaching tools Ganz developed first as a community organizer and later as a professor at the Kennedy School of Government.<sup>349</sup> Immediately before joining the Obama campaign, Ganz had worked on a multi-year grassroots leadership development project

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<sup>349</sup> Ganz is widely credited with orchestrating the grassroots organizing strategy—but this was only one part of the Obama campaign. A great deal of academic and popular culture literature on the Obama 2008 campaign stresses Obama’s use of social media (Denton and Hendricks; Plouffe). More recently, and especially since Obama’s re-election, pundits have tended to stress the Democrats’ successful use of “big data” in fundraising and electoral outreach (Rucker and Wilson). At a practical level, civil society movements and political parties seeking to emulate Obama’s success tend to have both grassroots outreach and big data targeting of constituencies as cornerstones of their approaches. The New Organizing Institute’s framework of “engagement organizing,” widely taught to progressive activists, is an example.

with the Sierra Club, a key member of the Alaska Coalition. The analysis which follows turns not just to Ganz's published academic work (including on the Sierra Club project) and the work of his collaborators, but to grey literature circulating within the North American environmental movement in the early 2000s, to my own first-hand experiences at the time, and to the expression of similar grassroots organizing activity in more recent North American social movements addressing climate change. All are drawn upon in order to envision movement building and civil society leadership development as important components in assessing social purpose media flows.

### **Building Movement Leadership Using *Being Caribou***

In the fall of 2004, AWL and AC organizers made the strategic decision to build a "living room" screening drive, using *Being Caribou*,<sup>350</sup> as a core activity in a tightly focused, intensive campaign to rally support to prevent drilling in the Arctic Refuge through pressuring elected Congresspeople in advance of key votes. In December 2004, AWL purchased 2186 DVD and 308 VHS copies of the film at cost from the NFB, which they began distributing immediately through their networks (Keogh, "Some More on Being Caribou"). In June 2005, bolstered by the success of hundreds of simultaneous screenings held on the March 12 Arctic Action Day, AWL bought another 5000 copies (Keogh, "Some More on Being Caribou"). The film, and its use, were part of a larger process of attracting new activists, deepening the commitment of those already involved, and channeling the momentum created into a series of carefully planned and executed actions

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<sup>350</sup> AWL distributed thousands of copies of *Being Caribou* and created its own campaigning materials around the film. However, some groups, most notably the Sierra Club, used the film *Oil and Ice* for their living room screening campaign.

that would build public support and effectively sway the balance of power in favour of protecting the Arctic Refuge through democratic means.

The results of the 2004 election had meant that the Alaska Coalition and Alaska Wilderness League knew they would be facing a series of extremely close votes in the coming months on allowing drilling in the Arctic Refuge—in order to prevent drilling, it would be necessary to convince a number of Republican legislators to vote against their party line, something that could only be accomplished through mobilizing their constituents to exert substantive political pressure.<sup>351</sup> In a very short period of time, AWL and its associated organizations had to rally hundreds of thousands of people to take political actions such as writing a letter, calling an elected official, or attending a demonstration.

Outside of their policy offices in Washington, most of the large conservation organizations had a very small staff, and relied heavily on volunteer leadership. Ganz (“Leading Change” 510), cites the Sierra Club of the USA as having one leader/organizer per 57 members, with 750 000 members, 62 chapters, and 343 groups in operation by 2003 (Andrews et al 1195). In this time period, AWL was exceptional for having six to ten paid field organizers working to support the volunteer leadership. However, even with this extra layer of support, the vast majority of the organization legwork necessary to generate letters, phone calls, and other kinds of political protest, was done by people whom Han (34), in her study of the development of civic association leadership, would

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<sup>351</sup> Baumgartner et al.’s research (156-157) shows that this effect works both directly and indirectly: citizen pressure itself can influence how an elected official votes, but additionally, the access and influence that elected officials will give to civic and political association lobbyists depends on the ability of these associations to show power by mobilizing a mass membership. See Han (39) for further explication of this point.

label “high-engagement” volunteers. It required people who would not just volunteer discrete blocks of their time, but would commit to the outcome of getting fellow citizens to take action, becoming leaders by Ganz’s definition of leadership as “accepting responsibility to create conditions that enable others to achieve shared purpose in the face of uncertainty” (“Leading Change” 509).

To achieve high rates of commitment and participation, the Alaska Wilderness League, as well as most of the large membership-based conservation groups within the Alaska Coalition (AC) and the even larger Arctic Refuge Action Coalition (ARAC),<sup>352</sup> largely operated through what Ganz labels “distributed leadership” at the grassroots level.<sup>353</sup> In this model, an “inner ring” of more experienced leaders coaches and supports “outer rings” of developing leaders to take on new responsibilities and tasks (Han 80-84). Responsibility is continually pushed outwards because the execution of programs of activity depends on the work of the “outer ring” (Han 81-82), resulting in “cascading leadership development” (Ganz and Lin 358). Leaders are continually supporting and

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<sup>352</sup> The ARAC came into existence in 2005 as a subproject of the Save Our Environment Action Center, which was a joint project of most of the major national U.S. conservation groups, as well as some international groups such as the Union of Concerned Scientists and the World Wildlife Fund. The groups pooled their resources to create online “Action Center” tools to support important joint campaigns. So ARAC brought additional constituencies and organizing power to the Alaska Coalition. The AC numbered over 700 individual groups in 2005 (see <http://web.archive.org/web/20050213044831/http://www.alaskacoalition.org/members.htm> for a complete listing) and included churches (notably, as will be discussed, the Episcopal Church), labour groups, aboriginal groups, civic/community associations of various types, and hunting and fishing groups in addition to both large national and small local environmental organizations. The Alaska Coalition and AWL provided strategic leadership to the joint campaign to protect the Arctic Refuge.

<sup>353</sup> As Han points out, most national-level organizations have some form of federated/hierarchical structure feeding up from the local to the national level (80-84). The level of “in-practice” distributed leadership can vary widely between local chapters (Andrews et al.)

developing new movement leadership, and thus growing the movement. Degnan described the function of the six to ten paid, full-time field organizers for AWL as being to cultivate and support a network of organizers in their region such that a day of phone calls could result in easily half a dozen organizers committing to organizing individual screenings or other campaign activities.<sup>354</sup> This type of organizing is extremely intensive in the time investments required from individuals, but has long-term payoffs because, as Han has shown, it “creates a culture of organizing that persists” (87)—something crucial to the movement to protect the Arctic Refuge, which has had to mobilize periodic intensive cycles of activity for well over 25 years.

The very first AWL post-election *AlaskaWild Update* ended with a call for volunteers to step forward and assume responsibility in their own communities by becoming a District Captain, an “extremely committed volunteer who can help to organize local slide show and video parties, can lead small delegations to meet with their local member of Congress, and helps to spread the word in their neighborhood about the threats facing America’s Arctic Refuge” (Alaska Wilderness League, “Post Election Results”). Organizing a *Being Caribou* video party was one of the core activities designed to grow the Arctic Refuge campaign along all three axes that Ganz identified as key to organizational effectiveness: public recognition, member engagement, and leadership development.

In terms of developing movement leadership, holding a *Being Caribou* video party fit squarely with the five core practices that Ganz and Lin identified as needing to be taught “in-practice” to grow civic movement leadership. The first three, which apply

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<sup>354</sup> The number varied between six and ten over this period.



clearly to video organizing, are: (1) building “the skill of public narrative”; (2) learning to hold house meetings and engage in one-to-one dialogues to reach out to others to build relationships and create shared commitment on an issue; and (3) developing the abilities of organizers to work together with “shared purpose, clear norms, and interdependent roles” (Ganz and Lin 355-356). Moreover, *Being Caribou* screenings fed into the final two leadership practices of strategically “turning one’s resources into power to achieve objectives” and “mobilizing and deploying resources in action” (355-356), as they were planned to coincide with the three major 2005 Arctic Action Days of Saturday March 12, Saturday June 11, and Tuesday September 20. These dates were strategically chosen to maximize public pressure leading up to key legislative events.<sup>355</sup>

AWL distributed the *Being Caribou* DVD for free both to Alaska Coalition member organizations, and directly to between 1 000 and 1 500 activists in 2005 (Degnan). The DVD was included as part of an “Arctic Action Kit” developed by AWL. The full kit (minus the DVD) is included as Appendix 5. The first page of the kit encouraged activists to kick off their campaign through an “Arctic Video and letter writing party,” and provided a detailed set of steps to follow as well as contact information for AWL national field director Erik Dumont. Other supplemental information included a Video-Party sign-up sheet, a handout describing how to write to one’s member of Congress, a short list of 50 actions people could take to protect the Arctic Refuge, a more detailed handout describing ten top actions one could take, with

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<sup>355</sup> For example, the March date came right before a vote in the Senate on an amendment to keep oil drilling out of the Refuge. The amendment was narrowly defeated by a vote of 49 to 51, further increasing the threat to the Refuge and increasing the urgency to keep up the pressure on the campaign.

tips and ideas for each one, and Arctic Action flyers which included both information on the Arctic Refuge and opportunities for taking action.<sup>356</sup>

Although individual volunteers/activists were given a fairly thorough orientation package for hosting a party, and were in many cases directly hooked in with the paid AWL field organizer in their region, they themselves were in charge of actually hosting a screening. Hosting a video party was an entry-level step for activists to develop as movement leaders. Hosts had considerable autonomy in organizing their activity but also ultimate responsibility. Ganz and Lin argue that such in-practice activities, where organizers take charge of reaching a goal and are accountable, are the most effective way of cultivating leadership.<sup>357</sup> A video party was an excellent initial “leadership” activity, because it forced the host to learn to tell his or her story in a compelling way that would include others and spur them to action, what Ganz labels the skill of “public narrative”.

### **Stories of Shared Leadership: the Skill of Public Narrative**

*Being Caribou* formed a highly apposite filmic foundation for building a public narrative about the Arctic Refuge. As earlier descriptions of Gwich’in responses to *Being Caribou* demonstrate, how any individual responds to the film depends on many factors, ranging from the context in which one sees the film and one’s relation to the screeners (and/or the filmmakers), to one’s personal history and cultural background. However, as has also

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<sup>356</sup> While AWL had its own flyer, Erica Heuer designed “Arctic Truth,” which she both updated as an insert for the *Yukon News* from 2005-2007 and used as a stand-alone flyer. She shared this flyer with Lexi Keogh and AWL, and it may or may not have been used in some AWL video party kits (E. Heuer, Interview).

<sup>357</sup> Han (99-100) also stresses that giving this kind of autonomy to volunteer leaders is an important practice in cultivating volunteer leadership.

been discussed, *Being Caribou* entered into an existing cultural conversation, and its imagery and storyline easily evoked a host of powerful motifs including but not limited to: connection to animals; Gwich'in worldviews, culture, and special relationship with the caribou; the appeal of wilderness and especially Alaska as “the last wild place”; democratic values (as signified by the repeated appearances of the George W. Bush doll, President Bush film clips, and the scenes at the end of the film of iconic sites in American democracy, such as Congress and the Washington monument); the emotional and spiritual journey of a newlywed couple; the epic adventure story; and the suffering and hardship of both humans and caribou completing an arduous journey. It is difficult to generalize too much about how these many different motifs combined to affectively appeal to individual viewers—however, it is clear that the story *Being Caribou* told was flexible enough to have enduring appeal to an extremely wide cross section of people. The film could accommodate a breadth of interpretations, ranging from a Gwich'in person proudly remembering the journeys of her ancestors, to someone in New England drawn to protecting the Arctic Refuge as “America’s last wild place” (Demos). As Tsing has pointed out, a certain elasticity is necessary for movement narratives to evolve/respond to local conditions while maintaining enough of a shared story to be cohesive across such differences. *Being Caribou* offered a way “in” to a variety of perspectives, and so was an excellent starting point for a speaker or movement organizer to begin articulating his or her narrative as to why the fate of the caribou was important not only to him or her but to everyone in the audience, and why people needed to collectively take action. Gwich'in speakers, for example, could easily pick up on the

theme of the caribou as central to their culture.<sup>358</sup>

*Being Caribou* ends with Allison and Heuer making a direct appeal to ordinary Americans to use their democratic influence to sway lawmakers. This unconventional closing goes a considerable distance in crafting a “story of us” (us being the citizens watching the film) and a “story of now” (the Arctic Refuge is in imminent danger from lawmakers) that create the common cause and call-to-action that form an effective public campaigning narrative (Ganz “Leading Change”; Degnan). The appeal begins in the 68<sup>th</sup> minute of the 72-minute film, superimposed over footage of Heuer and Allison “cleaned up” in business attire, in and around the Capitol buildings where they are meeting with Congressional officials. In 2005, during the intensive calving grounds campaign, this scene spoke directly to the experiences of thousands of viewers at Alaska Wilderness Week, and to thousands more who had attended past weeks or lobbied Congressional officials locally in their districts. Heuer describes his despair and discouragement that two people’s stories carry little weight in the power politics of Washington, while Allison adds,

I said before the trip that my biggest fear is that we’re going to become

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<sup>358</sup> While this seems obvious, movement organizers I spoke with agreed that the “story” of *Being Caribou* was much more effective in this regard than films with a more traditional investigative journalism structure. Degnan, for example, said that the movie *Oil and Ice*, while comprehensive, was not compelling because it overwhelmed the viewer with complicated and detailed arguments for and against drilling. As covered in Chapter 2, stories generally do better than a debate/factual argument structure when it comes to opening the minds of audience members. Additionally, given the value that Gwich’in culture places on unity and navigating conflicts graciously and respectfully, a more subtle film like *Being Caribou*, which did not directly broach differences between Gwich’in and the Inupiat of Katkovik (who stand to benefit from drilling in the Arctic Refuge), was a far more natural platform to speak after than a film that would put the speaker in a position of challenging the perspectives of other “talking heads,” and especially other native people.

hopelessly attached to these caribou and then we're going to have to, in our lifetime, see their calving grounds drilled, their numbers decline. And maybe we really did see the last, some of the last times that they migrate. And [pause] I don't know that I was prepared for how hard this is going to be. (Allison qtd. in Allison and Wilson)

This appeal is emotionally charged and unscripted. It echoes the First Nations oratorical practice of “speaking from the heart.”<sup>359</sup> In describing public narrative as “a leadership practice of translating values into action” Ganz (“Public Narrative” 274) stresses that “values are experienced emotionally” and that emotion is an embodied, physiological process. The “high alert” state of strong emotion that causes Allison to choke back tears also speeds her heart rate and breathing—physiological states that viewers pick up on and may even mirror unconsciously. Allison’s appeal activates a sense of urgency, because the caribou could disappear in a few short years depending on how Congress votes: her story is a “story of now” that presents the viewer with a choice.

Heuer appears next on camera, explaining, “I don’t know what we should do next. I don’t know how we should make the story of this caribou resonate. Maybe the answer is to work from the bottom up and not just the top down as we’ve been trying.” This direct address includes the viewer as part of the “story of us” of who is needed to protect the caribou. It is underlined visually as the imagery shifts to pictures of protest signs,

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<sup>359</sup> In my experience, it is common in many kinds of community decision-making settings for First Nations to give an open space/time for people to tell their stories without interruption, often in ways that express their values and engage with deep emotion. These speeches are an important part of what leadership must attend to when making a decision. The film *Gwich'in Women Speak* (Aida, 2013) contains many examples of Gwich'in women “speaking from the heart” about the caribou and the calving grounds.

banners, and a ceremonial drum as Gwich'in and other Arctic Refuge supporters hold a demonstration on Capitol Hill, while Heuer intones that, "This story hopefully will resonate with people. We have to make them feel it in their hearts. I guess that the only pathway is true democracy." The final scenes of the film show the sun setting on the Washington monument as a drum track swells slowly and the scene switches to Randall Tetlichy by candlelight, in the cabin the night Leanne had her dream that started their journey, describing the need to respect all life. His voiceover continues as the film ends with footage of the caribou migrating. These images link democratic values and political action, Allison and Heuer's experiences as nested within Gwich'in spirituality and traditional knowledge, and, most importantly, the fate of the caribou. There is no tidy conclusion: whether the caribou will continue their age-old migration to the calving grounds is an open question, and depends in no small part on the actions of the American electorate—of whom, in 2005, *Being Caribou* house party and community screening audiences formed an important part. Sam Gregory, longtime Program Director of the human rights video advocacy organization WITNESS, has highlighted the importance of such open narrative structures in effective videography/storytelling for action, stressing that these stories must be coupled with opportunities to act (Gregory 526).

When used in the context of community screenings and house parties, which provided such opportunities to act, the ending of the film modeled the kind of "public narrative" appeal Ganz describes as "link[ing] our own calling to that of our community to a call to action" (*Public Narrative Syllabus* 2).<sup>360</sup> It discursively subsumed the

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<sup>360</sup> Ganz continues, "Leaders can use public narrative to interpret their values to others, enable one's community to experience values it shares, and inspire others to act on

protection of the calving grounds within the “story” of viewers’ shared democratic values and common interest in protecting life, then posed a challenge/choice for viewers to act immediately to secure those values. It was an easy staging ground for organizers to follow up with their own appeal to shared values and action. Because the film made the pitch effectively on its own, as long as attendees were encouraged and given the tools to immediately write letters, commit to other actions, and sign up to become more involved in the campaign, a *Being Caribou* house party screening could succeed at recruiting and involving new members even if organizers were still honing their own public narrative skills.

Recent research strongly suggests that peer-to-peer dialogue and creating a sense of community through shared social interaction are incredibly important predictors both of initial involvement and longer-term participation in social movements (Han; Corrigan-Brown “Patterns of Protest”; Ganz “Leading Change”). Asking people to take action at a house party and then supporting attendees through the process does more than serve the function of producing immediate, tangible political actions. It primes people to take more actions in several ways. Firstly, individuals are trained on-site in developing their civic skills, the lack of which is often a key barrier to political participation.<sup>361</sup> Secondly, as both Ganz and Han point out repeatedly, “the key to social movement action is the craft of getting commitments” because people “begin to learn leadership through their

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challenges this community must face. It is learning how to tell a story of self, a story of us, and a story of now” (*Public Narrative Syllabus* 2).

<sup>361</sup> Baggetta, Han, and Andrews go into some detail on Verba’s widely accepted “civic voluntarism model” (see Verba, Schlozman, and Brady) which argues “that political participation demands proficiency with civic skills like leading meetings, writing letters, and making speeches” (547).

experience of commitment to an organizing project” (Ganz and Lin 359). The small act of doing something manageable like writing a letter at a house party, in a context that produces an immediate result and receives concrete recognition, nudges individuals along a path to believing that their actions make a difference. The house party experience, in which Heuer’s plea for collective action was broken down into a “credible solution” of activities that led to “direct experience of small successes and small victories” (Ganz, “Leading Change” 518-9), itself completed the last step of the public narrative process of creating a leadership path to translate values into action. The calving grounds campaign was strategically designed such that thousands of small actions (such as hosting hundreds of house parties in one day, or having a number of local groups deluge a “swing” Senator with letters and phone calls before a key vote) added up to “specific measurable outcomes with real deadlines” —exactly the formula Ganz (“Leading Change” 536) describes as key to effective action. As Corrigan-Brown points out, participation in social movements is highly correlated to an individual’s sense of “political efficacy,” the confidence that his or her actions make a difference and help create change in the world (*Patterns of Protest* 19-20). Finally, house parties were effective in building movement participation because, as Corrigan-Brown also documents in detail (84-86), social ties, especially among peers, are one of the strongest predictors of social movement participation. At community or home/living room screenings, participants already knew each other or had either mutual social connections or a mutual interest (such as a kayak club). Conversation and fostering social connections were emphasized as part of cultivating a shared interest in the calving grounds issue. Corrigan-Brown stresses that this kind of shared participation in group activities is crucial to social movements



strengthening their internal social ties. In a long and difficult political fight—as calving grounds conservation is and was—strong social ties are a leading predictor of continued engagement by activists over time, because the feelings of connection and solidarity they engender help cushion the emotional impact of setbacks in political struggle.

In the case of the calving grounds campaign, the first Arctic Action date of March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2005—a date on which Degnan estimated at a minimum hundreds of *Being Caribou* screenings took place—preceded a major setback. The amendment the campaign had rallied around to keep drilling out of the Arctic Refuge was defeated on March 16<sup>th</sup> in the Senate by a vote of 49-51. Yet, within how the campaign was structured, with groups of leaders who could reflect, debrief, learn new skills and move forward in a supportive environment of both peers and coaches with shared values and vision, this defeat was not a “failure” but a challenge built into the narrative of moving towards two more Arctic Action days with now more crucial electoral choice points/votes. Han, (98-9), Ganz and Lin (363-4), and Arnold et al., among others, make the point that critical reflection is key to the “learning by doing” approaches to social change. Ganz (“Leading Change” 558) argues that the learning opportunities of an early setback can be an important re-calibration point that increases the strategic capacity of a campaign and even the motivation of campaigners. In Han’s interpretation, such “reflection is crucial for helping leaders understand how their actions fit into the bigger picture, and to develop their skills in navigating the complexities of political action” (98).

In such a scenario, movement storytelling is especially important. *Being Caribou*, as a touchstone to a shared story of commitment to the caribou, had motivational attributes: it is a story of resilience over the course of a long, difficult journey. Allison

and Heuer are physically and emotionally taxed to their limits, and early in the film openly discuss quitting their expedition. Yet they dig a little deeper and continue on, gaining a profound appreciation of just how arduous the annual migration is, and how slim the margin between survival and decline of the herd is in the face of so many obstacles. Demos, a 25-year veteran of Arctic Refuge organizing, stressed that *Being Caribou* was unique in Arctic Refuge campaigning in portraying such an intimate, ground-level experience of journeying with the caribou.<sup>362</sup> In the public narrative of the Arctic Refuge campaign, the difficult, challenging, and long journey of the caribou and of Allison and Heuer is a motivating reminder that survival and success—for social change campaigns, as well as for caribou—depend on resilience in the face of adversity. Such a reframing of activist experience, in which defeat and difficulty are re-interpreted as a trial through which the movement gains strength, is not just a practical change in orientation, but a shift in outlook that prompts positive affect and maintains hope. Han (62-123) describes such “transformational” storytelling as a key part of nurturing a culture of high-engagement organizing within social movements, particularly as people’s identities shift, becoming more tied into the work they are doing.

### **Translocal and Transformational: the Place of *Being Caribou* House Parties**

*Being Caribou* screenings were an opportunity for the Alaska Wilderness League, Alaska Coalition, and Arctic Refuge Action Coalition to cultivate a broader and more committed

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<sup>362</sup> He stressed that the vast majority of documentation of the Porcupine caribou herd and the Arctic Refuge is in the form of aerial photographs or other kinds of landscape shots whereas *Being Caribou* has no such remove, and engages viewers emotionally and at a much more intimate level by sharing the lives of Allison, Heuer, and the caribou.

membership base, bringing more people from more communities across North America into the movement to protect the Arctic Refuge. At the same time, the organizing of the screenings was used to grow the movement's voluntary leadership. As well as developing public storytelling skills, at a house party hosts had ample opportunity to cultivate their one-on-one conversational and relationship building skills in the relatively comfortable, low-risk environment of their own homes or the homes of their friends. Finally, house parties and community screenings were often organized by a few people working together. In Baggetta et al.'s analysis of the National Purpose Local Action (NPLA) project—a large assessment of the voluntary leadership across 308 Sierra Club groups, undertaken in 2003—"team interdependence" emerged as a very important factor determining the level of commitment and engagement of leaders. As a simple yet effective group project, which produced immediate results and next steps, *Being Caribou* screenings were an important exercise that helped move hundreds of activists up what Han (34) describes as "the activist ladder," to greater levels of involvement and commitment.

Han, who tries to answer the question, "why are some civic associations better than others at 'getting'—and keeping—people involved in activism?" (1), makes a crucial distinction in her research between high and low engagement activist groups. In very simplified terms, her research suggests that low-engagement groups concentrate largely on "mobilizing" strategies which direct members towards discrete and instrumental actions, which she labels "transactional." While these actions are often easily measurable—such as how many people took an online action or made phone calls—on their own, they do not tend to draw people more deeply into a movement or

inspire long term participation. High-engagement groups, which are the most adept in getting and keeping people involved, integrate mobilizing activities with transformational strategies that invest heavily in developing the organizational leadership of individuals, such that individuals not only become more adept at an organizer skill set, but grow into a greater confidence in their own agency and power to engage in effective collective action. Almost all such strategies involve either interpersonal or collective forms of work.

Because participation is conceptualized as growing out of dynamic social interactions, in high-engagement civic association groups or chapters a great deal of energy is invested in creating high quality formal and informal peer-to-peer and mentoring relationships between individuals and at a group level. These relationships are not only practical, such as a mentor providing a new organizer with technical knowledge on how to organize an event, but emotional and cognitive, helping activists to see how their work fits into a bigger picture and reinforcing a sense of commitment to other individuals and the group, as well as to the cause. The *Being Caribou* house parties of 2005 fit many of the criteria Han identifies for activities that have transformational capacity: they had potential as a training activity for organizers, contained built-in opportunities to build personal relationships within a community of concern, and presented the ‘big picture’ of a campaign where small individual steps can build successfully towards a concrete outcome of political change.

The success of the thousands of *Being Caribou* screenings that took place in homes and community gathering places over the course of 2005 cannot be measured by transactional metrics—number of viewers, numbers of letters written, etc.—alone. The screenings must also be understood as important entry-level events for developing

grassroots leadership. Han describes such transformational organizing—building a leadership that will itself build new leadership<sup>363</sup>—as an important way that organizations scale up their power, particularly when, as was the case with the 2005 votes on the Arctic Refuge, leadership is faced with a daunting exogenous challenge that cannot be addressed with existing resources (71). Citing Tufekci’s work on the Arab Spring, Occupy Wall Street, and other digitally driven/enhanced protest movements, Han cautions that too much emphasis on digital mobilizing—which is what the transactional metrics of web ‘hits’, signatures on a petition, and other ‘film impact assessment’ evaluations tend to measure—“may have the seemingly paradoxical effect of contributing to political weakness in the latter stages, by allowing movements to grow without building needed structures and strengths, including capacities for negotiation, representation, and mobilization” (127). As a part of something larger, digital mobilizing can significantly enhance the reach of movements, for example by databasing and identifying prospective participants, and by increasing flows of communication and information to them. However, unless these information flows are followed up with personal interactions—which can be “on-line” such as teleconferences—Han’s investigations show that where digital mobilizing has superceded meetings, phone calls, and more traditional

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<sup>363</sup> Han’s research shows “stickiness” for organizations that embark on a transformational organizing path: “Once an association adopted an organizing approach, volunteer leaders were trained in organizing and began to think about investing in members and developing leaders as their core approach to achieving social change. They began to develop skills, experiences, and narratives that attributed their source of power to the people they were able to cultivate as activists and leaders. In addition, they created structures that made organizing possible. Thus, when future strategic dilemmas came before the association, the leaders asked themselves, ‘Where does our power originate?’ and ‘What kind of resources do we have that we can use?’ Given the experiences they had in the past, the answer was more likely to point to organizing.” (69-70).

communications systems within social movements, it has resulted in “a lack of certain downstream effects that used to emerge from the work of everyday movement-building” (127), particularly in relation to building commitment and movement leadership.

In the case of living room and community screenings, not only film impact assessment itself, but the more general bent of new media scholarship has served to omit the markers of movement building from the “video party” narrative. As previously discussed, most film scholars source the house party phenomenon as originating with Robert Greenwald’s work partnering first with Move-On.org and the Center for American Progress and later other grassroots groups to distribute his socially conscious documentaries. House parties are mentioned, but subsumed within a narrative in which networked digital media and viral marketing were instrumental in delivering film/video content outside of mainstream film distribution networks.<sup>364</sup> The focus is on technology, and how it has revolutionized distribution through multiple alternative channels facilitated by new media. Success is measured by viewership data. Beginning with *An Inconvenient Truth*—a film that had an ambitious outreach plan that included numerous strategic alliances and even a project to train a Climate Reality Leadership Corp of one thousand lecturers to deliver public presentations on the film’s message<sup>365</sup>—documentary film scholars began to make more of an effort to analyse audience engagement and the impact of social change films on individual behaviour. They also began to document in

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<sup>364</sup> An example of this framing is the editorial in *Cineaste*’s Jun 01, 2005 issue, Vol. 30, No. 3, “Political Documentaries at Last Get Some Respect.”

<sup>365</sup> The project began in 2007 with a goal of training one thousand climate leaders. By 2014, over 6 000 people had been trained through twenty-five trainings across the globe. See <http://www.regainyourtime.com/about/press/climate/> and <http://climaterealityproject.org/leadership-corps>.

more detail the partnerships between social change groups and filmmakers. However, even this research approaches the phenomenon of house parties from a “textual” understanding in which the content of the video party is the video being shown and its message. To integrate this understanding with appreciating the video party’s transformational/movement-building potential, one must also situate the video party within a broader genealogy of ‘house parties’ as a core leader and member building practice prevalent within certain American civic associations and grassroots groups in the early 2000s.

After the post-September 11, 2001 market collapse, certain large American charitable foundations had begun heavily boosting house parties as a fundraising model. These foundations had responded to the plummeting value of their endowments<sup>366</sup> by cutting back on their grants and refocusing their priorities, often adopting a more corporate/instrumentalist/results-based model in which funded projects had to be very clearly articulated to accomplishing the funder’s political objectives. In order to fund their core activities and maintain control of their priorities (rather than having them dictated by efforts to chase foundation dollars) environmental non-profits were forced to become much more savvy at grassroots fundraising and building an individual donor base.<sup>367</sup> Large environmental grant-makers who had once provided core activities grants

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<sup>366</sup> Please refer to the discussion in Chapter 4’s section “A Full Circle” on the changes to foundation charitable funding due to the market collapse.

<sup>367</sup> TREC (Training Resources for the Environmental Community)’s 2005 report *Conservation Fundraising at a Crossroads*, written by Mary Humphries, discusses this change, although framing it as a challenge for conservation groups to become more in touch with their base, and largely glossing over the roll-back of foundation funding. TREC’s third fundraising report, 2009’s *Weathering the Storm*, is in contrast quite a bit more forthright about market impacts on donor support.

shifted towards investing in fundraising training and capacity building initiatives. The “house party” fundraising model<sup>368</sup> was ubiquitously promoted by these initiatives—for example in Kim Klein’s *Grassroots Fundraising Journal* and in the various fundraising training workshops run regularly throughout northwestern North America by TREC (Training Resources for the Environmental Community).

House parties have a long history as a consciousness-raising tool within American culture. Since the early 1900s house parties, initially an extension of door-to-door sales techniques, have acted as a way for small-scale business people, often women and/or people of colour, to reach out to gendered and racialized communities in the domestic spheres in which they exercised more choice/control over household goods and beauty products.<sup>369</sup> Such parties also have a history within community organizing. Kim Klein references the use of house parties in the early days of the United Farm Worker’s movement in her influential 1999 article “Putting on a House Party.”<sup>370</sup> By the early 2000’s, Klein and others were training hundreds if not thousands of grassroots activists—and especially volunteers, as the focus of these trainings was on non-profit board

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<sup>368</sup> The influential “Putting on a House Party” article from *The Grassroots Fundraising Journal* Vol 18 No 4 goes step-by-step through the house party process. The planning of such a party echoes the planning guidelines for *Being Caribou* video parties which are included as Appendix 5.

<sup>369</sup> Clarke offers a genealogy of this kind of domestic person-to-person marketing in America, ranging from African-American beauty product entrepreneur CJ Walker in the 1910s through to Avon ladies and the rise of the Tupperware party. Such domestic social marketing strategies occupied a curious, at times contradictory space, promoting both expansion of the social world and connection to new cultural currents, and the containment of social and cultural expression to commercial contexts. Clarke focuses particularly on women’s liberation and ideologies of domesticity as they applied to Tupperware parties, but the point applies more broadly.

<sup>370</sup> Thank you to Lorna Roth for an enlightening discussion on both the entrepreneurial and community organizing histories of domestic gatherings of various kinds, from housewives through to migrant workers.



members taking on responsibility for fundraising, and by law these positions were volunteer—to use house parties as a cornerstone of yearly fundraising activity.

When I attended one of Klein’s multi-day trainings in Seattle in the early 2000s, the core activity of the training was practicing the house party “ask”: successful fundraising depends on securing commitments from others to donate funds, yet most North Americans who volunteer their time to social purpose organizations find the “ask” very difficult. This is consistent with Ganz’s perspective that although the craft of getting commitments is “key to social movement action ... it is a leadership skill that people find most difficult to master ... Whatever the reasons, it takes courage, training, and dedication to develop a movement culture of asking for and getting real commitments” (Ganz, “Leading Change” 536).<sup>371</sup> The downstream effect of training volunteers to fundraise at a house party was that these volunteers learned the crucial activist skill of asking others to commit and then “walking with” them to be sure that they did.<sup>372</sup>

At the same time as this culture of fundraising house parties was developing, the house party model was being steadily adopted within a subset of American progressive groups engaged in digitally enhanced forms of grassroots electoral organizing. For example, *MoveOn.org* used house parties in 2004 not to screen Michael Moore’s *Fahrenheit 9/11*, but to convene a “town hall” in which people who had already seen the

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<sup>371</sup> The challenge of the “ask” is broached over and over in grassroots fundraising literature. See, for example, Kim Klein’s “Getting Over the Fear of Asking.”

<sup>372</sup> On a personal note, while doing research I looked back over the Yukon Conservation Society’s newsletters. The editorial for the winter 2005 issue—when I was Executive Director, and while the *Being Caribou* film and book were being widely circulated in a campaigning context—was an article from a board member about how, despite her personal discomfort with asking for money, the YCS board had set itself a \$20 000 fundraising target and would approach fundraising through a more personal, one-on-one approach.

film video-conferenced with Michael Moore before planning local actions with their neighbours to “win back the White House”. Approximately 55 000 people attended 4 600 house parties, with MoveOn members committing to reaching out to hundreds of thousands of unregistered voters in key swing states.<sup>373</sup> Again, the house party was acting as a mechanism for community building, and a training ground in which prospective activists were brought together and supported to take action and commit to future actions. A successful house party was one in which peer leadership asked for and succeeded in moving others from interest to action, and thus up a rung on Han’s “activist ladder.” The case of Whitehorse, Yukon, offers an avenue to explore how house party and community screenings worked in practice to promote public involvement in campaigning to protect the Arctic Refuge calving grounds in 2005.

### ***Being Caribou* Community Screenings as a Locus for Organizing**

It is not possible, given the absence of both records and resources, to undertake the kind of qualitative survey, interview, and focus group work with a representative sample of activists that would be necessary to give a full accounting of how *Being Caribou* community and living room screenings functioned as a movement building tool in the 2004-6 period. Instead, I offer a detailed description of one regional example, that of Whitehorse, to show how such screenings were used to build awareness and then coalesce a growing interest in the calving grounds into concrete political actions.

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<sup>373</sup> See <http://pol.moveon.org/f911/mappics.html> and <http://www.moveon.org/pac/news/f911parties.html> for more details on these events.

*Being Caribou* premiered at Whitehorse's Available Light Film Festival on Tuesday March 1, 2005, where it was given pride of place as the festival opener, following an evening reception.<sup>374</sup> Local calving grounds organizers, including *Being Caribou* publicist Erica Heuer and Caribou Common's organizer Matthew Lien, introduced the film with a blistering critique of the trip Yukon Premier Dennis Fentie and Alaskan Governor Frank Murkowski had taken the week before to Ottawa to lobby Prime Minister Paul Martin, Environment Minister Stéphane Dion, Yukon MP Larry Bagnell and U.S. ambassador to Canada Paul Cellucci, in support of a natural gas pipeline along the Alaska highway and a Yukon-Alaska rail link. Just three weeks before a crucial Senate vote on opening the Arctic Refuge to drilling, the Premier had not raised the calving grounds issue. Erica Heuer declared, "Premier Fentie's silence spoke louder than any words he has ever said," while Lien added that for the Premier to not raise the issue, in a room with all the key people present, at this 11<sup>th</sup> hour for the issue, was negligent in his duty as representative of the people, the cultures, and the wilderness of the Yukon Territory. It's like calling the fire department, and forgetting to mention your house is on fire (E. Heuer qtd in. "Fentie is Blasted").

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<sup>374</sup> This was the official Yukon premiere. In fact, Jane Gutteridge's records of community screenings indicate that co-director Diane Wilson had presented the film at a screening attended by 92 people at Dawson City's Danojo Zho Cultural Centre on February 23. Wilson had been invited up to give a multi-day GIFTs-style filmmaking workshop the weekend before Dawson City's International Short Film Festival. Attendees produced five short documentaries that were screened at the end of the week, with *Being Caribou* as the finale. The Available Light Film Festival cooperated with the Klondike Institute of Art and Culture and Danojo Zho to put on the event (Davidson, 2005).

Lien himself was only briefly in Whitehorse, between trips to lobby swing Senators in the U.S. southwest and heading to Washington DC to make a special presentation on the calving grounds to an audience of dignitaries at the Canadian Embassy, including Canadian Ambassador to the U.S., Frank McKenna. Caribou Commons followed up on Lien's comments with a statement reminding the press of the 1987 joint Canada-U.S. agreement on protecting the Porcupine caribou, ensuring that local press coverage would include the current controversy over the Arctic Refuge in its coverage of the film.

The film screened twice at the large Beringia Interpretive Centre Auditorium as part of the Available Light Film Festival, but Erica Heuer found that there was still a huge demand to see the film. As a supplement to the NFB- and Yukon Film Society-coordinated community screenings of the film throughout the territory in March—*Being Caribou* toured to Watson Lake, Carmacks, Faro, and Haines Junction<sup>375</sup>—Erica Heuer began organizing additional by-donation screenings of *Being Caribou* at Hellaby Hall, the basement of a local Anglican church, with a capacity of up to one hundred people. Erica Heuer first organized screenings for two consecutive nights, and when these screenings were both at capacity, decided to keep screening the film (E. Heuer, Interview; E. Heuer, “The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge”). In the month of March, twelve hundred people saw the film at ten at-capacity screenings (E. Heuer, “The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge”). At the end of each screening, Erica Heuer would go to the front of the room and answer questions about the Being Caribou journey. Sometimes Matthew Lien would join to answer further questions about the calving grounds

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<sup>375</sup> See <http://web.archive.org/web/20050305230437/http://www.nfb.ca/beingcaribou/> under “screenings” for the full Yukon Film Society tour dates.

campaign. Yukon MP Larry Bagnell, as well as the territorial Opposition Leader Todd Hardy, the Environment Critic and MLA for Old Crow, Lorraine Peter,<sup>376</sup> and popular NDP MLA Steve Cardiff, among other invitees, also spoke at several of these screenings and often stayed to “think tank” with the audience about next steps. According to Erica Heuer, after the screenings,

people wanted to know what was happening, they wanted to know what they could do, they wanted to know what the political scene was at that time, and it was changing all the time at that time. It was pretty hot. So it was a super easy springboard to go into ‘we’re not sure what to do next. What do you think we should do next? Do you guys have any ideas — that’s partly what we’re here for.’ You know, because the message, Karsten’s message at the end of the film is ‘do what you can,’ right? So that’s the note you finish watching on, that’s the last thing in your mind and then there you are and it’s like ‘yeah, what can I do?’ It was great (E. Heuer, Interview).

People from the audience were encouraged to put their ideas forward for next steps: often the post-screening discussions lasted an hour or more (E. Heuer, Interview), and the ideas were forwarded from one discussion session to the next. Audience members discussed personal actions, such as the individual who told Erica Heuer that he went home after a screening and emailed a hundred people about the film and the Arctic Refuge issue (E. Heuer, Interview). They also discussed collective action, with a

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<sup>376</sup> Lorraine Peter is the woman quoted as Lorraine Netro throughout this thesis. However she went by the name Peter during much of her time as Old Crow MLA.

consensus quickly emerging that a first step should be a demonstration to coincide with a March 30<sup>th</sup> visit to the Yukon Legislature by a delegation of Alaskan politicians invited to further discuss Premier Fentie and Governor Murkowski's pipeline and railway proposals (E. Heuer, Interview; McElheran, "ANWR Protest").

The Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, Yukon branch (CPAWS-Yukon), which also took out full page "One Yukon, One Chance" ads in the major local newspapers,<sup>377</sup> helped support Caribou Commons and Being Caribou in organizing the March 30<sup>th</sup> demonstration outside the Yukon Legislature, which received substantial advanced publicity in the mainstream press. The *Whitehorse Star* carried an article publicizing the demonstration two days before the event, with a half-page opinion piece by Heuer and Lien promoting the demonstration also appearing on the editorial page. Wednesday, the day of the demonstration, the *Yukon News* had a small photo and note about the rally on its front page, with a full page photo and article spread on page 3.

Several volunteers, mainly members of CPAWS, helped Erica Heuer and Matthew Lien to prepare for the rally. Over 350 signs were printed up with slogans such as "No refuge? No railway," "120 000 caribou can't be wrong," and "Canada has a say. We say no." Although media estimates put rally numbers at two to three hundred, it is likely there were at least 350 attendees, as every one of these signs was held up by a protestor, with many other protesters bringing their own (E. Heuer, Interview). The

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<sup>377</sup> As a registered charity, CPAWS had to restrict its "advocacy" to 10% of its revenue. However, it could spend unlimited funds on education. The ads did not directly address the Arctic Refuge controversy but gave photos and statistics about how protected areas contributed to the Yukon economy, and about the current government's failure to create new protected areas. An example would be the full page ad that appeared on page 9 of the *Yukon News* on April 1<sup>st</sup> of 2006.

protest was covered nationally by the CBC, as well as locally in Yukon and Alaska, with the two major Whitehorse newspapers each putting the rally as their front cover photos and publishing full-page spreads of multiple articles and photographs. Rally speakers included Larry Bagnell, Lorraine Peter, Council of Yukon First Nations Grand Chief Eric Morris, caribou biologist Don Russell, and Gwich'in Steering Committee member Norma Kassi. In keeping with the spirit of community organizing, the line-up also included the performance of Tracey Aldridge, a local poet who had taken the initiative to contact Erica Heuer to ask to read her work. The speeches ended with Matthew Lien, who also sang a song. According to Erica Heuer,

and then—a piece of brilliance—we got the national anthem and we played the national anthem. And we'd made this huge friggin' banner that was probably 12 or 14 feet tall and said Save ANWR on it<sup>378</sup> ... and we took down one of the flags on their flagpoles, they have those three flag poles there, and we ran the banner up the flagpole as O Canada was playing, and people were bawling their eyes out. It was awesome. We had a great First Nations contingent there, First Nation youth. It was so excellent (E. Heuer, Interview).

The rally was intended to send a message to the visiting Alaskan elected officials, some of whom had accepted an invitation to attend. However, to ensure that both Yukon and Alaskan officials received the message, at the end of the rally organizers distributed one hundred “SAVE ANWR” t-shirts to volunteers who were willing to join the Alaskan

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<sup>378</sup> In fact, photos in the *Whitehorse Star* show the banner to be taller than the flagpole itself; it was several meters tall.

delegation in observing the afternoon session of the Yukon Legislature. Protesters flooded the public gallery to beyond capacity. In the words of one journalist, “Dyson and the other Alaskan delegates, who sat together near the front of the gallery, were surrounded by a sea of white, slogan-inscribed T-shirts” (McElheran, “Fentie Absent”).

The rally was an important show of force for the movement to protect the calving grounds: organizers were able to mobilize hundreds of people, signaling to both Yukon and Alaskan politicians that Yukon voters could put valuable parts of their political agendas (building pipelines and railroads) in jeopardy if they did not actively support protection of the calving grounds. The display of “people-power” had a crucial catalytic effect in shifting momentum after the demoralizing defeat in the Senate just two weeks before, which had put conservation of the calving grounds at perhaps its most precarious since 1988. Erica Heuer attributed much of the demonstration’s success to the fact that *Being Caribou* audiences had themselves decided on the demonstration as a tactic:

They (*Being Caribou* community screening audiences) are the ones who decided that we should have a demonstration, which I am sure is why it was so successful, because out of 24 screenings<sup>379</sup> where you get people from the audience deciding, submitting this idea, putting it forward and building it and getting excited about it, and that happens from meeting to meeting to meeting to meeting, with different people all the time—that by the time you get to have the demonstration, all those people, or a good percentage of them anyways, will show up. So, it was great ... it left a

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<sup>379</sup> In fact, as mentioned, the demonstration occurred after about ten such screenings, not the full twenty-four.



mark. And I always think that these things, individually maybe they don't get that net change that you want, but they contributed to the positive energy from which other ideas can spring, other activists can spring, and other actions can spring that ultimately will result in the change that you want (E. Heuer, Interview).

In other words, *Being Caribou* screenings were activist training grounds. Resonating with what Corrigan-Brown, Han, and Ganz and Lin have theorized about building social movement leadership, in the *Being Caribou* post-screening discussions, people were engaging one-on-one with others in their community, articulating their shared values, and then turning their values into action through making and honouring specific commitments. This applied to organizing and taking part in the March 30 rally, but also to continuing advocacy work, which resulted in a slew of events and activities to protect the Arctic Refuge that took place in the Whitehorse area throughout 2005 and 2006, as Erica Heuer continued to host weekly or biweekly screenings—according to her estimates she hosted approximately two dozen.<sup>380</sup>

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<sup>380</sup> For instance, in the week of August 15<sup>th</sup>, 2005, when a bipartisan group of U.S. Senators, including Hillary Clinton and John McCain, were touring Alaska and Yukon on a fact-finding mission about northern climate change, both First Nations and non-First Nations activists took whatever opportunities they could to press home the importance of protecting the Arctic Refuge. At a reception at the High Country Inn which I attended, Erica Heuer prepared packages for each Senator and also for the U.S. Ambassador to Canada, David Wilkins, containing numerous relevant international conservation agreements that the U.S. had signed, as well as Bean North coffee, an information booklet, fact sheets and a SAVE ANWR bumper sticker. MP Larry Bagnell gave a package to Hillary Clinton, who had retired early, on Erica Heuer's behalf. See also Erica Heuer's blog post, "Senator Collins: You Can Count on My Vote". Yukon First Nations discussed the calving grounds with the Senators at various points on the fact-finding mission, including at a reception given by First Nations earlier that same evening (Bagnell).

As numerous organizations—particularly the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Government and the Porcupine Caribou Management Board—worked to pressure the Yukon government to honour its obligations to advocate on behalf of the calving grounds, throughout 2005 and early 2006, the *Being Caribou* film and book contributed significantly both to educating individuals and to growing the public face of the Arctic Refuge campaign by bringing likeminded people together at galvanizing events that celebrated and connected an ever-growing community of concern. For example, months before Karsten Heuer came to Whitehorse as part of his participation in the 16<sup>th</sup> Yukon Writer’s Festival,<sup>381</sup> Erica Heuer began publicizing the event and working to turn it into what became a sold-out Arctic Refuge fundraiser that attracted well over four hundred people to the Yukon Arts Centre.<sup>382</sup> The lobby of the theatre held a silent auction of over fifty items, and activists constructed an installation of a wall of Bean Caribou coffee<sup>383</sup> interspersed with “SAVE ANWR” bumper stickers<sup>384</sup> (which, like Bean Caribou,

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<sup>381</sup> Heuer was invited to the festival to tour the *Being Caribou* book. As well as the lecture at the Yukon Arts Centre on April 30, 2006, he gave a talk in Haines Junction. See [http://www.yesnet.yk.ca/events/youngauthors/writersfestival/livewords\\_06.pdf](http://www.yesnet.yk.ca/events/youngauthors/writersfestival/livewords_06.pdf) for a description of festival events.

<sup>382</sup> The theatre capacity is 428 seats with ten wheelchairs. See <http://yukonartscentre.com/theatre/venue/>.

<sup>383</sup> Bean Caribou was an organic coffee blend produced by *Being Caribou* in partnership with fair trade coffee roasters Bean North. A percentage of the profits from sales went to efforts to protect the Arctic Refuge. The backside of the packaging was an awareness-raising flyer on the Arctic Refuge. Originally, the coffee came with a booklet and SAVE ANWR bumper sticker, although this is no longer the case. The partnership continues today, and the coffee is for sale at prominent Whitehorse locations.

<sup>384</sup> Thousands of these bumper stickers and pamphlets were printed and distributed to youth and other delegations going out of territory to conferences, and for a time the PCMB also distributed the bumper stickers (E.Heuer, Interview). As one edition of the PCMB’s caribou almanac (printed in the *Yukon News*) notes, baseball caps with the PCMB logo, PCMB mugs with a short write-up on the board’s purpose, and other simple

featured an iconic still of a caribou calf from *Being Caribou*) and a retrospective of headlines from over the years about the fight to protect the calving grounds. As well as featuring Heuer's slideshow presentation, local musician Kim Barlow's music, and a screening of *Being Caribou* for those who wished to stay,<sup>385</sup> the evening was a launch event for seven separate local awareness, profile and fundraising initiatives in support of the Porcupine Caribou (E. Heuer Interview; "Being Caribou Multimedia Presentation").<sup>386</sup>

Overall, reflecting on the Whitehorse area public awareness activities of the *Being Caribou* expedition in the 2004-2006 time period and their impact on protecting the calving grounds, Erica Heuer commented that, "We had people heated up around the issue again like I'd never seen them since I'd moved here, or since. By the film" (E. Heuer, Interview).

### **Quantifying the Impact of *Being Caribou* Community and Living Room Screenings in the 2004-2006 Period**

During the 2004-2006 period, *Being Caribou* living room and community screenings were a core campaigning and community organizing activity of coalitions working to protect the Arctic Refuge. In Canada, along with activating its usual community screening networks, the NFB worked with *Being Caribou* and with WildCanada.net, a

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but ubiquitous everyday items were among the most popular and effective forms of communication ("Caribou Almanac").

<sup>385</sup> Erica Heuer expressed shock that, in fact, a large crowd stayed to watch the film (2E. Heuer, Interview).

<sup>386</sup> Some of the information about the event I have gleaned from a pdf of the event poster that Erica Heuer gave to me along with some other files during the course of our interview.

kind of on-line clearinghouse for actions to support ongoing Canadian environmental campaigns,<sup>387</sup> to promote community screenings as part of the March 12, 2005 Arctic Action Day. In the United States, the Alaska Wilderness League facilitated distribution of 7500 copies of *Being Caribou* (with community screening packages) both through its own networks and throughout the Alaska Coalition. As previously mentioned, within AWL, regional paid field staff worked to support local organizers in a distributed organizing model, helping these organizers to coordinate *Being Caribou* screenings leading up to the March 12 Arctic Action Day, for which the screenings were a core suggested activity. Field organizers also helped local organizers to debrief the events, making sure successes were celebrated throughout the network; the burgeoning use of web 1.0 tools, such as e-newsletters, blogs, and simply posting photographs of the action day across the country allowed a translocal connectivity and sharing between local groups that would not have been possible even five years earlier.

Although many Alaska Coalition member groups lacked the level of paid field support workers that AWL had, over the course of 2005, under the umbrella of the Arctic Refuge Action Coalition (ARAC), field organizers or their equivalents were pooled from across organizations, so that ARAC members could access an additional twenty-nine organizers in twenty-three states.<sup>388</sup> Additionally, most member groups had a strong

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<sup>387</sup> WildCanada.net was founded by Stephen Legault, who had been active for well over a decade in Alberta on conservation issues. He was an early promoter of the Y2Y network, and had close ties to CPAWS. WildCanada.net was inherited by CPAWS in 2005 (Adelberg; Chester; Gailus).

<sup>388</sup> ARAC formally launched on June 29<sup>th</sup>, 2005. Field organizers support was definitely in place for the September 20 Action Day and likely informally for the June Action Day, but not for the March living room screenings (Alaska Wilderness League, *Annual Report*

grassroots following and formalized means of supporting and training their volunteer leadership. This was not only true for conservation groups, such as the Sierra Club<sup>389</sup> or the League of Conservation Voters (whose entire mission depended on effective grassroots electoral organizing), but for many of the seven-hundred environmental, labour, faith, and sporting groups that formed the Coalition. Faith and labour groups in particular had their own strong traditions of solidarity and organizing, and deep roots in their communities. In the case of the Episcopal church, for example, during the crucial 2004-2006 period, Bishop of Alaska Mark MacDonald went so far as to travel to London to co-present a shareholder's resolution concerning the Arctic Refuge at the 2004 British Petroleum Annual General Meeting (Johnson), and to leave the 2005 House of Bishops meeting early in order to personally deliver a special resolution urging protection of the Arctic Refuge to the United States Senate days before the crucial March Senate vote (Episcopal Church, "House of Bishops"). These strong actions by the upper echelons of the leadership encouraged local and lay leadership to embrace action on the calving grounds issue, and to do so in community. The Episcopal Church thus provided a robust home for *Being Caribou* screenings, and for encouraging congregants to build their leadership skills and take initiative to make their views known to Congress.

It is extremely likely that any given community or living room screening conducted by Alaska Coalition members in the U.S., or by the NFB and its networks in

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2005 2). Archived versions of ARAC's action calls are visible at the Internet Archive under [www.arcticrefugeaction.org](http://www.arcticrefugeaction.org). See for example: <http://web.archive.org/web/20051217210826/http://www.arcticrefugeaction.org/takeaction/>.

<sup>389</sup> The Sierra Club's grassroots organizing capacity as assessed by the NPLA project was discussed earlier in this chapter.

Canada, not only grew interest in the calving grounds issue, but resulted in between several and several dozen individuals signing petitions, writing letters, calling elected officials, and making other commitments to act. But what was the true scope of such screenings? How many were there and how many people were reached?

Reasonable data exists to estimate the scope of NFB sponsored screenings in Canada, as the NFB and its partners kept both official and unofficial records of its community screening program. Appendix 4 breaks down estimates of viewership of *Being Caribou* through different facets of the program. Roughly 3 000-3 750 people watched the film from the last quarter of 2004 to the first quarter of 2006 either through a NFB Film Club public library screening or by borrowing the DVD from the library. Two different methods are used to estimate viewership at community screenings facilitated by the NFB's regular community screening program. The first method draws on records NFB Community Marketing Manager Jane Gutteridge kept of *Being Caribou* screenings from January to June of 2005, based on report-backs from local contacts. Some of these report-backs included audience counts. Where they did not, I estimated audiences at 60 per community screening, 30 per school screening, and 15 for an unspecified viewing venue. Report-backs were done voluntarily at the initiative of local film screeners; given that Gutteridge did not have time to follow-up persistently but collected these figures somewhat ad-hoc, I assumed a report back rate of 35%. Extrapolating from the figures for January to June, with 6 757 viewers from 117 screenings in 77 communities representing 35% of the total for that time period, I estimated approximately 53 100 viewers for community screenings directly sponsored by the NFB from December of 2004 through the first quarter of 2006. A second, more theoretical model, estimates viewership by

extrapolating that the 35 to 50 copies of the film in circulation in the community screening program circulated to a new screening partner once every three weeks, and that the average community screening partner reached an audience of 50 viewers. This method yields an estimate of between 38 000 and 54 000 viewers.

This number, however, does not include the screenings coordinated by WildCanada.net or *Being Caribou* for the March 12, 2005 Action Day. The *Being Caribou* website listed 35 Canadian screenings between March 11 and 14,<sup>390</sup> these screenings, however, were likely facilitated through *Being Caribou*<sup>391</sup> and not WildCanada.net, as the WildCanada.net and Alaska Wilderness League events are listed as separate line items. Only five of these screenings are at “private residences.” The rest of the locales range from screenings in coffee shops and brew houses, to viewings organized at high schools and universities (usually in auditoriums), to several bookstore screenings and screenings at co-ops or other forms of shared housing. These screenings were significant organizational efforts, often sponsored by a local group (rather than an individual), with audiences easily in the range of several dozen, and with opportunities for taking action clearly foregrounded at the events.

Internal NFB documents (National Film Board, *Being Caribou Living Room Screening Campaign*) quote WildCanada as reporting 2 700 public screenings, with total viewership of “at least” 300,000 people. Although unspecified, this figure is likely to be an estimation of total North American viewership of the film in and around the March 12

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<sup>390</sup>These are archived by the Internet Archive at <http://web.archive.org/web/20050313175642/http://www.beingcaribou.com/schedule.htm>

<sup>391</sup>In other words, these screenings were for the most part organized by people who had contacted *Being Caribou* through their website or email.

Action Day, including American viewers—this squares with roughly one March 12 screening per copy for the 2500 copies of *Being Caribou* were bought by AWL in December 2004 to distribute for Arctic Action Days,<sup>392</sup> and Canada hosting a proportional 200, or roughly 10% of screenings.<sup>393</sup> This averages to approximately 50 screenings per American state, which is easily probable given the participation in the campaign of so many groups with large grassroots memberships, such as the Episcopal Church.<sup>394</sup> It is also consistent with reports that *Oil on Ice*, a film distributed by the Sierra Club and U.S. PIRGS (Public Interest Research Groups) at the same time for living room screening campaigns, screened 1 500 times in the same week (“Award Winning Documentary”; Bishop).<sup>395</sup> The NFB’s “spike” of sales of 789 copies of *Being Caribou* immediately following the Action Day also suggests a large number of people saw the film on the Action Day and were moved by it.<sup>396</sup>

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<sup>392</sup> Not all copies may have been used or in circulation, but Erica Heuer’s example certainly isn’t unique in terms of a local group showing the film multiple times. Even in her list on the *Being Caribou* expedition website, of March 12 screenings in Canada, several groups report multiple screenings, with Salt Spring Island’s Star Books simply screening the film repeatedly all day.

<sup>393</sup> In fact, it works out to Canada having a slightly lower turnout. Although, in terms of population ratio, these figures seem correct, community organizing on the Arctic Refuge was far more powerful in the United States, as the influence of US voters on Congress is a great deal more direct.

<sup>394</sup> There were just under 7 000 Episcopal Church congregations in the US in 2010 (Episcopal Church, “Table of Statistics”).

<sup>395</sup> Degnan said unequivocally that from his perspective as a grassroots campaigner, *Being Caribou* created a stronger emotional connection with audiences than *Oil and Ice*, a more traditional political documentary, and that he felt AWL had made the right choice of film for the living room screening campaign.

<sup>396</sup> These numbers come from the NFB’s *Being Caribou Living Room Screenings Campaign* report. One would generally expect that only a small percentage of a given audience would want to buy a just-viewed documentary.



Through 2 700 film screenings of *Being Caribou*, on Saturday March 12, 2005, 300 000 viewers in a single day were entreated to take immediate, specific action to protect the Arctic Refuge days before an upcoming Senate vote on whether to strip provisions for drilling in the Arctic Refuge from the Budget Bill. Individuals were asked to contact Senators by mail, email, telephone and even in person, with the Alaska Coalition and AWL coordinating and focusing efforts on a small cadre of “swing” Senators—both Republicans and Democrats who could vote against party lines.<sup>397</sup> While Coalition members organized radio and TV ads targeting these Senators (“ANWR: Enviro Run Ads”), and arranged for heavyweight supporters and key Gwich’in leadership to meet with or call them—even former President Jimmy Carter was enlisted to call the Democratic Senators—a deluge of phone calls, letters, and emails to the offices of these and other Senators reinforced the message. In the final days before the vote, hundreds of thousands of Americans also signed a “Citizen’s Roll Call” petition in support of the Cantwell-Kerry Amendment to remove drilling from the budget bill.<sup>398</sup>

Grassroots mobilizing to show electoral support was only one of a number of tactics that the Alaska Coalition deployed to influence what they knew would be an

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<sup>397</sup> One of the reasons that the budget bill passed with the provision to drill in the Arctic Refuge included was that the two Democratic Senators from Hawaii, as well as Democratic Senator Mary Landrieu of Louisiana, voted against Sen. Cantwell’s amendment to strip out the drilling provisions.

<sup>398</sup> John Kerry started the Citizen’s Roll Call initiative; he used his roughly 2.75 million-member email list—compiled during his run for president—to publicize the petition. The petition was also widely distributed through activist networks. The full text of the email Kerry sent to his email list asking for petition signatures is viewable at <http://freerepublic.com/focus/f-news/1363308/posts>. The email Kerry sent supporters confirming 260 000 signatures in 24 hours is viewable at <http://www.dailykos.com/story/2005/03/16/99758/-In-24-Hours-260-000-People-Sign-Kerry-s-Citizen-Roll-Call#>.

extremely close vote.<sup>399</sup> However, it was an extremely powerful tactic: Democratic Senators such as John Kerry, Joe Lieberman, Maria Cantwell and Barbara Boxer worked with the environmental movement and spoke out in the Senate, via their offices, through press conferences, and even by attending rallies,<sup>400</sup> framed their support in terms of an appeal to American moral values—but were undoubtedly conscious of how this support played to their voter base. This was even more the case for Republicans who broke with their party line to support of the Arctic Refuge.<sup>401</sup> In my own experiences at Alaska Wilderness Week, attending meetings at Congressional offices, it was very clear, especially in the cases where we had sit-down meetings with Senators and Representatives, that they were extremely concerned about how their position on the Refuge would play out with their own constituencies.<sup>402</sup>

Although, just four days after the Arctic Action day, drilling in the Refuge came a step closer with a 49-51 loss in the Senate, the Alaska Coalition had solidified its power

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<sup>399</sup> By putting Arctic Refuge drilling in a budget bill that could not be filibustered Republicans had created conditions where only 50% support was required for drilling to be approved. In the case of a filibuster, 60% of votes would be required.

<sup>400</sup> Barbara Boxer did a joint press conference with Alaskan Natives and the *Oil and Ice* filmmakers on the Wednesday before the vote (Stolberg). The Canadian government also spoke out strongly against drilling in the Arctic Refuge, with environment minister Stephan Dion calling it “A big mistake” (Ljunggren). Joe Lieberman, who had helped defeat ANWR drilling proposals in 1991, 1995, 2002, and 2003, was also extremely active before the 2005 Senate vote (“Senator Lieberman”).

<sup>401</sup> For example, Republican Senator Lincoln D. Chafee held a press conference with prominent Republicans (including the grandchildren of two former Republican Presidents) to argue that the Republican Party would diminish its environmentalist legacy and past conservation achievements by supporting drilling in the Refuge (Mulligan).

<sup>402</sup> For example, in 2012, my small group met separately with two Senators who had voted against the 2005 amendment. As these Senators had large native constituencies, the AWL meeting group included strong aboriginal leaders (both from the Senators’ state and from Alaska); many of the verbal cues from the Senators clearly indicated a concern that they be responsive to native constituencies (they had also been visited by pro-drilling Alaskan natives with links to native constituencies in their state).

and grown its base of support through the grassroots outreach and mobilizing activities of the Arctic Action Day. In the coming months, as the Coalition repeatedly ramped up its efforts to block legislation opening the Arctic Refuge to drilling, *Being Caribou* living room and community screenings continued to feature heavily in grassroots organizing, with AWL circulating an additional 5 000 copies of the DVD throughout its networks. By November of 2005, the Being Caribou expedition estimated that the film had been seen by over a million North Americans. Subtracting TV and film festival viewers, this implies that between 500 000 and 750 000 people saw *Being Caribou* through community and living room screenings before the end of 2005.<sup>403</sup> *Being Caribou* had considerable reach within the grassroots coalitions working to protect the calving grounds in the 2004-2006 period; it almost certainly contributed to generating tens of thousands of phone calls, emails, and letters to elected officials in support of calving grounds protection.

### **Coda: the *Being Caribou* Book Tour**

Grassroots mobilizing to keep drilling out of the Arctic Refuge continued in high gear throughout 2005, as various efforts to include drilling in the U.S. Budget and in a new Energy Bill wound their way through Congress. In June Alaska Coalition groups and

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<sup>403</sup> The big gap in this estimate is the lack of viewership numbers for Link TV. As an extremely crude estimate, if 5.8 million regular Link viewers watch 2.5 hours of Link TV per week (see <http://web.archive.org/web/20091126005832/http://www.linktv.org/whoweare/history>—these figures come from Link’s own estimates), a showing on Link TV could expect about 87 000 viewers. If the film was shown four times (which it was, at a minimum), this would account for about 350 000 viewers. However, the audience figures for Link are from 2009, four years after *Being Caribou* was broadcast. It is likely that viewership was considerably smaller.

their allies launched the Arctic Refuge Action Coalition “with the goal of enlisting millions of activists to urge their members of Congress to protect the Refuge” (Alaska Wilderness League, *Annual Report 2005* 2). With a focus on the districts of 30 key House members, Coalition members continued to organize and facilitate grassroots citizen action on a large scale. As just one example, the two adults and two toddlers of the Black family spent ten weeks piloting an Arctic Refuge Action van from their home in St. Louis to Washington DC for the September Arctic Action Day Rally. On the way, the family stopped throughout the Midwest, “at zoos, bicycle races, farmers’ markets, parades, concerts, and other public events” (Grist Staff),<sup>404</sup> publicizing the rally and all the while updating a blog on their journey. *Being Caribou* continued to be distributed within AWL, ARAC, and the Alaska Coalition as an important outreach tool, and field organizers continued to support citizens organizing local screenings.

Months before the acute threat to the Refuge began to tail off, Mountaineers Books released the hardcover edition of Heuer’s book, *Being Caribou*, in the United States in the fall of 2005. As with the *Being Caribou* film, the book immediately began receiving accolades, winning the Grand Prize at the Banff International Mountain Book Festival in November of 2005, followed by a 2006 National Outdoor Book Award in the Outdoor Literature category, and Best Travel Book at the 2006 Independent Publishers Awards. *Being Caribou* was also nominated for a BC Book Award, cited in the *Globe and Mail*’s “Globe 100” list of top books of 2006, and won the Sigurd Olson Nature Writing Award for 2007.

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<sup>404</sup> Two Arctic rally vans travelled through 12 states in the summer of 2005. See <http://web.archive.org/web/20051023090347/http://www.arcticrefugeaction.org/>.

Beginning with two October 2005 dates in British Columbia for a Royal Canadian Geographic Society speakers' series, Karsten Heuer started touring both the lower 48/southern Canada and northern North America in support of the book, giving lectures, readings, and multimedia presentations with slides. Building from a spine of events organized by publishers—McClelland and Stewart published the Canadian edition in March of 2006—Erica Heuer continued to do additional publicity and scheduling of extra engagements. While the book tour by necessity had a far smaller scope than the community screening campaign for *Being Caribou*, as Karsten Heuer had personally to give all the multi-media presentations, lectures, and readings, the release of the book sparked a new wave of publicity for the *Being Caribou* expedition, particularly as the book was reviewed and in some cases excerpted by both mainstream media and high-circulation geographic and outdoor magazines in the U.S. and Canada.<sup>405</sup> Through his touring, Karsten Heuer increased his reputation as a speaker and writer, furthering existing *Being Caribou* expedition partnerships and helping to develop new ones. For example, outdoor clothing company Patagonia, which had supported *Being Caribou* screenings at a number of its stores, commissioned Heuer to write the feature story, "Caribou Camp", to be included as part of its fall/winter 2007 environmental campaign focused on permanent protection of the Arctic Refuge. The book tour was also an opportunity to reach new niche audiences. For example, Heuer attended a number of writer's festivals. As a published author and wildlife biologist, he was able to begin to bring the *Being Caribou* expedition to a more scientific and professional audience, such

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<sup>405</sup> For example, *Canadian Geographic* excerpted the book, accompanied by vivid photographs of the expedition, in its March/April 2006 issue.

as that attending a wildlife planner's association conference in Canmore, Alberta, where Parks Canada sponsored the reception after Heuer's talk (*Organization of Wildlife Planners* 4). These activities all also served to publicize the *Being Caribou* film, and generate new interest from new potential audiences.

The tail end of the book tour marked a turning point in the lifecycle of the media products of the *Being Caribou* expedition. After a final salvo in December of 2005, when Senator Ted Stevens of Alaska tried to include ANWR drilling provisions in a defense appropriations bill that was defeated by a filibuster on December 21, Republicans dropped efforts to open the calving grounds to drilling, turning their attention to other issues in anticipation of the 2006 midterm elections. The threat to the calving grounds became markedly less acute.<sup>406</sup> The *Being Caribou* book and film continued to be distributed widely, with Karsten Heuer even releasing a well-received *Being Caribou* children's book. However, the emphasis of the *Being Caribou* project was slowly shifting from a short term focus on activism to a longer term, educational one.

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<sup>406</sup> This is particularly true because the Democrats swept the mid-term elections.

## Chapter 8

### An Educational Moment: *Being Caribou* and the Long-term Trajectories of Transformational Change

In the past several chapters, I have focused on the *trajectory* of the Being Caribou project: on its embeddedness within the personal histories and trajectories of Leanne Allison and Karsten Heuer; on its imbrication within a sentient landscape of shifting geological formations, migrating caribou, and ever-changing equilibria of fauna, flora, and peoples of the Western high arctic, cycling through seasonal, hydrological, and climatic change as well as changing human governance; and on the Being Caribou project's extension beyond the local/locale of the Western high arctic to engage with communities, histories, and intersections of civil society and democratic governance throughout North America. Focusing on Being Caribou's trajectory has been a way to tell the project's story from multiple perspectives and across intersecting timescapes.<sup>407</sup> This becomes especially important in describing the "long tail" of the Being Caribou project's continuing engagements even as the key actors in the project began to shift trajectories.

As discussed in Chapter 7, the short-term impact of the use of Being Caribou media products in the 2004-6 period can be marked, with a degree of precision, through tracing the circulation of the 'charismatic packages' (Tsing 227) of the film and book's stories and tellers as they circulated through translocal networks, knitting together 'translocal assemblages' of stories, symbols, institutions, coalitions, politicians, and citizens that, for a time, directed their resources/efforts towards the common objective of

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<sup>407</sup> Adam (10) developed the notion of "timescapes" to describe "the complex temporalities of contextual being, becoming and dwelling" and to encompass, as other 'scapes' such as landscape do, the rhythms of interaction and contingency inherent to embodied and practiced/lived realities.

influencing specific Congressional votes. However, the measurable goals of short-term network activation formed only a part of the social change process. Even during the most critical campaigning periods, house parties and other *Being Caribou* viewing opportunities were not just occasions to target elected officials, but sites for beginning to engage potential activists in a long-term process of transformational change.

Processes of transformational change are deeply relational: they unfold over a series of engagements, questionings, and realizations, and they involve shifts in how one relates to the self and to others (whether these others are people, social systems, or more-than-human elements).<sup>408</sup> Askew and Carnell, for example, argue that transformatory learning “focuses on the learner, the learning context, and the learning process . . . how the emotional, social, spiritual and cognitive aspects of learning interrelate; the importance of the group and social context on learning and how people and organizations are transformed through engaging with the learning process” (1998:166 qtd in Barndt). This is not a linear process; citing dian marino’s<sup>409</sup> “more fluid notion of Gramscian hegemony as “a rainforest of moveable relations,” Barndt (100) proposes that profound social learning/change processes happen through a constantly changing dynamic of resistance, consent, and transformation. The cognitive is only one dimension of this

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<sup>408</sup> There are a variety of theories about critical education for social change. My learning in this area has been greatly influenced by the work of Dr. Deborah Barndt, who was able not only to bring a breadth of scholarship into social change education conversations, but to create spaces that brought non-verbal, kinetic, spiritual, and cross-cultural elements into classroom learning, and challenged students to wrestle with the tensions and contradictions that arose. Barndt, who alternates between glimpses of a class she taught in social change education theory and a more standard review essay, expands on her approach and its relationship to theories of transformative learning.

<sup>409</sup> marino deliberately spelled her name without capital letters as part of her practice of questioning everyday hegemonies. Her philosophy and practice is laid out in 1998’s *Wild Garden: Art, Education, and the Culture of Resistance*.



dynamic: it also embraces the physical, spiritual, and affective. Equally importantly, much transformational learning takes place in community; community opens to collaboration as a “context, catalyst, and source of learning” (98) that can productively encounter difference through a robust engagement with its conflicts and contradictions (101).

From *Being Caribou*’s earliest conception, Allison and Heuer aimed to do more than share factual information about the calving grounds; as described in Chapter 3, they set out to convey a sense of the lives of caribou as sentient beings, as creatures worthy of our consideration and respectful relationship. Opening out to this new relationship was, for Allison and Heuer, the basis for a far larger transformation of their understanding and of the natural world and the place of humans in it. Before proceeding, in my final chapter, to follow the various *Being Caribou* trajectories (of the project’s media products; of Allison and Heuer; of efforts to protect the summer and winter ranges of the Porcupine caribou herd), it is necessary to turn to this crux of transformatory potential, located in the caribou-human relationship. What exactly was it, and how did it come to reverberate through the multiple trajectories and engagements of the *Being Caribou* project?

This chapter opens by bringing Dwayne Donald’s research praxis of Indigenous Métissage to bear on understanding story’s part in the trajectory/story duality—and dance—described earlier. Donald’s explanation of the dialogic and transformative power of place-stories applies not only to the *Being Caribou* project’s storytelling, but to the method of this dissertation, which situates the *Being Caribou* expedition within a landscape of place-stories that challenge accepted narrations of North American norths.

Equipped with Donald's framework, the chapter then interrogates the extraordinary experiences<sup>410</sup> that formed the basis for the Being Caribou expedition's storytelling.

Allison and Heuer have repeatedly stated that their experiences with the caribou opened them up to a new kind of perception — one that resonated with indigenous teachings, and one that they felt was vitally important, but that they were never quite able to describe or articulate satisfactorily. Through turning to Gwich'in culture and traditional knowledge, Allison and Heuer's experiences are contextualized within broader, Gwich'in and Inuvialuit political and legal orders. Allison and Heuer's experiences on the tundra opened them up to a profoundly changed perception of the life-world, one that is consistent with Gwich'in and Inuvialuit worldviews.

The Being Caribou project performs transformational change work across multiple perspectives, timescales, and platforms wherever it serves to sensitize others to indigenous cosmologies and perceptions of the life-world. The closing sections of the chapter return to the Being Caribou project as a site of Indigenous Métissage, in which people touched by the Being Caribou stories re-evaluate their relationships to caribou, Gwich'in, and power structures of democratic politics in light of a new awareness. In this way, Allison and Heuer's stories play a part in the larger political project of rendering Gwich'in and Inuvialuit realities as part of the 'sensible' (in Rancière's terms) of North American culture and politics.

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<sup>410</sup> I am using the term 'extraordinary' in reference to the discussion in Chapter 3 of extraordinary experiences as explored by Nadasdy ("The Gift in the Animal").

## Trajectory, Story, and Ethical Relationality

As stated in Chapter 6, Being Caribou “works” as both trajectory and story. In making it the method of this dissertation to follow these twin aspects of the Being Caribou journey—and to view them as constitutive of one another—I have been guided by indigenous scholar Donald Dwayne and economic geographer Doreen Massey, who argue that different conceptions of time/history and space/geography reconfigure the politics of the possible. In Chapter 6, I drew on Massey’s conception of “geographies of responsibility” to explore Allison’s choice to explicitly including the North American public and North American lawmakers within the Being Caribou film. Massey’s point is that to challenge the assumed inevitable narrative of “progress,” neoliberal economic globalization must be rendered visible as a particular trajectory that is constituted through a complex of interrelationships in which we are all implicated. She argues that “to understand the global, implicitly, as always emanating from somewhere else . . . [as] therefore unlocated; nowhere” (*For Space* 101) serves the particular sleight of hand that reinforces

a powerfulness which consists in insisting on *powerlessness* — in the face of globalizing market forces there is absolutely nothing that can be done. Except, of course, to push the process further. It is a heroic impotence, which serves to disguise the fact that this is really a *project* (84).

Along with the “historicization” of other societies and cultures (discussed in Chapter 6), this imaginative geography serves to mask “the production of poverty and polarization” through neoliberal globalization (84). Massey offers up the example of the City of

London<sup>411</sup> to describe how neoliberal globalization is in fact rooted in the everyday, in a specificity of transactions and trajectories—originating in and affecting real places—that are just as concrete and comprehensible as the “locals” that are often positioned as victims of globalization:

From here run practices of engagement – investment, trading, dealing, disinvestment, exchange, the conjuring of the most fanciful (variously powerful and disastrously fragile) financial instruments – which extend around the world. A constant interplay with other places, on which it depends, whose future it can make or break. New spaces being made. Here the everyday is indubitably on a planetary scale (190).

Rather than fall back to “a romance of detachment which refuses to recognize any implication in this ‘power’ or to take responsibility for it” (154)—a problematic position that she and Donald describe as often corollary to the championing of “the local” within a dichotomous “local and concrete/global and abstract” imaginative geography—Massey promotes “An understanding of the world in terms of relationality, a world in which the local and the global really are ‘mutually constituted’” (*For Space* 184).

Similar to Massey, indigenous educational scholar Donald believes that cultivating “ethical relationality” is crucial to promoting a more just society. He describes that

relationality instantiates an ethical imperative to acknowledge and honour the significance of the relationships we have with others, how our histories and experiences position us in relation to each other, and how our futures

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<sup>411</sup> She is referring to the financial district of London.

as people in the world are tied together. It is also an ethical imperative to see that despite our varied place-based cultures and knowledge systems, we live in the world together with others and must constantly think and act with reference to these relationships (Donald 536).

Donald introduces ethical relationality in the context of describing his research praxis “Indigenous Métissage,” which was developed explicitly as a decolonizing methodology:

Métissage, as research praxis, is about relationality and the desire to treat texts – and lives – as relational and braided rather than isolated and independent. I explicitly connect Métissage to the legacies of colonialism and the need for recognition of the mutual vulnerability and dependency of colonizer and colonized, insider and outsider, as well as the presumed primacy of ‘literate’ societies over repressed oral traditions and storytelling (537-8).

Métissage, as a methodology, arises from Donald’s deep conviction that the task of decolonizing in the Canadian context can only occur when Aboriginal peoples and Canadians face each other across historic divides, deconstruct their shared past, and engage critically with the realization that their present and future are similarly tied together (535).

In Massey’s terms, Métissage can be understood as a strategy to present indigenous perspectives as “co-eval”<sup>412</sup> realities. Spatializing indigenous experience, so that its multiple trajectories are seen as distinct but also contemporaneous to mainstream

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<sup>412</sup> This is perhaps not entirely fair: indigenous perspectives in fact often have a longer duration/trajectory than their western counterparts, at least in terms of the trajectories/histories of neoliberal globalization.

perspectives, challenges the “one narrative” of colonial and neoliberal progress (Massey *For Space*). Such a strategy, for both Massey and Donald, is inherently place-based but not place-bound.<sup>413</sup>

Given that indigenous perspectives are deeply bound up in relations with the land, water, air, flora, and fauna of particular homelands, Donald finds postcolonial theorizations of hybridity like Bhabha’s “third space,” that rely on “placeless” abstractions, insufficient to address the realities of indigenous experience. Such theorizations reinscribe linear notions of progress such that “postcolonial hybrid subjectivity becomes a universalized utopian concept . . . [and] the new endpoint and final arbiter of all contemporary cultural practice that might be esteemed as valid, meaningful, and sufficiently ‘new’” (McClintock 1992: 85 referenced in Donald 540). To Donald, such fetishization of newness/emergent identities distracts from the real, necessary work of “sustained deliberations on socio-economic power” (540) that are automatically foregrounded through commingling place-based stories/trajectories, whose concordances and dissonances force us a new reckoning with the geographies of power and responsibility.

Donald describes that

A central goal of doing Indigenous Métissage is to bring Aboriginal place-stories to bear on public policy discussions in educational contexts in appropriate and meaningful ways (542).

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<sup>413</sup> Massey (2005: 184) specifically discusses the ‘politically tricky proposition’ for aboriginal people of articulating their culture to place, and that she has specifically chosen the terminology of place-based and not place-bound to minimize potential pitfalls.

This stress on place-stories as conduit for the power of indigenous discourse resonates strongly with how a number of Gwich'in leaders described returning in their minds to specific places such as the Old Crow Flats, in order to connect to their purpose so they could effectively advocate in Washington and elsewhere to protect the calving grounds. As Gwich'in Steering Committee member Lorraine Netro describes:

I had to learn very quickly how I would present our issue so that whomever we were speaking to understood what was important to us, and to be able to do that in a good way. And using the traditional knowledge that was passed on to me by my mother and my grandmothers, and the way of life that I grew up in became very — it was important before but it became, what was the word, it became very important. Because some of what I experienced and felt and witnessed while I was out on the land with my mother became some of the key stories that would help people to understand (Netro).<sup>414</sup>

In successfully bringing indigenous stories to bear on public policy discussions, Donald advises that interpretations be “grounded in the use of a specific artifact that comes from that place” (542). By artifact, Donald simply means something of that place (indigenous to it) that has a collectively remembered meaning, forged through a long history of interactions, that illustrates “tangible incarnations of social relationships embodying the attitudes and behaviors of the past” (Beaudry, Cook, and Mrozowski 1991 in Donald 2012: 542). In the case of Gwich'in efforts to educate voters and policymakers, caribou—and their close relationship with Gwich'in—acted as just such an artifact. The caribou

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<sup>414</sup> Elias (2012), and Kassi (2012), among others, also clearly linked their political work to keeping in their minds experiences of being on the land and with the caribou.

provided a through-line bringing Gwich'in histories/stories to bear in the present, and presented a point of commonality that challenged listeners to ask deeper questions about their own standpoints.

For Donald, an artifact is crucial because

Interpreting differing perspectives on artifact in place requires the development of a critical sense of *who* has formed the perspective, *where* the perspective is situated, under what circumstances, and according to which values, prejudices, and assumptions it has gained currency (549).

Interrogating the artifact reveals power-geometries: in order to square a mainstream/received understanding of a shared artifact—shaped by “colonial frontier logics” (542) —with a narrative strikingly outside one’s experience, a listener must examine her or his own historical trajectories and come to grips with the “intertwined concepts of standpoint and story” (549). Listeners

realize that things are not as they assumed them to be. The intention, then, is to inspire readers and listeners to examine the routes of their own interpretations – to see themselves implicated in the stories told – and make critical connections to teaching, learning, and public policy issues today (548).

Through reflection and dialog, listeners enter into a productive engagement with competing narratives of the past and present, coming to a more sophisticated and informed understanding of how these have been shaped by shared colonial constructs. The frictions of encounter rouse the interpretive imagination: listeners become participants in the creative act of reconciling conflicting narratives through understanding



the standpoints that shaped them. This opens up the possibility for changing relationships, recalibrating trajectories, and finding points of commonality on which to build shared understandings.

In Massey's terms, Indigenous Métissage of this kind is an example of the political possibilities that open up when space is realized as a "simultaneity of stories-so-far" (Massey, *For Space* 130). When space is understood as constituted through interrelationships on multiple timescales; as a sphere of co-existing, heterogeneous trajectories/pluralities; and as always under construction, and open to change through shifting relations, politics itself shifts.

If space is rather a simultaneity of stories – so – far, then places are collections of those stories, articulations within the wider power – geometries of space. Their character will be a product of these intersections within that wider setting, and of what is made of them. And, too, of the non— meetings – up, the disconnections and the relations not established, the exclusions. All this contributes to the specificity of place (Massey, *For Space* 130).

In this construction, power is a process, constantly made and remade through interactions. Each interaction is a site of mutual interdependence and thus, as Donald suggests, a pathway for exchange: it is through such points of co-constitution that trajectories alter one another, even in cases of significant power asymmetries. Donald describes how his methodology of using the hermeneutic imagination to braid together disparate stories of aboriginal and Canadian experience

relates how, in an indirect way, Aboriginal and Canadian standpoints are interreferential, interconnected, and yet simultaneously rife with the power dynamics of coloniality . . . our individual preoccupations with certain artifacts, places, and colonial constructs are really part of a larger collective and difficult understanding of those concerns. In this sense, then, such stories not only describe actions, but also transformations (Donald 548).

In the case of advocating to protect the calving grounds, the task facing Gwich'in, Inuvialuit, and other First Nations extends out from the "artifact" of the calving caribou into conveying a much larger set of interrelationships and interdependencies that must be made to 'count' in North American politics. It requires a shift in the distribution of the sensible, as the goal of protecting the calving grounds for all time<sup>415</sup> exceeds the imaginative geography and timescales on which North American democratic institutions work.

Thus, in working to protect calving grounds, Gwich'in, Inuvialuit, and other First Nations are working across multiple trajectories, from short-term very instrumental efforts to impact the outcome of specific congressional votes, to the far longer-term project of shifting colonial narratives and unseating taken-for-granted accounts of history/reality. For Gwich'in communities, keeping development out of the calving grounds is an urgent survival issue. But, as artifact, the Porcupine caribou are also a conduit for a tremendous amount of cultural information. Because of this, in bringing the caribou to bear outside of Gwich'in communities and northern contexts, Gwich'in

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<sup>415</sup> Gwich'in advocates such as Lorraine Netro and Darius Elias very clearly expressed that the goal was to protect the calving grounds for all time, and until this is done Gwich'in people cannot rest.

leadership has been very insistent that their issue is a human rights issue, and that Gwich'in must tell their own stories.

When voiced in the context of democratic decision making on the legal status and land use designation of the Arctic Refuge, stories of the thousands of years long Gwich'in-caribou relationship challenge listeners to take on “the task of rereading, reframing, contextualizing, and juxtaposing Aboriginal and Canadian [and/or American] standpoints to foster a more ethically relational understanding of what passes between them” ((Donald 548). Gwich'in speakers foreground this ethic of relationship in the content of their stories—speaking from the heart to draw human and caribou hearts closer together (as the Gwich'in heart is half caribou, and the caribou heart half Gwich'in). Equally importantly, following the direction given by the elders and re-affirmed at biannual Gwich'in Gatherings since 1988,<sup>416</sup> Gwich'in spokespeople enact ethical relationality in their bearing and manner. As one spokesperson described of his meetings in Washington

You sit down and you introduce yourself, where you came from, and you try your hardest to speak the best way that you can and make it understandable. So when I get to that point, it's always in the back of my mind that I'm not here for myself, I'm here for my community and the future of my young people, and I be careful on how I speak and not trip over anything I shouldn't say. We be careful on how we speak about our wildlife, and how we speak against development. We do it in a respectful

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<sup>416</sup> At first, the Gatherings happened once a year, but because of the logistical and financial effort involved it was soon switched to every two years.

way. If you do it with a tone and with an attitude, they won't listen to you.

They won't listen to you. That's the kind of message we got from our elders. It don't matter how hard it is, you respect yourself, you respect them, do it the way you think is best. That's the way we're taught (Schafer).

As touched upon in Chapter 5, some of the steps Gwich'in spokespeople described taking to go forward in a good way included dressing formally (such as in regalia) and not in 'bush clothes'; reflecting upon one's community and ancestors as a source of strength for choosing good words;<sup>417</sup> behaving in a gracious and well-spoken manner even when encounters were exhausting or emotionally taxing; and acknowledging those they met with, whether through carefully listening to others' concerns or through thanking allies for their support.

Gwich'in spokespeople encouraged reciprocity through their words, attitudes, and behaviours; this reciprocity included not only acting to protect the calving grounds, but a deeper "peeling back of the many layers of artifact and place" (Donald 544) such that Gwich'in allies began an "interrogation of the histories, logics, traditions, assumptions, and power dynamics at play" (548) in their own standpoints. Longtime activist Lenny Kohm has described that what changed his thinking and motivated him to campaign so passionately and for so many years to protect the calving grounds

was my connection with the Gwich'in people . . . I think the epiphany that I experienced began with my connection with them because suddenly it wasn't an issue about land. Suddenly, it was an issue about people. You

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<sup>417</sup> Gwich'in interviewees mentioned both preparing themselves before engagements through such reflections, and linking to their ancestors and communities in what they presented to decision makers.

know, people tend to relate to people ... it just occurred to me that, particularly in Arctic Village when I saw the way they were discounted<sup>418</sup> ... I thought, you know, 500 years ago Cortes and Pizarro wiped out the Aztecs and the Inca. And 150 years ago, we wiped out the buffalo and displaced the Native people. Here we are, almost 2000 at that time, and we're getting ready to do it again. Once, it was because we needed the gold. Once it was because we needed the land. Now it was because we need the oil (Kohm).

Kohm's experiences in Arctic Village—and later in other Gwich'in communities such as Old Crow—forced him to confront a grossly unequal power dynamic in which Gwich'in realities were sidelined. Exactly as Donald describes, the extreme dissonance between Gwich'in stories of subsistence and relationship, and competing narratives of progress led Kohm to begin a decolonizing process in which he questioned the broader historical trajectory of Gwich'in-American relations and wrestled with the “coloniality of power” (Donald 533) that supported it. And, as Donald gestures to, the result was not simply that Kohm changed his mental ‘story,’ but that he began reworking his relationship to

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<sup>418</sup> After his first trip to the Arctic Refuge for four or five days in 1987, Kohm's plane had stopped to refuel in Arctic Village “and it so happens on that particular day there was to be a US Congressional field hearing, in Arctic Village, dealing with the issue. And the Gwich'in people had sent representatives from all their villages in Alaska and Canada to testify at this hearing. And they were, to make a long story short, they were really given a short shrift at that hearing and pretty much ignored even though it was in one of their villages. It just seemed like, here we go again, more of the same. And I just couldn't stop thinking about it” (Kohm).

As previously touched upon, Lenny Kohm passed away in September of 2014. I am including more detail from my interview with him because he was a very important ally to the Gwich'in for a very long time in efforts to protect the calving grounds. He is well remembered by Gwich'in spokespeople, and it is important that his story also be remembered and brought forward in the conservation community.

northern Alaska through making efforts to spend time with and learn about Gwich'in people and their communities. Kohm described that

I would spend time with families at their bush camps or hunting camps ... there was a period of time I was going up there three or four times a year – and you know it was that connection. It just became for me a very personal thing where it wasn't about some far off place with some people I didn't know. It was about some place that I had become familiar with, with some people I considered among my best friends (Kohm).

These relationships became more reciprocal, with Kohm deciding he wanted to organize slideshows to raise awareness about the calving grounds, and asking Gwich'in for their advice and help to do so.<sup>419</sup> As described in Chapter 5, when approached, elders from Old Crow advised Kohm to focus on speaking from the heart and going about his work “in a good way.” For Kohm, the guidance began a process of deepening connection:

what can I say except it [the advice] worked. Occasionally, I'll still call some of my friends up there when I need some advice or just to cool my jets or whatever it is. The most important thing I learned from spending time with the Gwich'in and travelling with them was I really learned about community and how that works because it became apparent to me that without community, they really can't survive, or it would be very difficult.

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<sup>419</sup> Kohm came up with his slideshow idea after he first began spending extended time with the Gwich'in, but before the time referred to in the previous quote; during his peak years of campaigning on the Arctic Refuge, he was visiting Gwich'in communities several times a year.

And you know, I began to think that about the rest of the world as well  
(Kohm).

The trajectory of Kohm's 'good way' was not the Gwich'in way, but an imaginative reinterpretation of Gwich'in values to suit his different circumstances.<sup>420</sup> Yet the relationship was transformational for both parties: Kohm became a conduit for helping Gwich'in spokespeople scale up their efforts to reach Americans, while Kohm began to 'scale deep,' evolving his thinking about community organizing and becoming invested in its transformational possibility partly as a response to the example of profound interrelationship and connection he found among the Gwich'in.<sup>421</sup>

Kohm's adoption of a 'good way' fits with the "kind of overlapping, linking difference" that Tsing suggests is at the heart of "the most culturally productive kinds of collaboration" (245). The notion of trajectories/stories helps theorize how such difference work in a translocal world—how common cause is, as Tsing points out, a cultural encounter across which materials, relationships, labour, symbols, ideas and people flow with different degrees of ease and transmutation. Rupture, or lack of encounter, is possible at any time: Kohm represents one end of a spectrum of Gwich'in "ally" work.

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<sup>420</sup> The T-shirts printed in Kohm's memory for his memorial service had a photo of Kohm with the words "Do it in a good way". That his friends chose this phrase to memorialize Kohm in this way reflects that the phrase came to sum up an important part of the philosophy that Kohm brought to his work not just with the Gwich'in, but in later community organizing against mountaintop removal coal mining in the Appalachians.

<sup>421</sup> In the October 22, 2014 taping of an in-process "Social Learning for Social Impact" Group Online Open Course (GROOC) co-sponsored by McGill, Harvard, and MIT, Alex Megelas reframed the idea of social movement scaling – which ordinarily refers to 'scaling up' the reach of a campaign, to include not just scaling up but scaling wide (operating in a network of allies who are undertaking similar campaigns or movements in their communities of concern) and scaling deep. Scaling deep refers to undertaking more personal, possibly transformational work in which one becomes more deeply aligned with the values and processes behind the movement one is supporting.

Gwich'in communities have also chosen not to work with certain members of the conservation community—such as certain kinds of animal rights groups—with whom productive exchange is impossible because their worldviews/stories cannot accommodate one another (Elias; Confidential 1). At the same time, from a situated, multi-scalar perspective, it is evident that the successes of any given encounter cannot be judged only in the moment, separate from other exchanges and flows. While it might seem, for example, that the many, many meetings that Gwich'in and their allies have had over the years with Congresspeople who did not support further protection for ANWR were futile, over the longer term the meetings have had an impact:

To tell you the truth, over the last few years that I've been there, once you get into the office, this has been going on for so long, that the relationship is there, whether they agree with you or not. They give you a lot of time now. A lot of the times, even if the Congressman or Senator has actually voted against protection of the area, they just totally appreciate and respect the effort . . . this has been going on for 25 years and they know it, and they respect that in itself. That such a small group of people can organize themselves in such a unique and kind-- with a friendly demeanour, a respectful demeanour-- way, to protect something that is going to protect another indigenous society from extinction on this planet (Elias).

Even in the most asymmetrical of power relationships, such as between visiting Gwich'in and Congresspeople, the multiple entanglements and interconnections that emerge through repeated encounter between “stories-so-far” can produce change; in this case, repeated interactions have served to introduce Gwich'in and Native American politics



more and more into the ‘realm of the sensible’ of Congresspeople and their aides. For Gwich’in leaders to have arrived at such Washington meetings in the first place, multiple moments of decolonization were necessary: a whole chain of interactions played a role, including, but not limited to, community level encounters in churches, universities and colleges, libraries, Kiwanis and Rotary clubs, and various hunters and fishers, birders, general outdoor and conservation clubs; and encounters forged through land claim and self-government, which catalyzed relationship building within the Gwich’in nation, with the Canadian Government and Embassy in Washington, with bureaucrats and their agencies in Canada and the United States, and with conservation leaders.

In a translocal context, a Congressperson’s office in Washington—as congregation point for agribusiness, oil industry, health care and other lobbyists; for environmental, faith, social justice, and consumer protection groups; for local constituents and individual supplicants—is a meeting point where “place” is constructed on multiple scales. Such places are

the realm of the configuration of potentially dissonant (or concordant) narratives. Places, rather than being locations of coherence, become the foci of the meeting and the nonmeeting of the previously unrelated and thus integral to the generation of novelty. The spatial in its role of bringing distinct temporalities into new configurations sets off new social processes. And in turn, this emphasizes the nature of narratives, of time itself, as being not about the unfolding of some internalized story (some already – established identities) – the self producing story of Europe – but about interaction and *the process of the constitution of* identities – the

reformulated notion of (the multiplicities of) colonization (Massey, *For Space* 71).

In other words, within the narrative work of decolonizing spatiality, trajectory/story is key to agency. In Massey's schema "What is always at issue is the *content*, not the spatial form, of the *relations through which* space is constructed" (101). Trajectory/story is that content/contact, the filaments that weave or fray, that which integrates "notions of fluidity and discontinuity associated with mobilities, movements and flows on the one hand with notions of fixity, groundedness and situatedness in particular settings on the other" (Brickell and Datta 376).

In developing Indigenous Métissage as a method of inquiry that employs trajectories/stories to explore the dynamic relations which construct space, Donald places a particular emphasis on the role of the researcher as "a 'passionate participant' in the deconstruction, reconstruction, and juxtaposition of contentious versions of historical realities". It is the researcher's responsibility to support "more informed and sophisticated constructions" of the historical narratives underscoring present day realities through engaging in the process of interpreting and braiding standpoints identified through the research (Guba and Lincoln 1994, 115). Through this process, the meaning of a historical situation or context, derived from an artifact rooted in a particular place, 'accumulates only in a relative sense through the formation of ever more informed and sophisticated constructions via the hermeneutical/dialectical process, as varying constructions are brought into juxtaposition' (1994, 114) (Donald 545).

By introducing the Being Caribou project as arising within a convergence of a number of overlapping, interdependent stories/trajectories, sometimes concordant and sometimes dissonant, I hope I have created opportunities for the hermeneutical imagination of the reader to become not just engaged but implicated in working through the Being Caribou project's evolving legacy, and in how that legacy fits within the larger projects of protecting the calving grounds and decolonizing relations between Gwich'in communities and the other North American communities and governments with which their fates are intertwined.

In going forward, the trope of story/trajectory will be put to use to consider the 'traces' of the Being Caribou expedition in the present and future as including not only the assemblage of media products that the project produced, and the project's dissolution into and contribution to a multiplicity of ongoing stories/trajectories with which Being Caribou crossed paths, but also the place of Being Caribou in kindling trajectories of transformational social change. First, however, my dissertation narrative turns to the "crux" of caribou, and caribou-human relations, that define the Being Caribou story in all its tellings. The next sections delve into Allison and Heuer's accountings of caribou "thrumming," before briefly reviewing the thought of Gwich'in and other northern indigenous peoples in which the experience "fits".<sup>422</sup> Finally, the text explores what the

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<sup>422</sup> Not all these peoples are from territories directly part of the Being Caribou expedition. For example, Heuer and Allison passed through Dane-zaa territory at the northern end of their Y2Y hike, and Inupiat are Inuit people who have kin among the Inuvialuit of the Mackenzie Delta. Some of the themes I will touch upon are also extensively probed by philosophers taking the 'ontological turn'. Chisolm does a thorough job of treating the 'becoming-animal' of *Being Caribou* through the philosophical lens of Deleuze and Guattari; connections could similarly be made to the work of Bruno Latour or numerous others. While it is worth acknowledging these connections, they are not central to my

experience of thrumming illuminated for Allison and Heuer—what it opened up for them in Gwich'in thinking, and how it threw into sharp relief certain taken-for-granted Western assumptions that reflect cultural perceptions and biases rather than fixed “facts” or expressions of reality.

## **An Extraordinary Experience I: Thrumming on the Tundra**

Shortly after returning from his journey following the caribou, Heuer explained that

It's like Leanne and I are strangers in our old lives. Even the people that are closest to us, our parents, don't really understand that we're not the same people anymore. This other possibility opened up to us—and then we came back and felt it close again behind us. As we got inundated with all the advertising and everything else that fills the human world, we felt the barriers go up again, and of course we were cut off from that other world. The dreams and the visions and the thrumming stopped, and a big loneliness and depression came in to fill that space. I think we experienced in a shortened period of time what many Native cultures have experienced over the last many decades—it's a ripping from between worlds. Now Leanne and I are faced with the quandary of how we bridge back and forth—how do we exist in both? (Heuer qtd. in Esser 40)

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approach. Todd offers a succinct rationale for privileging indigenous thinkers and indigenous communities in academic writing on the 'more-than-human,' sentience, and agency of the natural world. Sahlins (*Part One* 5) also offers a concise summary of anthropological thinkers, dating back to Aristotle, who have broached themes of kinship between humans and the more-than-human world.

“Thrumming” and the shift in perception that it represents, comes up over and over in Allison and Heuer’s speaking and writing as the crux of their life-changing experiences amongst the caribou on the tundra. In her blog post “Where *Bear 71* Came From,” which begins by describing the Being Caribou journey, Allison’s sentiments closely echo those of her husband comments to Esser eight years earlier:

We were constantly in the presence of wild animals such as wolves, wolverines, musk ox, eagles and foxes, because the caribou tow an entire ecosystem with them on their migration. This immersion in an ancient animal rhythm made us wake up to an old way of being human. We started to dream about where we would see caribou next, and to guide us we used a sound Karsten describes as “thrumming” in his book about the trip. It was something you felt more than you heard, and yet we trusted this new sense, and it worked. Reconciling that world we discovered with the caribou and the busy modern world we have since returned to has been difficult . . . We get further and further from our instincts, we forget about the thrumming, and our world becomes bound by computer screens instead of *unbound* by the sky above our heads (Allison, “Where *Bear 71* Came From”).

Allison and Heuer’s descriptions of thrumming place it squarely within the realm of what Nadasdy has labeled “extraordinary experiences” (see Chapter 3), which are illegible within one’s own cultural precepts yet viewed as entirely normal within another’s. According to Nadasdy, to gain the insights such experiences offer one must engage in “radical participation” in which one takes the explanations and worldviews of one’s cultural informants absolutely seriously (“The Gift in the Animal” 36). Over the course of

their migration with the caribou, Allison and Heuer began more and more not only to pay attention to thrumming, but to use it as a basis for their decision making.

Heuer describes the awareness of “thrumming” growing on him and Allison slowly during the post-calving aggregation, a time when

We were moving so fast, among a huge rush of animals, that we were sleep deprived, traveling all hours of the day and night. We'd nap for an hour or two, walk for five or six, nap for an hour or two. Our whole sense of time got messed up. We didn't know what day it was or what time of day it was because of the 24-hour daylight. We were constantly surrounded by caribou or behind caribou or on their fresh trails. They're shedding their winter coats at that time, so we had hair in our food, hair in our sleeping bags, caribou hair everywhere, like you get sand everywhere when you're at the beach (Heuer qtd. in Esser 39).

At the same time, Allison and Heuer were perpetually hungry so that “between this perpetual state of hunger and the sleep deprivation, we were quite dizzy, and it was almost like we were entering into a different state—much like a shaman might go on a fast and work himself into a trance” (Heuer qtd. in Esser 39).

Allison and Heuer soon gave up on using scientific methods for trying to find the caribou (Esser 39); *Being Caribou* shows the limitations of this method with Allison and Heuer's failed attempt to take a shortcut to meet the caribou at a crossing of the First River. Instead,

as the trip progressed and we got into this unique state of consciousness, we started to plug into different signs and signals and we started to have

vivid dreams and visions—of where we would find caribou next when we'd lost them. We started following those dreams and visions. We would tell them to each other before we headed out and then exact scenes that we had described to each other would play out (Heuer qtd. in Esser 39).

Heuer documents incidents of these specific dreams-turned-real in *Being Caribou* (158, 165), and of their success in finding caribou by following their intuition (183-186). Heuer and Allison, in these passages, shift what kinds of information they draw on to make choices; this is not just a process of weighing facts differently, but honing their perceptions so as to be able to sense information that previously they might have been unaware of or have discounted. In Rancière's terms, they are very directly opening out the 'field of the sensible' of what they perceive as knowledge.

Several aspects of this opening out are worthy of note. Firstly, Allison and Heuer have repeatedly described it as originating in an actual change in their sense perceptions. This is most evident in their descriptions of "thrumming":

There was also a vibration in the landscape, and it wasn't from the hooves; it was more like a singing through the landscape. You felt it more than you heard it. We would hear it when the caribou were in large groups. It was subtle at first, but as the layers of our lives dropped away, our senses were sharpened. We started to tune in to this sound—which I call thrumming—and that began to inform our decisions about where we went when we had lost the caribou, and we would find them. It was a really magical development in the trip (Heuer qtd. in Esser 39).

In *The Audible Past*, Sterne notes that listening is a bodily practice, both conscious and unconscious, that evolves in each individual through “a mix of custom, bodily technique, social outlook, style, and orientation” (92). The ways we learn to see, hear, smell and otherwise sense are profoundly cultural; phenomenologist Edward Casey describes this process as developing “corporate schema,” wherein a mix of instinct, learned patterns, memories, thoughts, perceptions, and the particular mechanics of an individual’s body coalesce to create that individual’s ‘bodily practice’ of listening (Casey 27-28).<sup>423</sup> As Allison and Heuer attempted to align their movement through the landscape to that of the caribou, they experienced significant physiological changes. Some, such as those caused by starvation, lack of sleep, and extreme physical exertion<sup>424</sup> are visually apparent in *Being Caribou*. Others, such as the disruption to their circadian rhythms through 24-hour daylight and not following normal ‘day/night’ patterns of behaviour, or maintaining a different level of awareness of the landscape,<sup>425</sup> are evident in how Allison and Heuer narrate their experiences.

One way that Allison and Heuer have described this changed awareness/sense perception, is as a kind of “openness” that could not be maintained in the urbanized,

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<sup>423</sup> Ingold (*Being Alive* 40-60) goes into some detail on these points with reference to hunter-gatherer cultures, including the Koyukon who live adjacent to Gwich’in communities in Alaska.

<sup>424</sup> Examples include the scenes of a gaunt Heuer hunting ground squirrels, or Allison and Heuer’s obviously adrenalin-spiked interactions with hungry grizzlies coming out of hibernation.

<sup>425</sup> This was necessary to avoid threats (such as grizzly bears) or to route find, which is what they were doing when they first became aware of the thrumming (Heuer, *Being Caribou* 98-99; 158-9)



technological world without going into a kind of sensorial shock/overload.<sup>426</sup> Allison addresses this in the 65<sup>th</sup> minute of *Being Caribou*:

Something that happens when you're on a trip for this long in this place is that you can allow your senses to open totally up and take in absolutely everything. If you were to be this way in a noisy city with so much stimulation, you'd go crazy. There's a possibility to have your spirit kind of torn in this state and it's something that I worry about a little bit.<sup>427</sup>

Allison and Heuer describe their perceptual shift as coming from a much closer attunement to the environment that permeated their beings—they were ‘immersed’ in the flow of the caribou (quite literally, with caribou hair, scat, smells, sounds, and bodies commingling all around them in the landscape they shared),<sup>428</sup> such that what they describe variously as an “ancient” or “instinctual” ability to sense the caribou pervaded their bodily schema, entering into their dreams.

At the same time, Allison and Heuer are insistent that what they were sensing was a kind of communication emanating from the animals. Asked to explain thrumming from a scientific perspective, Heuer described it as a form of communication that the Porcupine caribou actively uses to co-ordinate its migration as the tens to hundreds of thousands of animals split up and come together over the course of their migration cycle:

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<sup>426</sup> Heuer directly addresses the camera about the impact of the float plane ‘drop –ins’ and other disturbances on the caribou and themselves in the 60<sup>th</sup> and 61<sup>st</sup> minutes of *Being Caribou*.

<sup>427</sup> As discussed in Chapter 7, even with the interventions of Randall Tetlich to ease their transition, Allison and Heuer did in fact experience a kind of physiological and psychic shock in returning from their expedition to a more human-centric world. Peter Mather (Interview) noted their discombobulation in Washington when he was down at the same time in September of 2003.

<sup>428</sup> See note 41 of this chapter.

Despite being hundreds of miles apart, all groups will shift and head south at the same time. There is a huge level of co-ordination. There's some level of communication going on that we don't understand, some communication that's able to transcend those distances. I think the thrumming is an infrasonic wavelength, just on the edge of human hearing, which is also what elephants use to communicate over long distances (Heuer qtd. in Esser 40).

Heuer then goes on to cite First Nation and biologist stories of four marked bulls who have repeatedly converged at around the same time of year from hundreds of miles away. Explaining that there is almost no information on caribou communication in scientific literature, Heuer puts forward a belief that

the greatest discoveries in science are really mystical as well. They not only bring to light new facts about animals, but new dimensions about the world, and open up a new breadth of possibility . . . I believe that that other dimension—whether it's what the Koyukon Indians in the Yukon call distant time or the aborigines of Australia call the dream time—exists (Heuer qtd. in Esser 42).

Allison and Heuer have repeatedly described that in their new awareness of a different kind of consciousness and dimensions to reality, “our experience matches the description Gwich'in people talk about, a distant time when people could talk to caribou and caribou could talk to people” (Heuer qtd. in Esser 39). Gwich'in and other northern North American indigenous thought and traditional knowledge provide a coherent cosmology in which Allison and Heuer's “extraordinary experience” (see Chapter 2) makes sense.

## An Extraordinary Experience II: A Culture, Extraordinarily Evolved

The idea of a world with many dimensions or realms, including the supernatural and different kinds of time<sup>429</sup> is central not only to Gwich'in thought (Myers and Sherry 350), but to many First Nations cosmologies. These realms are porous and communicate with each other. Rice offers a detailed explanation from Anishnawbe cosmology<sup>430</sup> in which

Anishnawbe view *Atisokan* (sacred) stories as part of their present reality; sacred time of stories occurs simultaneously with this reality. These stories are emergent stories that have to do with the transference from other realms of existence into the present earthly realm. They occur today as easily as they did when they were first presented after the first transference to this world by their archetypical ancestors (10)<sup>431</sup>

Similar perceptions inform Gwich'in culture, where "Sacred narratives commonly describe humans and animals communicating, transforming into one other, intermarrying, cohabiting, and having offspring" (Myers and Sherry 350) and where the ancient relationship with caribou suffuses the present day. It is because humans and caribou once traded places and "learned the difficulties and rewards of the other's life and retained a vestige of the old relationship afterward" (350) that the lives of Gwich'in and caribou

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<sup>429</sup> Rice (8) characterizes these kinds of time as "sacred, historical, mythological, and profane," a distinction that echoes categorizations made by Basso in his discussion of different kinds of Western Apache narratives (48-52). The VGFN ethnography *People of the Lakes* also makes clear distinctions about categories of stories set within different kinds of time, such as mythological versus long-ago time (51-53).

<sup>430</sup> This explanation is consistent with descriptions I have read and heard about that are relevant to Gwich'in culture. See Smith and VGFN as well as Myers and Sherry.

<sup>431</sup> Rice goes on to note that some of how the sacred time of stories is recreated in the present day is through active cycles of ceremonies and storytelling that re-enact or reinvolve this sacred time.

remain so closely intertwined. Myers and Sherry describe that this impacts the success of caribou hunts as “People will know what caribou are thinking or feeling, and caribou will have the same understanding of people” (350).<sup>432</sup> As discussed in Chapter 3, it requires “an education in emotion” for people raised in non-aboriginal cosmologies to reconceive of “personhood, agency, knowledge, power, labor, (and) exchange” in this way (Nadasdy “The Gift in the Animal” 26).

This ‘education in emotion’ comes through building relationships. Filmmaker Dennis Allen<sup>433</sup> stressed to me the importance of not mistaking information for knowledge. He described that

In CBQM<sup>434</sup> what I do is I kind of invite people in for a cup of tea.<sup>435</sup> You come in and you get to know people. You know Bertha Francis, you know Neil Collin, you know all these elders, you know all these people who are volunteering their time at the radio station and you get to know certain members of the community. And after a while you feel like you know them (Allen).

Allen very deliberately chose this approach in his filmmaking rather than giving facts because he wanted to share ‘knowledge’:

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<sup>432</sup> Nadasdy puts forward a similar description of northern hunters and animal interactions in which “many northern hunters regard animals to be the same as humans in their essential nature” (“The Gift in the Animal” 33).

<sup>433</sup> Allen identifies as Inuvialuit, as one must “choose” under land claims, but his mother is Gwich’in (Allen).

<sup>434</sup> CBQM is an eponymous film about the CBQM community radio station in Fort McPherson.

<sup>435</sup> The value of “tea drinking” is often underestimated as it pertains to indigenous knowledge systems. See Castleden et al, and Roburn and Tr’ondek Hwech’in.

It's hard to give somebody knowledge in one day . . . I get emails from young people down in the States about CBQM and they say "I watched it over and over." Because a lot of them didn't grow up with elders or community. They grew up in urban sprawl and they never really had those types of elders in their family and what I gave them in that film was knowledge. About relationships between people. I think that was the biggest thing in that film was that people left that film and they felt like they knew who those people were (Allen).

Knowledge, in Allen's terms, comes from careful, repeated observation of and attention to relationships, and this attention includes spiritual and emotional investment.

Knowledge is imbricated within relationships. While Allen is specifically talking about people, in the Gwich'in worldview "there is no distinction between animate and inanimate elements of the earth, the supernatural and the tangible, humans and nature"—all are considered to be alive and 'in relation' to other elements of the cosmos (Myers and Sherry 350).

The richness of Gwich'in knowledge about caribou becomes evident within the intricacy of caribou-human relationships. For example, Gwich'in people eat different caribou parts harvested from animals of different sexes and ages depending upon their own life stage. Gwich'in hunters therefore know how to identify and harvest specific animals, which requires "intimate knowledge of the herd's habitat requirements, behaviour, movement patterns, and life history traits" (Sherry and VGFN 197) while Gwich'in women have incredibly detailed knowledge of how to appropriately preserve and prepare meat, tan hides, and process parts such as bone and sinew depending on the

particularities on the animal and the intended use<sup>436</sup>. This knowledge, as Chapter 4 reviewed, cannot be separated from the long timescale across which the Gwich'in-caribou relationship has developed, nor from the relationship's reciprocal and spiritual dimensions. This relationship is more than communicational: it is constitutive. As Nadasdy, Sahlins, Sakakibara, and other anthropologists point out of hunting cultures, the gifting by animals of their lifeforce is what gives lifeforce to people. This relationship takes place at a cellular level: many physical elements cycling through and making up a Gwich'in person are likely to have also cycled through a caribou body, and the characteristics of Gwich'in bodies—hormones, cholesterol levels, blood sugar, bone and brain health and etc. —have evolved through thousands of years of nutritional interactions with a caribou diet.<sup>437</sup> At both an individual and population level, the Gwich'in-caribou relationship is transcorporeal (Alaimo).

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<sup>436</sup> For example, marrow is especially nourishing for growing children and so dry meat with marrow is fed to them (Confidential 1). Much more detail on these points can be found in Myers and Sherry, and in the chapter "Culture and the Caribou" in Sherry and VGFN (179-234). Additionally, in several interviews I conducted in 2012, Gwich'in interviewees stressed these points.

<sup>437</sup> This is an observation that has become more and more clear to me in the context of attending Arctic science and social science conferences where a lot of research is presented on community food security, subsistence harvesting, and chronic health conditions (such as diabetes). Lack of access to traditional foods is strongly correlated with poor health. Physical health declines due to diets higher in processed foods, carbohydrates, and sugars, which especially in northern First Nations people are associated with diabetes and obesity, and the chronic conditions associated with obesity. At a population level, mental health also declines with shifts in rural economies that erode subsistence harvesting and traditional lifestyles. There are both very specific effects on morale of lack of access to traditional food and the associated community activities of food gathering and sharing (which I discuss more in *Dispatch*), and more generalizable consequences of shifting to certain kinds of wage labour and resource-dependent economies. In particular, changing the structure of local economies can erode patterns of cultural activity and social support. In the last decade research out of the University of

This transcorporeal applies also to the 'social body' of Gwich'in communities. The sharing of meat is an important practice that nourishes not just the physical health of community members, but cultural and social connections (Sherry and VGFN 206; 209).

As one interviewee explained to me

For example, I'm just on my own with my baby for the first time. Her father is down going to school so it's been my first experience of being a single mom. What really was emotional for me was all the men that came and dropped meat off for me, because they knew that I didn't have anyone at home. There must've been between all the pieces that were shared with me almost two or three caribou. So to me that shows first of all that the men see that I'm alone, and just help provide to the household economy. And of course their concern about (names her child), making sure that she has a healthy food source. It just really shows the care and the attention that's paid to situations like that. That was really special for me and for (names her child). It's things like that that just really show the importance of the caribou. I don't know if that's a big message but it's an important one (Confidential 1).<sup>438</sup>

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Alberta Resource Economics and Environmental Sociology Department has explored multiple facets of such rural economic shifts.

<sup>438</sup> As Sherry and VGFN (206; 209) note, sharing meat is integral to traditional Gwich'in culture. Protocols of sharing had a very practical and positive purpose in preventing starvation in times of food scarcity. Sharing is also considered integral to maintaining a proper balance and being in good spiritual relation to all aspects of creation. Sharing is necessary to maintain good luck in hunting. The complex patterns in which protocols around sharing and hunting fit into larger cycles of reciprocity between humans and

Reciprocally, Gwich'in with whom I spoke conveyed a strong sense that actions taken towards the caribou must take into consideration preserving the community and social structure of the herd. This goes further than showing proper *yinjigwihile* (respect) to individual animals that have been harvested (Myers and Sherry 352), to include ensuring that hunting behaviour—such as the previously-discussed 'let the leaders pass' provisions, or similar protocols Myers and Sherry describe (352) around not pursuing animals at *nehttui* (river crossings) until swimming is fully initiated—does not either threaten the collective communication and knowledge of the herd nor rupture its social cohesion. A concern about 'balance,' not just for humans eating caribou but for the constitution of caribou society itself, is one of the reasons that some Yukon First Nations have experienced tensions around the adoption of resource-management based herd conservation techniques that restrict the harvest to bulls alone (Confidential 1).<sup>439</sup>

The ways Gwich'in people spoke to me about caribou—for example with mothers imagining and identifying with calving cows, or Esau Schafer's imagining the cold water a pregnant caribou swims across to "carry on its generation" —was consistent with Nadasdy's perspective that northern hunting peoples operate with a sense of "the sentience and sociology of animals" ("The Gift in the Animal" 29) that results in a set of social practices:

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animals form part of what will be described later in this section as 'indigenous legal orders.'

<sup>439</sup> In my limited experience working with the Tr'ondek Hwech'in government, concerns about the bull harvest also came up. Harvesting only bulls is seen in Western science as an effective conservation measure (as it reduces the kill of cows, who reproduce the herd), but for many First Nations who take a more holistic perspective on herd health, it is a strategy with troubling implications.



animals are people . . . There are many different kinds of people, and the social rules and conventions for dealing with human people are different from those governing social relations with rabbit people, which are different again from those governing relations between humans and moose people, and so on (31).

In the case of Gwich'in, not just practical learning, but much passing on of knowledge through storytelling is coordinated through the social processes that are part of the caribou hunt. As Confidential 1 describes

within the community itself, that's where a lot of story transmission happens, when you go out on hunts, and when the women are sitting down together working with meat. That's usually the point from which stories start happening. Again, it just shows how everything revolves around caribou. That's when your Auntie will talk about the time that there was just women in camp, the men were away and they had to hunt themselves. Things like that start coming up (Confidential 1).

Sakakibara describes this kind of a social system, in the case of Inupiat whalers, as “collaborative reciprocity” in which “humans and animals physically and spiritually constitute one other; (such) that the soul, thoughts, and behaviors of animals and people interpenetrate in the collaboration of life (Fienup-Riordan 1990 in Sakakibara 1007). She argues that it cultivates a kind of consciousness that she names “cetaceousness . . . a hybrid of cetaceous and consciousness” (1003) that is at the root of Inupiat cultural resilience in the face of climate change. Inupiat turn to their whaling cycle and the public ways it reinforces “whaling organizations, food production, distribution, and

consumption and in the styles of music, storytelling, and many other aspects of ceremonial and everyday life” (1007) and the human-whale relationship. This promotes a particular kind of consciousness, cetaceousness, in which

change and continuity are closely interrelated . . . Inupiat cultural practices and hope for survival converge in their tradition of being flexible and responsive to their surroundings . . . As my Inupiat collaborators continually emphasized, to keep whaling as the environment transforms around them is a way to strengthen their identity and nurture their survival (1008).

Sakakibara goes on to describe how cetaceousness—a powerful emotional reconnection to the precepts of Inupiat culture through returning to the whaling cycle—has been a wellspring inspiring Inupiat to advocate for their cultural and human rights in international forums in response to the threats posed by climate change.<sup>440</sup>

Caribou have been a similar touchstone for Gwich’in confronting an uncertain future in the face of both climate change and encroaching resource development. As Lorraine Netro describes:

While I was living away, no matter where it was that I lived, my family always sent me traditional food. Whether it be dried or fresh caribou meat and fish. I never really was away from it. If I didn't have our traditional food in my diet then I didn't feel connected. The connection to our lands

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<sup>440</sup> See Sakakibara (1009-10). She specifically looks at Inupiat work through Arctic organizations and forums, including the Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission and the Inuit Circumpolar Council, although she also addresses the Indigenous People’s Global Summit on Climate Change that took place in Anchorage in 2009.

and animals is very strong, our connection with the caribou is very spiritual, and it's very strong (Netro).

A return to the caribou is a return to a series of relationships, behaviours, and social institutions that provide community cohesion and create reciprocity, and thus sustainability in relations within the territory and community. As band councilor Brandon Kyikivichik explains:

We're situated 140 km above the Arctic Circle. Life here is somewhat harsh. If you are gonna live here, one of the best things that you can aspire to is being a hunter, and a trapper and a fisher, and being self-sufficient. It's how we gauge success around here. It's important to our economy because the cost of living is so high . . . The morale of the community depends almost solely on caribou and fresh game. We don't really get fresh things here. If we want to eat something fresh, we basically have to go out and hunt it and skin it and butcher it and bring it home and cook and then we can eat it. You can actually see the morale of the community increase whenever there's a lot of meat or there's a lot caribou. People have something to do, something to be happy for. It brings us up, makes us more inspired, more ambitious, more motivated. It's important in a lot of ways, and it's not just important to us, it's important to the entire ecosystem. It's important for the wetlands. It's important for other predators, wolves and bears. Caribou is a staple of our community, and one of the most important things to the entire ecosystem that we live in (Kyikivichik).

Myers and Sherry (350-351) describe how Gwich'in ethics and approaches to resource management play out in "rules regarding communal property, behavior and stewardship, kinship ties, and sharing" that were in place prior to European contact. These take the form of "written or de jure rules, customary laws, and unspoken assumptions". While written rules have become more prominent as a part of self-government,<sup>441</sup> customary laws ("informal rules institutionalized in the traditional system") and unspoken assumptions "reflected in local language, ideology, and mental models that govern local thinking" make for community standards that are powerfully reinforced throughout Gwich'in culture, and particularly through the kinds of activities associated with traditional knowledge transmission, such as the oral tradition, Gwich'in spirituality, and community events and celebrations.

As with Inupiat cetaceousness, the cultural systems at play are dynamic. Myers and Sherry (352) quote Nelson in offering the example of luck, which

can be lost, transferred, and recovered. Luck binds people to the code of proper behaviour towards the natural world. And so success in living on the land involves far more than a mastery of technical skills. It requires that a sensitive balance be maintained between each person and the conscious forces of the environment (Nelson 1983: 27 qtd. in Myers and Sherry).

Myers and Sherry (352) note that the expression for a lucky hunter is "vitive gwinzi" or "his ways are well." The ethic of the "good way," repeatedly invoked by Gwich'in in describing the guiding principle for their public and educational/political work to protect

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<sup>441</sup> An outcome, no doubt, of Gwich'in legal orders needing to interact with the codified written law of the Canadian State.

the calving grounds, can be understood as having its origins in this hundreds or thousands of year old Gwich'in ethic, re-interpreted to apply in regional, national, and international governance forums. As discussed in Chapter 1,<sup>442</sup> such "rules" arise not just from sets of practices but also from associated systems of thought that apprehend relations and patterns in ways that help people to make decisions.

Perhaps because of their flexible/dynamic aspect, such coupled systems of reciprocity and rebalancing tend to be interpreted cross-culturally as less than what they truly are: forms of community governance with surprising breadth and deep roots. A new generation of indigenous legal scholars is working to have such systems acknowledged as "law" or indigenous legal orders. Napoleon (3) explains that law is "something that people actually do," with indigenous people applying these systems "to harvesting fish and game, the access and distribution of berries, the management of rivers, and the management of all other aspects of political, economic, and social life." According to Napoleon, "Law may be described as 'the language of interaction' that is necessary for people's social behavior to be meaningful and predictable" (8).

Napoleon's descriptions of the force of these systems as 'law' fits with the weight that, in my experience, people in Old Crow attributed to caribou management. As Kyikivichik expressed:

In the beginning, and for millennia after that, there were strict rules that we followed. I can't say in detail exactly what the rules were, I mean today it permeates throughout everything that we do in our daily lives, just on that

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<sup>442</sup> See the discussion of Fikrit Berkes' research on the 'complex systems' of traditional knowledge discussed in the section "A Resilient Whole."

instinctual nature because we did it for so long. But there were strict rules and guidelines on how to care for meat, and how to prepare it, and how to share it, and why to share it, and what kind of tools to make with it, and the ceremonies and all that kind of stuff. Obviously nothing was written because we didn't have writing, but it didn't have to be. There were leaders, people that when they say something it goes, and if they saw somebody that was doing something that they weren't supposed to be doing, they went up to that person and said 'hey, you're not supposed to be doing that. That's not how we as Vuntut Gwitchin do things. This is how we do things'. But even that rarely happened probably. Everything was strictly followed, and people just knew. So they managed the herd around those strict guidelines that all dealt with preparing the meat, sharing the meat, ceremonies, potlatches. All these types of things were the guiding force of how we manage the herd back then (Kyikivichik).

While it is outside of the Western legal order to understand such unspoken (but well understood) cultural expectations as 'law,' within my limited cross-cultural understanding, traditional legal orders—as described in Smith and VGFN, Sherry and VGFN, and other VGFN records and publications—continue to be at work. When I was in Old Crow in the winter of 2012, there was ongoing community talk/transmission of information from elders and hunters and trappers around appropriate behaviours toward caribou that was relevant to discussions that came up later in the December 2012 Porcupine Caribou Management Board meeting around hunting in the Dempster

corridor.<sup>443</sup> This fits with a further part of Napoleon's explanation that such "law is basically a collaborative process — something that groups of people do together. Law is never static, but rather, lives in each new context" (4).

In other words, much as cetaceousness could be understood as a touchstone for Inupiat navigating an uncertain future, so caribou are as a conduit for Gwich'in to access and bring into play an enormous repository of cultural knowledge, tools, and skills that not only connect Gwich'in to their ancestors but serve as a guide for tackling present and future challenges. The "thrumping" that Allison and Heuer experienced is a channel to an experience/realization that is at the core of the difference between Gwich'in and dominant Western cosmologies, something that Sahlin labels "the transpersonal distribution of the self".

### **An Extraordinary Experience III: Transpersonal Trajectories and Migrating Boundaries of Self**

In his overview of kinship across many traditional cultures, Sahlin defines kinship systems as "a manifold of intersubjective participations, founded on mutualities of being" (*Part One* 10). Quoting Strathern's work in Melanesia, Sahlin argues that "persons are frequently constructed as the plural and composite site of the relationships that produced them. The singular person can be imagined as a social microcosm" (Strathern, 1988: 13 qtd. in Sahlin, *Part One* 12). Moreover, kin relations reflect a larger reality in which

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<sup>443</sup> This is a particularly contentious area for hunting as the highway makes access easy; there are many hunters, non-First Nations and from a variety of First Nations communities. It has been difficult for the PCMB to get consensus on some aspects of hunting along the Dempster. But it was clear that within individual communities, elders and others were working to make sure the traditional law perspectives were brought to bear.

“persons” are multiple, divisible, and relationally constructed in ways that cannot be captured from a perspective that reduces kin relations to attributes bounded within singular individuals:

for understanding kinship much is gained by privileging intersubjective being over the singular person as the composite site of multiple others. For one, the extensional aspects of kin relationships, the transpersonal practices of coexistence from sharing to mourning, are better motivated by the sociocentric considerations of mutuality (Sahlin, *Part One* 13).

Sahlin argues that by taking the individual person as the root ‘unit’ or analytical category, anthropologist subconsciously reinscribe the Western bias of the autonomous bourgeois individual into their analysis. This bias is not restricted to anthropology: it subtends Western industrial culture and practices of everyday life. The bounded body, existing in the earth realm, enveloped and ending at a membrane of skin, has arisen as a basic unit of narrative, law, and administration within industrial capitalism. This body has eclipsed the “ecological body,” characterized by its “permeability,” and “constant exchange between inside and outside, by fluxes and flows, and by its close dependence on the surrounding environment” that Nash argues was predominant in nineteenth century America (Nash 12; Alaimo 90). It thwarts the transcorporeal body, whose “viscous porosity” (Tuana, 2007: 12 qtd. in Alaimo 14) bears witness to the toxic trajectories by which “the very substance of the self is interconnected with vast biological, economic, and industrial systems that can never be entirely mapped or understood” (Alaimo 23), such that



carcinogens in the environment become constitutive of the cells that make up otherwise ‘low-risk’ individuals including bladder cancer survivor Sandra Steingraber.<sup>444</sup>

Sahlin points out that, in the case of indigenous peoples, the pervasive category/unit of the bounded individual body underrepresents the reality of co-presence, de-emphasizing or even rendering invisible the intersubjective commingling of “mutualities of being” and the transpersonal character of experience (Sahlin *Part One*; Sahlin *Part Two* 231).<sup>445</sup> Nadasdy brings this line of reasoning to bear on northern hunting cultures, arguing that Western cultural biases cause us to dismiss complex conceptions of animals and human animal interactions as “purely symbolic and metaphorical” when in fact they are “methods for ascertaining truths” and apprehending the real (*The Gift in the Animal* 26).<sup>446</sup> For Allison and Heuer, “thrumming” was the experience through which the conceptual curtain/cage of the bounded body was lifted,

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<sup>444</sup> Alaimo devotes a full chapter in *Bodily Natures* to the “material memoirs” of such authors as Steingraber, Audrey Lorde and others who have linked disease to the circulation of toxic chemicals in their environments.

<sup>445</sup> Although I have emphasized the more metaphysical implications of the restriction to the bounded body, as they are particularly germane to the discussion which follows, this is hardly an abstract point. In the case of First Nations and Inuit peoples, the isolation and detachment of individuals from their communities, cut off from land, animal, and even human connections through administrative processes such as the large-scale removal of children to residential schools or foster care, or Inuit being numbered and removed of their names through the disc (“ujamiit” in Inuktitut), has been an important part of an ongoing process stripping First Nations and Inuit peoples of their cultures and rights as self-determining peoples. The cultural assumption of the discrete, individual body, largely normalized within dominant culture, subtends such ongoing acts of dissociation and dispossession.

<sup>446</sup> A simple example of the concreteness, as opposed to purely metaphorical aspect of connection that can get missed, is the idea expressed by many northern indigenous people (such as Lorraine Netro earlier in this chapter) that they don’t feel good if they don’t eat traditional food. As discussed, meat sharing helps to reinforce social support systems, but also, eating non-traditional diets is responsible for much of the rise in obesity and diabetes in the north. It is empirically true that northern First Nations people deprived of their traditional diet may feel less well.

revealing a permeable vessel whose lifeforce spills forth and commingles with the flux of other lifeforces, pulsing to the rhythms of the world.

Within an indigenous worldview Allison and Heuer's experiences of thrumming could be interpreted as an awakening to the primal sounding of the world. Rice explains that:

In many traditional Aboriginal cultures everything that exists and is considered alive can be represented by primal sounds, and sound is more important than the name. These primal sounds exist in languages of the people and in the sounds emitted by the universe. Within these sounds is a power and energy that can be tapped by those who can access them.

Aboriginal languages are based on word meaning as well as word sounds which place one in relationship to different aspects of creation ... Hearing or speaking words and sounds introduces another way of hearing outside the physical realm that has far reaching implications in all aspects of daily and spiritual existence . . . sounds and songs are an entranceway to communicating with supernatural forces (Rice 20-21).

Thrumming, "a sound sort of like running water over rocks when you're camping by a river, *almost a melody or a singing*" (Heuer, Egan Lecture) that acted as a gateway to experiencing other realms, very much fits with Rice's definition of primal sound. Heuer and Allison only really became conscious of the herd's thrumming when they were completely immersed in its frenzied journeying during the post-calving aggregation,<sup>447</sup>

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<sup>447</sup> Immersion is the term Heuer used to describe "this cycle of activity, over and over, eating on-the-fly, drinking on the fly, camping in places where, no matter where you

when sleep deprivation and hunger contributed to their attaining a physical state where “the line between the waking world and the dream world, the line between being caribou and being human really started to blur for us” (Heuer, Egan Lecture). The lifeforce that Rice describes as pulsing outward through primal sound flooded Heuer and Allison’s senses. Heuer describes that what “pushed us mentally, and spiritually, to places we’d never gone,” allowing them to “listen in ways that we had never listened before” was bodily stresses “coupled with this incredible intensity of life, this lifeforce sweeping across the landscape with such power, and instinct, and rush” (Heuer, Egan Lecture).

This led to dreams, visions, and intuitions so vivid that

we learned to actually realize that we were starting to dream where the caribou were whenever we lost them. And that, almost like a sixth or seventh dimension of knowledge, or wisdom we were actually starting to access became more important than where we were physically seeing prints on the ground (Heuer, Egan Lecture).

Allison and Heuer’s senses had been awakened such that the landscape itself—and the rush or life it supported—permeated their beings. The distinctions between self and other, between different kinds of time and different realms of consciousness, became less significant, and the flow, exchange, and interpolation of their bodies with and by the ecosystem of which they were a part became increasingly vivid. When Allison and Heuer descended from the tundra and came upon a rub tree—a crucial signpost for animal

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pitched the tent, the smell of caribou urine would be the smell that came up as you drifted off to sleep, from the ground. Every mouthful of food that you’re eating has caribou hair in it, your sleeping bag is filled with caribou hair, and the immersion is complete” (Heuer, Egan Lecture).

communication which has “information from the last hour and maybe even from the last century of animals constantly rubbing up ” against it—for them “it may as well have been in neon, it was so clear to us that there had been so much activity there”(Allison qtd. in Lam). In the same way, when the duo returned to Old Crow, they were struck by a heightened kinetic awareness of the Gwich’in connection to the living landscape, telegraphed through the caribou antlers woven into fencepost, the smokehouses found behind nearly every home, and the talk of caribou eddying through the community (Heuer, Egan Lecture).

Two days after their return to Old Crow, Allison and Heuer gave a presentation at the community hall, without photos or film, just telling the story of their ‘raw’ experience, including the dreams, the thrumming, and the communication they had developed with the caribou. According to Heuer, some Gwich’in hunters were moved to tears. After the presentation, they explained that what had affected them so deeply was “partly the stories you’re telling, but more important it’s the way you’re telling it, the very way you’re stringing together your words, the rhythm of your sentences” (Heuer, Egan Lecture) which resonated with how their great-grandparents had spoken before they came off the land.<sup>448</sup> Heuer and Allison immediately realized “we are not creators of this story, the caribou were living this story, and the story itself was embedded in the land.”

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<sup>448</sup> In this context, it is likely that the hunters meant before their grandparents had moved to live full time in settled villages. Gwich’in, Han, and other northern First Nations people used to travel seasonally, following the cycles of fish and game. Some village sites, such as Moosehide (a kilometer downriver from Dawson City), were seasonal sites before they became permanent settlements, with people gradually settling full-time in response to government policies and other changes to their social and political landscapes.

Another way of arriving at a cosmology in which story emanates from the land flows from the precepts of primal sound. Rice (20) clarifies that

Henderson (1992) says every Indigenous language has sounds connected to the different realms that make up the cosmology. For example, to hear the Haida speak is to listen to the waves on the shore and the cry of the birds (Peat 1994) . . . Words derive energy and potency from the sounds that are embodied in the words.

This is why hearing or speaking words and sounds “introduces another way of hearing outside the physical realm” that resonates throughout physical and spiritual life. The soundings that Rice refers to are resonances beyond simple onomatopoeia. Most aboriginal languages in North America, including Gwich’in and Inuit, are polysynthetic,<sup>449</sup> meaning that basic units of utterance “come into being the moment that one joins both lexical and grammatical morphemes into a single word” that, in English would correspond to the equivalent of a complete clause or sentence (Neuhaus 3).

Neuhaus gives Jeannette Armstrong’s example of the Okanagan word for dog, *kekwep*, in which the first syllable translates as “happening upon a small (thing),” and the second as “sprouting profusely (as in fur),” producing “fur growing on a little living thing,” a clause that “highlights action and movement as well as connections” (2-3). Armstrong explains that “When you say the Okanagan word for dog, you don’t ‘see’ a dog image, you summon an *experience* of a little furred life, the exactness of which is known only by its interaction with you or something” (Armstrong qtd. in Neuhaus 3). The language itself

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<sup>449</sup> In contrast, English and other European languages are analytic, meaning that “all words consist of a single morpheme” (someone in Neuhaus 3)

calls into being a sensorial orientation and bodily schema, very much like the Gwich'in orientation I have described towards caribou, that foregrounds active co-creation and participation (through imagination, invoking the 'experience' of a little furred life) in a sentient, animate world.

Because of the ways that silences are built into polysynthetic grammars, resulting in a brevity of expression that requires a more active participation and co-creation on the part of a listener, a polysynthetic structure of language aligns with the kind of careful listening and watching characteristic of a traditional knowledge orientation.<sup>450</sup> A listener attunes to a speaker's cues and uses his or her imagination to, drawing on the speech act, re-create its experience/story. Neuheus points out that, in polysynthetic languages, the core unit of communication that she characterizes as a holophrase—which is basically a

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<sup>450</sup> The rhythms of sound and silence in certain forms of aboriginal speech also afford different patterns for accessing and processing trauma. Kidron (6-7) critiques the "logocentric paradigms of silence" in which "absence of voice is understood as signaling psychopathologized processes of avoidance and repression, socially suspect processes of personal secrecy, or collective processes of political subjugation . . . these logocentric readings have led to a neglect of the phenomenon of silence as a medium of expression, communication, and transmission of knowledge in its own right or as an alternative form of personal knowing . . . The field of psychology has framed silence as the failure of speech, as dysfunctional absence in need of therapeutic redemption through the restoration of voice". As Simpson has pointed out, psychological models have been deployed on an industrial scale within First Nations communities in ways that locate dysfunction with individual First Nations people rather than with the harms inflicted upon them by State actions and policies, or with the current state of State relationships with aboriginal people. Models of "therapeutic redemption" are highly suspect as a way of individualizing responsibility for social harm upon the victims while releasing abusers – for example, a First Nations person forgiving residential school abuse is a successful end result for a therapeutic model, independent of what justice a victim receives. Much can be gained from moving away from a default assumption of silence as pathology to explore the complexity with which rhythms of speech, sound (such as song and drum dancing), and silence play out in First Nations communities in pro-active response to historical trauma. Covarrubias, for example, argues that silence in Native American cultures is frequently generative, "culture-rich," and communicative.

concatenation of root syllables in which a verb is modified by the syllables attached to it that can include subject, object, or other units of meaning— is in and of itself a complete phrase or story (3–4). Having story built into language as a basic “unit” of expression, has profound implications for perception and thought.<sup>451</sup>

Neuhaus’ intellectual project is to trace how, despite the limitations English poses, indigenous writers have been able to indigenize the language, bringing Native language speech patterns, grammars, and constructions of thought into the architectures of their texts, and thus bringing important protocols and orientations derived from aboriginal languages into the possible and even probable interactions that readers will have with their English texts. Aboriginal languages remain the source/wellspring for these patterns of thought and interaction; however, it is possible to adapt English, and other languages, to the more sensorially open rhythms required to begin to perceive the world, in Rice’s terms “through Aboriginal eyes.”<sup>452</sup>

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<sup>451</sup> A classic reference for exploring the power of stories, and more specifically, place-stories, when they are a basic ‘unit of thinking’ expressed within, for example, the name of a location, is Keith Basso’s *Wisdom Sits in Places*. Basso argues that for the Western Apache, having their spirituality, moral codes, and historical relationship to particular places built into the vocabulary of everyday life creates a particular kind of rich cultural relationship/awareness in which the landscape offers an upwelling of co-presence of other Apache and other creatures through historical and distant time. He also offers specific examples of how place-names and their associated stories are used as a means of cultural instruction and encouraging reflection on appropriate behaviour. Cruikshank’s works, discussed earlier, also touch on these points with reference to Yukon First Nations. Much in-depth work on place-stories, language, and cosmology has been done with indigenous peoples of Australia.

<sup>452</sup> In the interest of brevity, I have excised a consideration of Canadian ecopoetics from this dissertation. However, poets like Don McKay and Jan Zwicky identify the project of ecopoetics as being to open up the ‘wild’ in language in ways that resonate with some of the ideas Neuhaus puts forward. For example, Zwicky’s line-by-line breakdown of the scaffolding of ancient Greek epic poetry (1995), which illustrates how the actual rhythms of the language help elaborate underlying Ancient Greek cosmologies, accomplishes

Just as the teeming life of the landscape arose as a groundswell that Heuer and Allison only gradually began to take note of as they travelled the landscape, so, too, Randall Tetlichi's stories began more and more to suffuse their conscious and unconscious awareness. Heuer describes that, while the Gwich'in stories were always present in their journey, as their senses opened and intuitive and mystic experiences became part of their everyday rhythm, it was as if "through the power of the landscape itself, the power of this herd itself, those two worldviews [the Gwich'in worldview and that of Heuer and Allison] had aligned." (Heuer, Egan Lecture). The life-altering realization which reverberated physically and psychically through the very core of their beings was, in essence, what Richard Nelson came to living among the Gwich'in's neighbours, the Koyukon:

nothing struck me more forcefully than the fact that [the Koyukon people] experience a different reality in the natural world. This can be viewed as belief, of course, but it also goes firmly beyond belief. For the Koyukon, there is a different existence in the forest, something fully actualized within their physical and emotional senses, yet entirely beyond those of outsiders.

. . . My clear and certain comprehension of the natural world was ended. Fundamental assumptions I had learned about the nature of nature were thrown into doubt . . . my Koyukon teachers had learned through their own traditions about dimensions in nature that I, as a Euro-American, had either not learned to perceive or had been explicitly taught do not exist (Nelson

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something similar to Neuhaus' interlinear translation and analysis of an excerpt of a Cree story (2011:226-7), which Neuhaus references in detail to discuss the functioning of holophrases in indigenous storytelling.



1983:239 qtd. in Nadasdy “The Gift in the Animal” 36-7).

Heuer and Allison emerged from their experiences on the tundra with a completely changed perception of the universe as teeming with life, vibrating with energies that resonate among all things, and reliant upon constant exchanges and flows between the permeable bonds/boundaries of bodies which feed the cycle of creation and life. This ‘story’, as Rice elaborates, is quite literally spoken by the sounds/vibrations of the land. In Gwich’in, Koyukon, and other cultures/cosmologies that are so attuned, people’s bodily schema—ranging from how they listen and see, to the ways they speak, to their actions and systems of thinking—have developed in relation to this reality.

The body politic has developed likewise. As a simple example, ‘seven generations’ are alive in Gwich’in political life in the very forms and protocols of everyday living (such as when ancestors are acknowledged in a prayer). In consulting with elders, who bring in knowledge from their own grandparents and great-grandparents—not simply in abstraction, but in the form of real stories of real people who are just as tangible in their personhood as those physically present—in forums where children are also playing in the room,<sup>453</sup> Gwich’in cultural practice brings the co-presence of seven generations into the actual practice of decision-making. This was the case not only for the 1988 gathering at Arctic Village, but was also the a basic form for how many Gwich’in communities such as Old Crow gathered to consult before negotiating land claims.

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<sup>453</sup> As was the case at the 1988 gathering at Arctic Village, but was also the a basic form for how Gwich’in communities have gathered to consult before negotiating land claims or making other similar major decisions.

Part of the long-term political project for northern First Nations, as evident in a large swathe of projects, policies, and practices,<sup>454</sup> is to try to adapt institutions of modern governance—both First Nations governments and, to the extent possible, co-management bodies and institutions/processes of the Canadian and American States—to be more receptive to and respectful of the liveliness/agency both of First Nations people themselves and of the more-than-human world. This requires, firstly, a “redistribution of the sensible” to open the political field to an awareness of the lifeforce of the more-than-human, and of complex ways that human and non-human relationships must be negotiated to keep lifecycles in balance.

### ***Being Caribou* as a Site of Transformational Change: Caribou Beings in the Redistribution of the Sensible**

Heuer describes that his and Allison’s experiences on the tundra and interactions afterwards with Gwich’in led him to “one of the most important moments in my life, to know that those stories and that way of being exist in the land and that can be the source of our wisdom, our knowledge, our way of being, the source of everything” (Heuer, Egan Lecture). Much of Allison and Heuer’s work, both with the Being Caribou project and after, has attempted to bring the knowledge they gained on the tundra into the ‘sensible’ of North American public culture. As part of doing so, as is further discussed in Chapter 9, Heuer and Allison’s storywork has gone on to explore ways in which such a sensual

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<sup>454</sup> Recent examples in northwestern North America include the development of Dechinta ‘bush’ university, whose courses are now accredited through the University of Alberta, and the adoption of the Teslin Tlingit Constitution as part of the Teslin Tlingit First Nation concluding a land claims and self-government agreement. The traditional clan structure, as well as other forms of indigenous legal orders, are incorporated into the Teslin Tlingit Council government.

awareness, and a different relationship to landscape and story, can connect to and arise organically out of experiences and cultural references that are part of mainstream North American awareness.<sup>455</sup>

Part of Allison and Heuer's labour has been at a perceptual level, bridging cross-culturally to open others out to the sensual awareness that gave rise to their extraordinary experiences with the caribou. Allison has described this as "a theme throughout in the work my husband and I have done. To take us out of the human-centered world and transport people into that animal world that is just so, so endlessly fascinating" (Allison qtd. in Lam). This transformational social change work supports the practical, day-to-day work—further discussed in the next chapter—of building institutions and relationships that can support not only the protection of the calving grounds but greater ecosystem connectivity and a better engineering of human infrastructure to take into account the needs of other creatures.

Just as the implications of human interconnection and exchange with the lifeworld can only be apprehended by spilling beyond the bounded body and into a flow of relationships, so too, to fully comprehend the work of stories, requires moving beyond an assumption of texts as self-contained cages of meaning.<sup>456</sup> Particularly in a new-media era, which has allowed for a return to a greater level of dialog in the co-construction of narrative that is always implicit between a text/teller and an audience, "story" must be

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<sup>455</sup> Heuer (Egan Lecture) discusses in detail how, in the course of writing *Being Caribou* he grappled with the revelations he had had on the tundra that were based on Gwich'in knowledge and which often contradicted his scientific training.

<sup>456</sup> As discussed in Chapter 7, there is a bias within ecocinematic studies towards textual analysis, with perhaps a very 'results-based' approach to audience studies that is reflective of the kinds of models of communication that were prevalent in early development theory.

considered in its flows and permeabilities/possibility for exchange with the trajectories of the individuals and communities with which it interpolates. The power of story *is* the power of connection; to the extent that the Being Caribou story moved people to take actions to protect the calving grounds, it did so because it built and reinforced connections between people and caribou; between people and common communities of concern; and between people and their lawmakers. This was not the work of the ‘texts’ of the Being Caribou project alone, but the work of whole communities: the plant, animal, human, and more-than human communities that interacted with Allison and Heuer, co-creating their journey; the northern communities who shaped Allison and Heuer’s understandings before, during, and after the expedition; and the communities of educators, social movement leaders, First Nations leadership, and others (including, most particularly, Canada’s National Film Board) who took up the Being Caribou story. This latter group not only created short-term public spaces of encounter, where the film acted as a catalyst for people joining networks and furthering their implication and commitment, but integrated the film and its narrative supports (teacher’s guides, action kits, etc.) into existing repositories (such as curriculum resource lists and libraries) and networks, creating the ongoing circuits of community and connection through which *Being Caribou* continues to make a contribution.

A key way that the Being Caribou texts—here I will focus the *Being Caribou* film—act as effective catalysts, sparking new (or rejuvenated or reinvented) relationships, is through a process of Métissage in which the ‘artifact’ of the caribou is interpreted in a new light, causing the viewer to question his or her fundamental assumptions and relationships. *Being Caribou* is first and foremost an intimate portrait of

two intertwined journeys, that of Allison and Heuer, and that of the migrating caribou whom they follow. With a minimum of contextualizing facts and argument, the focus of the film is a story, one told as a slow unfolding of cycles: the migration cycle of the caribou, the cycling of the seasons, the lifecycle unfolding as the caribou give birth, and cycles of deepening intimacy (complete with moments of challenge and irritation) as Heuer and Allison, become more tightly bound up with each other and with the migrating caribou.

Allison and Heuer come to a new way of seeing because of how they travel and the choices that they make. For example, while they draw on indigenous knowledge to do so, it is Allison's dream that the couple listens to in deciding when to set out on their journey. Their subsequent experiences of finding caribou by following dreams, which acted as 'verification' to many indigenous viewers of the validity of indigenous knowledge, served as a bridge for non-native viewers to at least consider the possibility that such knowledge indeed is at work/resonates with "the real". Most of how the film makes its point—that another relationship is possible that respects the caribou as social beings and as creatures attuned to the environment who make an incredible journey—is simply through showing the caribou reality, either directly as it affects the caribou, or indirectly as Allison and Heuer struggle with the bugs, heat, predators, river crossings, and other challenges of the migration. The occasional commentaries that Allison and Heuer make, in a form of direct address to the camera that echoes indigenous practices of speaking from the heart, offer a kind of 'education in emotion' in which Allison and Heuer come increasingly to identify with the caribou as beings, such as when Allison

softly narrates as the camera pans across a caribou calf being nudged to take his/her first steps by its mother, whose umbilical cord still dangles behind her.

As discussed in Chapter 6, much of the interest in *Being Caribou* on the part of Gwich'in and Inuvialuit audiences came because of the intimate footage of caribou life—on the calving grounds, being chased by wolves, or simply grazing undisturbed—that showed caribou up close, sometimes in ways to which Gwich'in and Inuvialuit didn't normally have access.<sup>457</sup> I was particularly struck by Gwich'in elder Robert Bruce saying that he keeps a copy of *Being Caribou* that he takes out from time to time to watch the newborn caribou calves, something that is “very, very unique” (Bruce). It seemed to me that, similar to how Dennis Allen described indigenous youth watching CBQM, Bruce was drawing on *Being Caribou* as a way of accessing ‘knowledge’ of the caribou — renewing a kind of intimate, emotive connection that Bruce had gained through careful watching, listening, and imagining of the particularities of the herd's everyday life.

The particular ways that *Being Caribou* unfolds its story offers up the possibility for the attentive listener/viewer to access an emotive connection to the lifeworld of the caribou. It is this very emotive connection, where caribou no longer seem something “out there,” but living creatures to which we have a relationship and a responsibility, that has

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<sup>457</sup> For example, as previously mentioned, Gwich'in don't see caribou on the calving grounds because they do not go there, as it is sacred. However, more broadly, I think there is simply an interest in all aspects of caribou life, including when caribou are crossing challenging terrain where it is not easy to follow them—for instance, there has been a great deal of talk about the BBC series *The Great Race* that aims to follow the herd in spring of 2015, augmenting previous methods of filming through the use of special drones (which are supposedly not too noisy/disruptive). The full project application (Project Number 2014-0168) and associated documentation was viewable on the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board (YESAB) website as of this writing: <http://www.yesab.ca/>.

acted as an entryway for caribou to become a part of the ‘sensible’ in the political field or ordinary North Americans, and that has encouraged many to embark upon their first step on Han’s “activist ladder” towards advocating for calving grounds protection.

## Chapter 9

### Bringing Caribou into Public Life

In numerous places, Heuer has described his amazement that, when they migrate, the caribou tow a whole ecosystem along:

there's a stream of life that's coming along with them, whether it's golden eagles or jaegers looking for calves to pick off—or the grizzly bears ambushing them in the willows along the rivers—or wolves and foxes trying to isolate individual animals as prey (Heuer qtd. in Esser 38).

Similarly, when Gwich'in people bring their 'caribou stories' into Western political life, these stories channel entire constellations of values and knowledge. As Borrows, Napoleon, and other indigenous legal scholars make clear, the encounters such storying practices produce are not ones between legislator and petitioner, but between two different kinds of legal orders.

The Being Caribou project is but part of much larger efforts, ongoing for generations, to rebalance the role that caribou play in public life and decision-making within and about northwestern North America. This final chapter aims to consider the project's long-term contribution to various trajectories which tow an 'ecosystem of caribou stories' into public life. It turns first to the media products of the Being Caribou expedition, and the ways in which these have been incorporated into the cultural canon. The *Being Caribou* books and film have over time increasingly entered in cultural repositories such as libraries, databases, and curricular resource listings. Equally importantly, networks of educators, outdoor enthusiasts, human rights and conservation activists, and others have selected and shared *Being Caribou* stories; through this



circulation, the stories continue to live and be articulated, or not, to issues of caribou conservation.

This twinning of connectivity with story is even more crucial in following the arc of Allison and Heuer's personal post-expedition trajectories. The couple has continued to go on journeys and tell stories of animal/human interrelationships and the power of landscape connectivity. While Allison and Heuer first broached these themes on the Yellowstone To Yukon (Y2Y) journey, since their life-changing travels on the tundra, they have integrated deeper insights into the interconnections of the life-world, as anchored in place/landscape, into their pursuits. Allison in particular has pushed creative boundaries in producing film and multi-media work that senses the life-worlds of animals in transformative ways. Concomitantly, she and Heuer have worked to build the networks and on-the-ground connections such as wildlife corridors that promote ecosystem connectivity and keep animal populations healthy. As President of the Y2Y Conservation Initiative in 2013 and 2014, Heuer has played a major role in supporting translocal networks animated by the Y2Y vision, ensuring that expertise, inspiration, and financing flow throughout the Y2Y region in support of specific on-the-ground work that improves ecosystem connectivity in the Y2Y corridor. Whether through encouraging highway overpasses or telling stories of journey and encounter—Heuer plans to re-hike the entire Y2Y route beginning in summer 2015—Allison and Heuer have continued to create bridges for animals to co-exist in the human 'sensible.'

As discussed in Chapter 7, such bridging is an important element of ongoing processes that re-center caribou stories in the forms of ecosystem governance at work in the north. Earlier this dissertation explored how certain institutions that developed under

land claim and self-government agreements, such as the Porcupine Caribou Management Board (PCMB), have drawn upon the traditional knowledge and indigenous legal orders of northern ‘caribou peoples’ to improve caribou governance and ensure the Porcupine caribou herd’s survival. However, in an increasingly interconnected world, in which ecosystem governance cannot be the work of one jurisdiction alone, more than local northern governance must be reworked. Effective caribou governance requires the participation of ‘southern’ state, territorial, and nation-state governance. Both northern civil society movements and northern First Nations have been working for decades to modify the forms of all relevant political processes such that the intertwined stories of caribou and people can fully participate in governance.

In closing, the chapter situates the Being Caribou project within civil society mobilizations in northern Canada that have played and are playing an important role in shifting the political consensus that subtends northern governance.<sup>458</sup> In drawing an arc of caribou governance from the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry to the December 2014 Peel Decision,<sup>459</sup> this section addresses the cross-cultural play at work in how State and First Nations actors interpret land claims and self-government agreements. Storytelling and movement building play a crucial part in bringing indigenous legal orders into the public sphere. In the case of the summer and wintering grounds of the Porcupine caribou, First Nations and the conservation community in Yukon and the Northwest Territories have shared stories about the Peel watershed in order to build civil society support and

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<sup>458</sup> I am focused here at the regional level, but particularly as First Nations and Inuit continue to strengthen their collaboration across borders, changes to governance in northern Canada have implications for Alaska and other northern jurisdictions.

<sup>459</sup> This decision is under appeal. However, as of this writing the judgment stands.

consensus on the Peel Watershed Regional Land Use Plan.<sup>460</sup> As one of the more sustained and wide-reaching efforts to bring caribou stories into civil society, the Being Caribou project was a valuable antecedent to mobilizations about the Peel. It acted as part of a broader process in which northern peoples have gained confidence in asserting their ambitions and vision in ways that effectively counter narrow Canadian and Territorial government interpretations of their democratic and treaty obligations to consider caribou in their decision making.

### **Tactical Trajectories I: *Being Caribou* within the Cultural Cannon**

Since the 2004-6 period, when hundreds of thousands of people were exposed to the Being Caribou project through TV, film, radio, books, newsletters, community meetings, house parties, and mentions in a wide range of networks (churches; schools; professional associations; indigenous alliances; etc.), the large-scale distribution of Being Caribou media products has gradually tailed off, in a pattern punctuated by distribution "spikes" following the various releases and re-releases of *Being Caribou* and Being Caribou associated media products. However, the film and books have an enduring presence in the public sphere, becoming embedded in various popular culture institutions and networks, and remaining especially valued as an educational resource used from K-12 and at the community college and university level.

As discussed in the opening section of Chapter 7, the staggered release of a series of multimedia artifacts — which is increasingly becoming the new norm in mainstream

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<sup>460</sup> They have been supporting the version of the plan recommended by the Peel Watershed Planning Commission following a multi-year stakeholder consultation process.

film distribution — helps bolster the long-term circulation and viewership of film and multimedia projects. This was certainly the case with *Being Caribou*.<sup>461</sup> The film received several viewership "bumps" as it was licensed to American specialty cable channels FREE SPEECH TV, the Documentary Channel and Link Media, and to distributors Mill Creek Entertainment (for home video, beginning in 2007) and Bullfrog Films (US educational and institutional sales rights as of Feb 2006).<sup>462</sup> The 2007 release of *Being Caribou* in paperback also increased the Being Caribou project's profile, with major newspapers including the *Washington Post* and *Los Angeles Times* reviewing the book, and the *Toronto Star* listing it as a top science book of 2007.<sup>463</sup>

Allison and Heuer's journey has continued to be featured occasionally in major media. In May of 2008 a short clip from *Being Caribou* was highlighted on *Good Morning America* as part of a segment on the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge as one of the "7 Wonders of America". The Being Caribou story, supplemented by interview clips of Allison and Heuer, was included in the 2012 IMAX film *To the Arctic 3D*.<sup>464</sup> This

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<sup>461</sup> In my conversation with her, Jane Gutteridge described seeing these 'bump' effects at the National Film Board, and that it was anticipated that *Being Caribou* would have a resurgence in popularity with the release of *Finding Farley*.

<sup>462</sup> These licensing agreements were laid out by NFB Community Marketing Manager Jane Gutteridge (pers. comm, April 4, 2008). The 'bumps' occurred when the film was shown on these channels, and also when *Being Caribou* was released in the United States as part of the Reel Indies DVD series that was made "available in major mass marketers, bookstores, and electronics retailers nationwide" (Wells). The release of the Being Caribou DVD led to a new publicity bump as the DVD was reviewed by online and print publications. See for example Scott and Williams.

<sup>463</sup> The reviewer noted that he had missed the book when it was released in hardcover in 2006 (Calamai).

<sup>464</sup> In 2009, Heuer and Allison spent 11 days in Alaska with the film crew, recreating scenes from the trip. See <http://web.archive.org/web/20110917214227/http://www.beingcaribou.com/necessaryjourneys/news/09sept.html#ff>.

film, narrated by Meryl Streep and directed by two-time Oscar nominee Greg MacGillivray,<sup>465</sup> was amply reviewed in the popular press and became the 18<sup>th</sup> top grossing film in Canadian and US theatres in its opening weekend (“*Think Like a Man*”). Perhaps most important to maintaining *Being Caribou*’s long term visibility in popular culture, the National Film Board (NFB) has continued to promote the film as well as Leanne Allison’s later films *Finding Farley* and *Bear 71*.<sup>466</sup> *Being Caribou* is included in NFB curated lists—for example, it is featured in Films for Change, a program developed in partnership with LEARN QUEBEC and the McGill University Centre for Educational Leadership, that was highlighted on the Canadian school portal for the Vancouver 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games—and continues to be a primary NFB resource (complete with teacher’s guide) to support the integration of NFB environmental documentaries into secondary school education.<sup>467</sup> *Being Caribou* is also periodically promoted by the NFB within its community programming. For example, it was one of three films featured on the NFB Blog for Earth Day in 2009 (Matlin). The NFB has further increased access to the film by releasing a version with French subtitles.<sup>468</sup>

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<sup>465</sup> MacGillivray also had extensive experience producing and directing in the IMAX format. See Page.

<sup>466</sup> In my conversation with her, NFB Community Marketing Manager Jane Gutteridge described that in her experience new related product releases, created a bump of interest in viewing and purchasing a filmmaker’s previous work. She anticipated that *Being Caribou* would have a resurgence in popularity with the release of *Finding Farley*.

<sup>467</sup> See <https://www.nfb.ca/playlists/films-change/> for more detail on the Films for Change program.

<sup>468</sup> See

<http://web.archive.org/web/20110917214227/http://www.beingcaribou.com/necessaryjourneys/news/09sept.html#ff>. This release has resulted in *Being Caribou* also being included in curricular resource lists in French Canada. *Les films comme outils pédagogiques secondaire* is one example.

Since January of 2009 *Being Caribou* has been freely accessible via streaming from the NFB site in Canada, and since 2010 via the NFB YouTube channel.<sup>469</sup> These two access points alone have resulted in over 95 600 views up to mid-October 2014.<sup>470</sup> While it is difficult to get an overall picture of *Being Caribou*'s digital distribution,<sup>471</sup> the film clearly continues to circulate. For example, *Being Caribou* was the fourth most viewed of 228 documentary titles available through Rogers On Demand Online's (RODO) video streaming service during the June 2010 to March 2011 period for which RODO made its data available (Glassman, 2011: 36). While *Being Caribou* is no longer among the upper echelon of the NFB's top selling films, its direct sales remain impressive, especially given that US sales have been licensed to other distributors:<sup>472</sup> a total of 12 066 copies in the USA and 6665 in Canada (Ohayon).

*Being Caribou* continues to have a presence in the public sphere: the film is a popular selection for Earth Day celebrations, conservation film festivals, and other

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<sup>469</sup> The NFB began its online streaming on January 21, 2009. See Forsythe.

<sup>470</sup> These figures come from Albert Ohayon, Collection Curator, Accessibility and Digital Enterprises, NFB. The film was also downloaded 105 times up until mid-October 2014. *Being Caribou* actually had significantly more YouTube views (I recollect around 90 000 by 2008), however after distribution rights were sold in the US access had to be restricted. I have been unable to get the original viewing figures from YouTube.

<sup>471</sup> See the Documentary Organization of Canada's 2011 Digital Distribution Report (Glassman 8-10). With current systems it is very difficult to get an accurate picture of digital distribution of a given multimedia asset, as data is not centralized but kept by different distributors, and often considered proprietary. An additional factor, not highlighted in the report, is that much digital distribution is not in fact by authorized distributors; I have found many examples of individuals uploading *Being Caribou* for streaming on services where this violates copyright.

<sup>472</sup> As noted earlier these are BullFrog Films and Milk Creek Entertainment. Since 2006, Bullfrog Films, which does primary educational/institutional sales to colleges, universities and libraries, has sold or rented sixty-one copies of the film; figures from Mill Creek Entertainment, which mass marketed the film commercially, are unavailable.

community events,<sup>473</sup> and is also occasionally broadcast on television<sup>474</sup>. The book is regularly written up by bloggers and chosen as a selection by book clubs,<sup>475</sup> with the paperback having gone into reprint in both Canada and the U.S.<sup>476</sup> In 2014, *Terra Informa*, a syndicated community radio environmental program broadcast in over 50 communities, made the book its first Summer Reading book club selection.<sup>477</sup>

Within the conservation community, the film endures as a valued resource. John Demos, who began working for the Alaska Wilderness League as field staff for the Northeast Region in 2007, estimates that during his tenure AWL has given away thousands of copies of the film “because it was such an important learning tool”, that powerfully communicates “respect and a really ancient feeling of protection for the land” (Demos). Local chapters of the Sierra Club and other conservation organizations continue to use *Being Caribou* in the context of the Arctic Refuge campaign<sup>478</sup> but also as an

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<sup>473</sup> For example, the film was included in at least seven environmental film festivals (including three for Earth Day) in 2007. More recently, *Being Caribou* was featured as a free public screening, at the Yukon Arts Centre on Friday October 24<sup>th</sup>, 2014, for the 3-day Yukon Film Society Kitchen Party Film Festival, which celebrated thirty years of the Society by highlighting favorite films from each decade of the Society’s existence.

<sup>474</sup> For example, it was shown on the Documentary Channel at 3pm EST on December 11<sup>th</sup>, 2013. See [http://www.tvhebdo.com/horaire-tele/emission/being-caribou/224318/diffusion\\_id/137188568](http://www.tvhebdo.com/horaire-tele/emission/being-caribou/224318/diffusion_id/137188568).

<sup>475</sup> For example, see Vose and VB Reads.

<sup>476</sup> Allison noted the reprints in a 2011 update to the News section of the Necessary Journeys website. See <http://web.archive.org/web/20110917214227/http://www.beingcaribou.com/necessaryjourneys/news/09sept.html#ff>.

<sup>477</sup> Part of a program was devoted to a discussion of the book, and additionally listeners were invited to join the conversation via email, Facebook, and twitter. See <http://terrainforma.ca/2014/06/30/book-club-we-read-being-caribou/>.

<sup>478</sup> For example, the Boise, Idaho Sierra Club chapter showed the film on April 1 of 2014. See <http://www.meetup.com/Idaho-Sierra-Club/events/172230912/>.

educational tool for boreal forest campaigns and campaigns for woodland caribou protection.<sup>479</sup>

The uptake of the Being Caribou stories has been especially strong in schooling and public education contexts. In addition to the *Being Caribou* film and book, the final major media product of the Being Caribou expedition was a children's book, *Being Caribou*, specifically geared towards educational use by young adults.<sup>480</sup> Released in 2007 in the USA by Walker & Co and distributed by Raincoast Books in Canada, the coffee-table style book's brief chapters were highlighted by sixty photographs, and supplemented by an index, a list of extra resources, and a "How You Can Help" section (D. Davidson, "Travelling"). Upon its release, the book sparked a new wave of interest in all Being Caribou materials, as many parents and educators connected the children's book with the book, film, and website. Publicity for the book's launch also dovetailed with the release of the adult *Being Caribou* paperback.

The *Being Caribou* children's book was reviewed in newspapers, magazines, and trade journals including *Kirkus Reviews* and *Booklist* (the Journal of the American Library Association), and highlighted in children's magazine's such as *Boy's Life*. It was

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<sup>479</sup> In Canada, woodland caribou are an endangered species largely because of human activity—including logging, oil and gas drilling, and snow machine recreation—within their habitat. Anita Willis's 2008 *British Columbia Magazine* editorial "What To Do About the Caribou?" offers a good example of how the Being Caribou project is invoked to spark discussion about the fate of woodland caribou. See <http://bcmag.ca/explore-more/what-to-do-about-the-caribou->. An example of a Canadian Geographic magazine lesson plan for teachers on woodland Caribou and the boreal forest that incorporates *Being Caribou* is viewable at <http://www.canadiangeographic.ca/boreal/map/?path=english/learning-resources/the-woodland-caribou>.

<sup>480</sup> The various listings and reviews generally rated the book as a middle to high school reading level of no less than 10-12 years old.



selected in the Life Sciences category by the National Science Teachers Association (NSTA) and the Children's Book Council (CBC) in the Outstanding Science Trade Books For Students K-12 2008 competition (Texley), and listed in the Environment/Energy/Ecology category in the 2008 Notable Social Studies Trade Books for Young People, which was printed as a supplement to *Social Education*, the official journal of the National Council for the Social Studies ("Notable"). Both of these listings were the result of nation-wide reviews by American teachers and the Children's Book Council, and were specifically created and organized so that K-12 level teachers could integrate the book into existing teaching units. *Science* magazine, the academic journal of the American Association for the Advancement of Science,<sup>481</sup> also included *Being Caribou* as one of only four recommendations for "middle grades science books" in its compilation of science books for young readers (Jasny et al.)<sup>482</sup> These listings, appearing within respected resources widely used by educators, undoubtedly helped ensure that the *Being Caribou* books and film were ordered by school libraries and promoted by educators in newsletters and in their programming for parents, students, and teachers—a first step in *Being Caribou* entering into circulation as a "go-to" educational resource.<sup>483</sup> Since 2007, *Being Caribou* materials have been included in more permanent curricular

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<sup>481</sup> The journal is widely cited, with one of the highest 'impact factors' of any scientific journal, and is widely read. See <http://web.archive.org/web/20121119073850/http://www.sciencemag.org/site/marketing/info/>.

<sup>482</sup> This list was comprised of books shortlisted for the 2008 *Science* prizes for excellence in science books.

<sup>483</sup> For example, the Summer 2007 issue of the Okanagan College's *The Deakin Newsletter of Children's Literature* promoted *Being Caribou* in its children's book reviews as did the June 22, 2007 issue of *CM: Canadian Review of Materials*. See Deakin as well as Richardson.

resource databases, such as the Resources for Rethinking database, where it is incorporated in a Boreal Forest lesson plan series developed to be compatible with pan-Canadian 6-12 curriculum,<sup>484</sup> and the “Indigenizing the Curriculum” appendix of films and books published by Community Based Aboriginal Curriculums Initiative.<sup>485</sup>

The children’s book— along with other versions of the Being Caribou story — also received a boost because of the 2007 – 2009 International Polar Year (IPY), a sixty-country, 1.2-billion dollar program of research into the health of polar and subarctic regions (“Polar Year”). The IPY had a heavy emphasis on public and youth outreach, as well as on using polar science to address the challenges facing the arctic region. Heuer opened the Canadian IPY affiliated Polar Perspective speaker series by presenting the multi-media talk “Five Months on Foot with an Arctic Caribou Herd” at the Canadian Museum of Nature in Ottawa in April of 2008 (Canadian Museum of Nature). Heuer also gave Polar Perspectives presentations in Drumheller and Whitehorse. As a major outreach initiative of the IPY in Canada, the series travelled to every Canadian province and territory between April of 2008 and October of 2009, hosting large public lecture evening events followed by all day Youth Forums for secondary students. These forums were highly interactive, and geared towards educating high school students by exposing

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<sup>484</sup> See <http://resources4rethinking.ca/en/resource/canadas-forests-the-boreal-forest-a-global-legacy>. Resources for Rethinking is a project of Learning for a Sustainable Future (LSF), a Canadian non-profit formed in 1991. See [http://www.lsf-lst.ca/media/LSF\\_Power\\_Point\\_Presentation.pdf](http://www.lsf-lst.ca/media/LSF_Power_Point_Presentation.pdf) for an overview of LSF’s work up to 2013.

<sup>485</sup> The Initiative now exists mainly as an archival website, but was an active collaborative project from 2004-2012. See <http://www.aboriginalcurriculum.ca/>.

them to current polar science, polar issues, and northern peoples and decision makers.<sup>486</sup>

The Being Caribou story acted as a conversation starter to open engagement within a community of interested and active youth, scientists, policy makers, and educators.

At a grassroots level, many educators and students were introduced to *Being Caribou* as both a ‘teachable moment’ and a resource that could help connect curriculum to the IPY and to real-world issues facing polar regions. Concomitantly, through word of mouth and Polar Perspectives publicity, the Being Caribou story circulated through the high level networks of IPY, which included not only series organizers Students on Ice and the Alliance of Natural History Museums of Canada, but international youth organizations,<sup>487</sup> professional networks of government and university affiliated scientists and social scientists, First Nations and Inuit organizations, learned societies such as the Royal Canadian Geographic Society, and specialty magazines as well as general media.<sup>488</sup> This positioning both reinforced Being Caribou’s existing relationships (for example, Heuer had become a Fellow of the Royal Canadian Geographic Society in 2007

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<sup>486</sup> Many of the individual forums had northern participation and live dialog via videoconferencing links. These details were available via the Polar Outreach Catalogue on the Association of Polar Early Career Scientists (APECS) website. The Catalogue is in the process of being moved and will reappear on the website in 2015.

<sup>487</sup> In Canada, a number of students and science educators, and their associated organizations became extremely implicated in the IPY, including at the organizational level. For example, the IPY Youth Steering Committee was dynamic and dedicated enough to spawn the creation of the Association of Polar Early Career Scientists (APECS), which as of 2012 had 3300 members in 73 countries. See Cheek for more information on APECS as an IPY legacy. See Provencher et al. for a more general evaluation and survey of IPY outreach.

<sup>488</sup> See “Polar Perspectives”. The series was additionally supported by the Government of Canada’s International Polar Year Program, the Walter & Duncan Gordon Foundation, the Alliance of Natural History Museums of Canada, Students on Ice, the Royal Canadian Geographical Society, Canadian Geographic Magazine, the National Inuit Youth Council and the Canadian IPY Youth Steering Committee.

(Rosano)) and built new ones. For example, in 2011 Heuer, Allison, and their son Zev accepted an invitation to be expedition field staff on a Students on Ice two week ship- and- land-based arctic expedition.<sup>489</sup> Overall, the Polar Perspectives series and other IPY educational efforts raised the profile not only of the children's book but also of all Being Caribou media products that could be used in polar education.<sup>490</sup>

Even as they have moved on to new projects, Heuer and Allison have continued to support *Being Caribou* as an educational/curricular resource through their occasional involvement with student-gearred activities (such as Students on Ice) and conferences.<sup>491</sup> While *Being Caribou* is used in teaching throughout North America,<sup>492</sup> especially at the community college and university level its uptake into the curriculum has been most prominent in the north and west. For example, *Being Caribou* has been included as recommended reading<sup>493</sup> for outdoor leadership courses in Yukon and Oregon, and the film and book have been assigned materials for undergraduate and graduate level humanities courses at the University of Calgary and Emily Carr University of Art and

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<sup>489</sup> Such expeditions form the core activity of Students on Ice. See <http://studentsonice.com/arctic2011/index.html> for more information on the 2011 expedition and its objectives.

<sup>490</sup> As another example of *Being Caribou* riding on the coattails of IPY promotion, the *Being Caribou* children's book was included in an article in the January 1 2008 issue of the School Library Journal which featured books and films that educators could use to teach about the polar regions and the polar year (Wysocki).

<sup>491</sup> For example, Heuer not only gave an evening public presentation, but also attended daytime sessions at the Community Caretakers Conference in Powell River on February 1, 2010. This conference was primarily geared to elementary school students ("Community Caretakers").

<sup>492</sup> Simply by doing an internet search, one can find examples of student blog assignments reflecting on the film or book, and of high school teachers including the film or book in their course outlines. I have kept a listing of various curricular uses of *Being Caribou* but not included it for reasons of brevity.

<sup>493</sup> The courses in question, being experiential outdoor education, tended to have recommended rather than required readings.

Design in Vancouver.<sup>494</sup> The northern and western regions of North America—where the *Being Caribou* story took place, and where Allison and Heuer have resided for most of the past decade<sup>495</sup>—are also where *Being Caribou* media coverage was most prominent, and where Heuer and occasionally Allison have most frequently given public lectures and professional association and conference keynote talks. Much as was the case with the *Being Caribou* film’s use in community organizing in the 2004-6 period, successful uptake of the *Being Caribou* story as an educational tool has depended upon the story taking root in communities of practice. Organizational/institutional support (such as including *Being Caribou* in sample curricula and curriculum resource lists and in newsletter articles) is important to this process, but relationship-building—which depends on the “human touch” cultivated through repeated circulation/connection of *Being Caribou* to particular community contexts—is equally crucial.

In western Canada, Heuer and Allison were personally able to build academic connections to the *Being Caribou* story through their prominent billing at two major academic conferences, the 2009 Association for the Study of Literature and Environment Conference in Victoria, BC, and the 2012 Under Western Skies Conference in Calgary. These events not only brought the *Being Caribou* expedition to more college and university educators’ attention, but also helped carve out a space for *Being Caribou* to be taken up formally by the academy as a subject of interest/study<sup>496</sup>. Experiencing Heuer and Allison’s presentations, as well as interacting with them and with other academics

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<sup>494</sup> My listing of curricular uses of *Being Caribou* includes various of these syllabi, and where and when the relevant courses were taught.

<sup>495</sup> Allison and Heuer have lived largely in Canmore, AB, though also in Dunster, BC.

<sup>496</sup> Since 2009, as well as the academic papers mentioned earlier, numerous presentations highlighting *Being Caribou* have been made at North American academic conferences.

curious about or vested in the Being Caribou story, sparked many academics to take up *Being Caribou* in their research and/or teaching<sup>497</sup>. Regionally, the higher profile of Heuer and Allison's post-Being Caribou initiatives (discussed later in this chapter) in their "home" area,<sup>498</sup> supported by stronger relationships with local media, professional networks, and educators, has likely helped ensure that Being Caribou project materials are noticed and taken up by more educators in western Canada.<sup>499</sup>

More and more, however, the relationships that bring educators to the Being Caribou materials have less to do with Heuer and Allison and more to do with other connections educators make to the Being Caribou trajectory. The 2012 One Campus, One Book (OCOB) event is a case in point. OCOB was a program devised by the University of Alaska Southeast (UAS) in 2010 as a community building and student retention initiative for a campus "where the student body is approximately a third Alaska Native, majority first-generation college students, and a third (sic) many single, working mothers", and where students had expressed a desire for more "community, communication, and compassion" on campus (Ray). OCOB programmer Sarah J Ray describes how *Being Caribou* was chosen as the 2012 selection "because an increasing number of UAS students, especially indigenous students, are coming from 'the North'. A

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<sup>497</sup> The three people I know personally who have published academic papers on *Being Caribou* each attended at least one of these two conferences. Sarah J. Ray, who was in charge of organizing the One Campus, One Book event discussed later in this section, specifically mentions her impressions from the ASLE talk as factoring into the decision to choose *Being Caribou* as the 2012 One Campus, One Book selection (Ray).

<sup>498</sup> Both because projects such as Y2Y, Bear 71 and the Highway Wilding film are more regionally relevant, and because local networks (media, social media, and professional networks) circulate more information more often about Allison and Heuer's activities.

<sup>499</sup> While Heuer's Y2Y work is transboundary, Allison's NFB films have been far more heavily marketed and circulated in western Canada than in the American West.

book about caribou seemed a great way to initiate conversations about people whose lives are entwined with that animal.” Additionally, the paperback was readable and affordable, the subject matter was cross-disciplinary and topical enough to bring the community out to a campus event, and the variety of different Being Caribou expedition outputs offered the possibility of having a “diverse” media focus for professors bringing *Being Caribou* into the classroom.

While Heuer and Allison spoke at UAS, and their Friday night presentation was an important draw and focus point for OCOB, the organizing committee strove to go beyond the “white environmentalist-adventurer speaking for others trope” (Ray), inviting Randall Tetlichí for a week-long elder-in-residency that included not only a public lecture one week before Heuer and Allison’s, but also meetings with local elders, and Tetlichí being available all week to students at UAS’s Native and Rural Student Resource Center. Ray felt that bringing Tetlichí, who has not read *Being Caribou*, was crucial to avoiding a reproduction of the “colonial habit” of privileging written texts and to showing “a different way of knowing, a different way of thinking about caribou and drilling, a different way of thinking about his purpose in coming” (Ray). This emphasis on honouring aboriginal oral histories had been carried forward from the first OCOB selections, Cherokee author Thomas King’s *The Truth About Stories* (a book originally given as a series of lectures/stories), and David Isay’s *To Listen is to Love*, which was chosen to tie into the UAS listening project, a campus effort to record and make available the oral histories/stories of campus community members. Ray received feedback that for many Alaskan Natives within the campus community, Tetlichí’s “visit, stories, and

presence ... provided a sense of deep, historical, destined connection” (Ray); most of the post-lecture questions were asked in Native languages.

Returning to Chapter 8’s discussion of transformational education, one can describe UAS educators as having used *Being Caribou* as an anchoring story for engaging in an exercise in Indigenous Métissage. The ‘artifact’ of caribou became an entryway for students from northern Alaska to bring their experiences to bear within the campus community. Ray credits OCOB 2012’s resounding success—a record eleven professors taught *Being Caribou* in association with the program, and the public events were all standing room only—to its “multiple perspectives” approach. *Being Caribou* became a tool to bridge different trajectories/experiences and deepen relationships through dialogue in which caribou provided a common point of encounter. A great deal of the effectiveness of OCOB came because of the organizers’ careful attention to relationship and community building, and their strategic support and positioning of Being Caribou events in ways that supported the larger goals of OCOB to “foster a page-turning togetherness,” value interdisciplinarity and experiences inside and outside the classroom, and—similar to *Being Caribou*’s use in a community organizing context in 2004-5—grow campus community investment and engagement by fostering “student, staff and community participation and identification as contributing members of an intellectual community” (“One Campus, One Book”).

As a set of stories/media resources, the Being Caribou expedition continues to offer powerful possibilities for people to connect to caribou, the caribou people, and the Arctic Refuge, in a new way. However, over time, realizing those possibilities has become less the work of Necessary Journeys (the umbrella under which Heuer and



Allison group their expedition, writing, public speaking, and film work), and more dependent on how institutions, networks, and communities of practice have taken up and continue to draw on the *Being Caribou* story. Through repeated circulation, numerous recognition and awards, and appearance within academic discourse and curated lists of educational resources, *Being Caribou* has entered the cultural canon of educational films and books.<sup>500</sup> How actively it remains a part of that canon will depend on whether and how *Being Caribou*'s story/trajectory continues to be able to speak to people even as environmental and geopolitical conditions in the Arctic are rapidly changing.

## **Tactical Trajectories II: the Personal and the Political**

Both Allison and Heuer have repeatedly expressed —both immediately upon return from their *Being Caribou* journey, and up into the present day—that their journey deeply and permanently changed them. In a 2012 interview, Allison described that

That trip, for five months, following caribou in the wild, just the two of us, definitely changed everything and set the stage for all the work we've done since, including taking our son on a five-month journey across the country to meet Farley Mowat<sup>501</sup> (Allison, "Interview by Boulder Pavement").

Allison went on to specifically mention her two then most recent projects, *Bear 71* and *Highway Wilding*, as also flowing from *Being Caribou*. In a very practical sense, Allison

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<sup>500</sup> This is more true in Canada than in the USA, at least partly the film—the most widely circulated project component—is distributed in Canada by the NFB, which continues both to market the film and to make it freely available via online streaming.

<sup>501</sup> This interview was a podcast hyperlinked to Issue 8 of Boulder Pavement, an online magazine out of the Banff Centre for the Arts. The magazine is offline but the podcast interview is still accessible via soundcloud.

and Heuer's trajectories since 2005 have built on access to funding, institutions, and individuals arising from their *Being Caribou* work. As just one example, Allison attributes her ability to make *Bear 71* —a relatively expensive undertaking in publicly funded interactive media<sup>502</sup> — to *Being Caribou*, because the film led to her relationship with the head of NFB's digital programming, who backed the project. At the same time, Allison believes that without her *Being Caribou* experience, she would not have been able to conceive of *Bear 71*, as she would not have perceived the story told by millions of trailcam images of a bear's territorial migrations (Allison, "Where *Bear 71* Came From").

As Allison and Heuer's projects have converged on animal connectivity and relationships, their own connectivity has continued to grow. They and their work have repeatedly circulated within networks of conservationists, outdoor and environmental writers, filmmakers and funders, and various land use and natural resource management professionals. More and more, their work is having real effects in fostering changes to attitudes and infrastructure, resulting in better co-habitations between humans and animals.

Formally and informally, since the *Being Caribou* expedition, Allison and Heuer have continued to work as "a husband-and-wife storytelling and adventure team who work on pressing conservation issues in compelling and creative ways" ("Who We Are"). Heuer has described how, as he and Allison sorted through the meaning of their experience on the tundra, and particularly its connections to ancient human wisdom, he felt the need to locate such wisdom within his own cultural referents:

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<sup>502</sup> The budget was \$ 350 000 Cdn ("The Making of *Bear 71*").

The best elder I could think of was Farley Mowat, this guy whose work had influenced and shaped me, whose values and storytelling skill really fulfilled all those elements of what an elder is in a culture (Heuer, Egan Lecture).

In 2007, along with their son Zev, then two and a half, the family set out to travel by canoe, sailboat and other human powered means across Canada to meet Farley Mowat, stopping along the way at landscapes important to his canon:

Sure enough we found his stories intact and still connected to the landscapes in which they were written, making us wonder whether we really write these stories, or whether they've been there all along and "release" themselves to those who take the time to notice them (Allison, "Where *Bear 71* Came From").

Allison made an award-winning film based on the journey, while Heuer wrote a feature magazine article. Both Heuer and Allison posted dispatches during and after the trip.<sup>503</sup> Similar to *Being Caribou*, the NFB produced and marketed *Finding Farley*, successfully entering it in film festivals and distributing the film through its community screening program.

Since 2007, Allison and Heuer have undertaken only shorter travels, such as a summer 2011 trip (again with Zev) as part of the Students on Ice<sup>504</sup> expedition staff

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<sup>503</sup> The film won the Grand Prize and People's Choice awards at the Banff Mountain Film Festival, among other accolades. Heuer's feature article "Following Farley" appeared in the July/August 2008 issue of *Canadian Geographic*. His book on the experience was originally due to be released in 2013 but as yet is not in print (Rosano).

<sup>504</sup> This organization had organized the Polar Perspectives lectures, but its main mandate is to inspire youth to connect to the natural world, come to a better cross-cultural

accompanying roughly seventy-five high school students on a ship and land based journey to Iceland, Greenland, Labrador and Nunavik. However, they have continued their educational outreach work, giving dozens of public lectures and in other ways—from blog posts to being present at student and community conferences,<sup>505</sup> to appearing in films, to doing volunteer work in the conservation community<sup>506</sup>—encouraging people to connect with the outdoors and become engaged in wildlife issues. In public presentations and writing as an MEC Ambassador, Allison has focused largely on outdoor activity and its relationship to family, growth, and developing a sense of community and belonging.<sup>507</sup>

Since about 2008, Allison and Heuer began to focus much of their work closer to home in Canmore, Alberta. Working as a warden and resource conservation specialist in

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understanding of northern issues, and become empowered and committed to addressing Arctic challenges through taking part in educational expeditions to the Arctic and Antarctic.

<sup>505</sup> In other words, not just giving lectures and leaving, but connecting with people at a conference and going on associated field trips or participating in other programming, particularly at student conferences.

<sup>506</sup> This work has ranged from judging an outdoor photo context (Allison) to reviewing scientific and policy papers on wildlife corridors in the southern Alberta/BC section of the Rockies (Heuer) and acting as an advisor to endurance adventurer Andrew Skurka on his 2010 7 month ski/trek/packraft adventure in Alaska. In addition to their more conventional media work, Heuer has appeared in educational videos such as Ross Burnet's children's film *Kids Room to Roam: People, Problems, and Natural Spaces*.

<sup>507</sup> Heuer is also an MEC Ambassador. This topic has gained Allison and Heuer quite a following with outdoor adventure enthusiasts who are also parents. For example, Allison and Heuer were the first interviewees for Meghan J. Ward's Adventures in Parenthood Project (with the tagline: exploring the transition of outdoor adventurers to parenthood). See Ward. Allison also gave the guest lecture "Growing up with MEC" at the 2013 MEC Annual General Meeting. Her vimeo stream contains a number of short (five minutes or less) films of wilderness trips her family has done with other families.

Banff National Park,<sup>508</sup> Heuer's duties included taking part in Parks Canada research and policy projects monitoring wildlife corridors and the attempting to engineer them to reduce human/animal conflict through better planning and infrastructure.<sup>509</sup> This work drew both Heuer and Allison full circle back to the revelations of the vast distances travelled by wildlife which had first sparked their Y2Y journey. As the tenth anniversary of the Y2Y hike approached, Heuer turned more and more to questions of connectivity and human/animal interactions in relation to wildlife corridors in his writing, speaking, and volunteer and paid work as a conservation biologist. For example, Heuer won a silver national magazine award for a 2009 *Alberta Views* article "The Big Squeeze" about a deadly grizzly bear mauling in a wildlife corridor passing through the town of Canmore, and in 2010 he worked with Tracy Lee of the Miistakis Institute to author a technical report for Y2Y on opportunities for private land conservation to improve wildlife connectivity through "squeeze points" in the Bow Valley (where the town of Canmore is located)<sup>510</sup>. These same issues preoccupied Allison: inspired in part because Heuer, who selected images from these cameras to post to the Parks Canada website,<sup>511</sup> kept an assortment of his favourite images on the family fridge, she began work on *Bear 71*, an

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<sup>508</sup> After completing their *Being Caribou* journey, Allison and Heuer lived in Dunster BC as Heuer worked in Jasper as a seasonal park warden while writing *Being Caribou*. The family then moved to Canmore, which was the home base from which they left on the Finding Farley journey. See

<http://www.yesnet.yk.ca/events/youngauthors/bios/pdf/kheuer.pdf>.

<sup>509</sup> Heuer had also worked for the Alberta government in 2007 on a wildlife corridors study that encompassed the Canmore/Banff area (Heuer, "The Big Squeeze" 33).

<sup>510</sup> See Heuer and Lee. Heuer did much more extensive work in this area than I have listed.

<sup>511</sup> Heuer had helped install some of the cameras, and he posted the best images from the motion-triggered cameras to the parks Canada website. See

[http://eedition.banffcragandcanyon.com/doc/Banff-Crag-and-Canyon/banffcragcanyon\\_20101116/2010111701/30.html#30](http://eedition.banffcragandcanyon.com/doc/Banff-Crag-and-Canyon/banffcragcanyon_20101116/2010111701/30.html#30).

interactive documentary that follows several years in the life of a grizzly bear as shown through motion-triggered trail cameras.

*Bear 71* can be viewed as a 20 minute film, but it can also be explored non-linearly through a map/grid of the Bow Valley which shows natural features (lakes, forests, rivers, plants), industrial/human infrastructure (road and rail corridors, cell phone towers, golf courses), individual animal, train, and human trajectories, and trailcams that record interactions at rub trees, highway underpasses, and other heavily trafficked intersections. The architecture of *Bear 71* balances tension between maintaining a strong narrative line and opening out to the possibilities—in this case those on offer through interactive technologies—for users to experience a relational universe where they can navigate choice points. The project accomplishes a kind of Métissage, in which Allison and co-creator Jeremy Mendes bridge between animal and human perspectives through unseating the taken-for-granted human one. Viewers navigate the interactive in the character of *Bear 71*, whose fraught interactions with the built world—both ‘built’ into the landscape of the interactive, and ‘built’ in the sense of being objects of human infrastructure such as cell phone towers or railways— create points of rupture. Viewer and bear experiences collide, for example, as the highways that simplify human access appear as dangerous crossings for the bear and her cubs.

*Bear 71* uses new technologies to make apparent the lifeworld of animals co-existing with the built/human world of the Bow Valley corridor<sup>512</sup>. Allison explains that wildlife surveillance cameras were what enabled her to

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<sup>512</sup> It is perhaps telling that the experience that allowed this storytelling approach to fall into place was Allison’s happening upon Jonathan Harris’s *The Whale Hunt*, an online

look out my window and see where I lived in a completely different way. I could imagine a cougar slinking by just a kilometre from my house, a wolf pack on a kill a valley or two away, or a grizzly bear scratching himself on a rub tree on a popular hiking trail just outside the town of Banff. The photographs showed me a world of animals, the same world we knew among the caribou, only now it was right in my backyard! (Allison, “Where *Bear 71* Came From”)

Both the online interactive and the installations created for *Bear 71*’s film festival debuts draw attention to the parallels and paradoxes in how human infrastructures and technologies, especially technologies of surveillance, have been superimposed over the living landscape. For example, ‘rub tree’ installations made flesh in Park City (for the Sundance film festival) and Vancouver (at DOXA documentary festival) were intended to make apparent how animals are in active communication with each other and the landscape. In Allison’s words

pretty much every single animal will check in on those trees. And if you were to map them, they would look like this network of cell phone towers. There could be literally centuries of information up to the last minute

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interactive whose source is a through line of ‘photographic heartbeats’ of a whale hunt that can be sifted through multiple perspectives, including that of the whale. Allison’s efforts to weave together a multi-perspective story drawing viewers into the deep interconnections and implication of human life (and infrastructure) with bear life in the Bow Valley were guided by a work that through its mediation between continuity and change, its movements between (at the time) cutting-edge virtual navigation and return to source in the life of the whale, offers a window on the animating power of cetaceousness in the modern world.

within that tree ... It would've been the most natural thing in the world for us to check in on those trees at one time (Allison qtd. in R. Smith).

*Bear 71* brings Allison and Heuer's transformational insights about the living landscape—hard won through following the caribou—to bear on the heavily human-modified landscapes further south.<sup>513</sup> The interactive project shows that, through careful attention,<sup>514</sup> it is possible for human beings to open their perception to the life-world, and become aware of the day-to-day passages of other creatures with whom we share our environments.

Allison's choice to make the *Highway Wilding* film, which became a popular selection on the 2012-2013 Banff Mountain Film Festival circuit, followed as a natural progression from *Bear 71*. The film, a collaboration with Parks Canada, the Miistakis Institute and Montana State University on the Highway Wilding initiative,<sup>515</sup> returned in a more hopeful way to the problems of human/animal cohabitation posed by *Bear 71*'s death in a train collision. Highlighting the remarkable success of Parks Canada's highway wildlife crossing structures in Banff National Park, the film promotes their wider adoption in North America. *Highway Wilding* resonates with *Being Caribou* in its attempts to raise awareness by unseating human perspectives and showing the landscape – in this case a heavily human-modified one– from “the point of view of an animal trying to cross a highway” (Allison qtd. in Hornsby). *Highway Wilding* works both at the

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<sup>513</sup> As the travels of *Bear 71*, *Pluie the wolf*, and other large carnivores have shown, these landscapes are interconnected with the far north as a continuous ecosystem stretching up the spine of the continent along the Rockies.

<sup>514</sup> And thus a kind of ‘education in emotion’ discussed in Chapter 3.

<sup>515</sup> *Highway Wilding* is a five-year collaborative project. The Wilburforce Foundation and Woodcock Foundations are major funders of the project. See <http://www.highwaywilding.org/funders.php>.



perceptual level through showing the perspective of animals attempting to cross highways, and at a practical level through connecting viewers with the Highway Wildling project, which provides educational materials, economic and scientific arguments and data, and practical tools to support wildlife researchers, decision-makers and the general public in advocating for wildlife over and underpass structures to be incorporated into roads.

As they made their home in the Bow Valley, alternating between ‘big picture’ speaking, writing, and film engagements, and working in very concrete ways on conservation solutions in the southwestern Alberta/southeastern BC area, Allison and particularly Heuer’s trajectories became more and more bound up with other individuals, organizations, and communities working on conservation issues.<sup>516</sup> At the end of 2012, building not only on his project work in the Y2Y corridor,<sup>517</sup> but also on the relationships he had nurtured, Heuer was named incoming President of the Yellowstone To Yukon Conservation Initiative. In 2013 and 2014 he headed the organization, working across scales from very detail-oriented, local scientific and community building labour required to create individual wildlife corridors, to the high-level visioning required for fundraising, strategic planning, campaigning, policy-building, and engaging and inspiring stakeholders across the Y2Y corridor.

Heuer’s (and to a lesser degree, Allison’s) long-term advocacy for the Y2Y corridor, which has encompassed experiential journeying, storytelling, scientific study,

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<sup>516</sup> Heuer did more speaking events, especially to specialist and professional audiences that overlapped with the kinds of ‘in the field’ work he did as a conservation planner.

<sup>517</sup> For example, Heuer had been one of the researchers at Parks Canada working on studying the success of highway overpasses and underpasses for wildlife in Banff National Park.

multiple kinds of relationship building, and work as Y2Y President at a local, regional, national, and international level, can be seen to be making a difference, daily, on a practical level. Through “working together, across boundaries,”<sup>518</sup> over 300 partners have helped, in the space of 20 years, double the amount of parks and protected areas, and increase by thirty-fold the amount of lands in the Y2Y corridor with other conservation designations.<sup>519</sup> Returning to Chester’s detailed empirical interrogation of the Y2Y network, however, it is apparent how intimately this practical relationship and institution building is intertwined with an animating story and experience of connectivity that has given vibrancy to the Y2Y project, buoying previously isolated community conservation efforts by changing the affective experience of conservation advocates to one of ‘big picture’ interconnection (Chester). In keeping with a stress on grassroots storytelling and community engagement, Heuer plans to re-hike the entire 3 200 km long Y2Y corridor, beginning in Wyoming in 2015.

Throughout their journeying, Allison and Heuer have continued to demonstrate a strong connection to and concern for caribou. Allison’s 2012 short film *Another Chance* is used by Parks Canada to promote their program to reintroduce woodland caribou to Banff after they were locally extirpated in a 2009 avalanche. Under Heuer, Y2Y has remained a vocal and active supporter of ongoing work to protect the wintering grounds of the Porcupine caribou in the Peel watershed.

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<sup>518</sup> This is one of Y2Y’s slogans.

<sup>519</sup> See <http://y2y.net/publications/20-years-of-progress>. These claims are made in much of the publicity for Y2Y’s 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, including in the video posted to this web page.

The Peel watershed is a crucial site of current contestation over what values and which communities will guide caribou governance in Canada. The final section of this chapter contextualizes the Being Caribou project within a trajectory leading from the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry to current court cases on the Peel Watershed Commission's Final Recommended Plan.

## **Rebalancing Laws--How the Social Leads to Movement**

Much excellent scholarship has focused on the MacKenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry (hereafter called the Berger Inquiry)<sup>520</sup> as a locus of organization and expression of a 'radical' Dene leadership that began to agitate for modern land claims processes.<sup>521</sup> Less is written about the Inquiry as a galvanizing moment for caribou governance. The powerful testimony of Gwich'in and Inuvialuit people, and especially the people of Old Crow, about their concerns for the caribou calving grounds, caused Berger to recommend against a pipeline right-of-way through both proposed northern Yukon routes,<sup>522</sup> and also to propose a wilderness park extending from the border with the Arctic Refuge across the entire north Yukon, and extending outwards to include Herschel and adjacent coastal islands (Berger, *Northern Frontier* 74-5). As discussed in Chapter 4, this proposal— of a park meant to protect the range of the Porcupine caribou from industrial incursion while allowing for continued human activity in the form of hunting and other traditional

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<sup>520</sup> This is how the Inquiry is popularly known.

<sup>521</sup> Watkins' edited collection, which is composed of testimony from the Berger Inquiry as selected in collaboration with Dene leadership, offers a good entryway into this scholarship.

<sup>522</sup> Berger only recommended a delay for the MacKenzie Valley proposals.

pursuits— was radical for its time and arose directly out of Inuit and Gwich'in advocacy of a different vision of human co-habitation with animals.

As Chapter 4 also traced, the Berger inquiry was an important site for the articulation of Inuit and northern First Nations aspirations to achieve self-government and a greater say in the future of northern Canada. It was an important antecedent to the settling of Inuvialuit land claims and of land claims in Yukon, and to the creation of the Porcupine Caribou Management Board, Ivvavik, Vuntut, and Herschel Island-Qikiqtaruk parks. The particular types of political engagement that the Berger Inquiry helped foster—in which indigenous communities entered into dialog with one another and incorporated a more sophisticated awareness of Western law, science, and other cultural forms into their approaches—also contributed to the signing of the Umbrella Final Agreement (UFA) by eleven Yukon First Nations as a precursor to settling individual land claim and self-government agreements. The UFA provided for joint planning processes to establish land use designations in each of Yukon's regions. As of this writing, an important crux in the evolution of northern caribou governance is playing out in the Canadian court system, as the Peel Watershed Planning Process acts as a crucible for larger questions of 'right relationship' and what obligations the Yukon Territorial Government (YTG) towards carrying forward the Peel Watershed Final Recommended Plan.

This final section contextualizes the Being Caribou project as part of a larger set of trajectories that have helped northern First Nations, often working with civil society partners, gain greater purchase in shaping northern caribou governance. It returns first to examine the Berger Inquiry as a site of public storytelling; the form of the inquiry,

decided upon through consultation with indigenous leadership, had a direct bearing on its outcomes, not only in terms of the final recommendations, but also in terms of the consciousness-raising about northern communities and their concerns. Next, public engagement with “Inquiry”, a public exhibit commemorating the Berger Inquiry forty years later, is used to explore how public storytelling remains integral to building social consensus and power in northern communities. After briefly considering both indigenous and social movement perspectives on changing ‘law’ through changing social consensus, the Being Caribou project is situated as a public storytelling exercise that not only played a particular role at a particular time in efforts to protect the Arctic Refuge, but influenced future public storytelling within the ranges of the Porcupine caribou. Current efforts to protect the wintering grounds of the Porcupine caribou in the Peel Watershed draw both directly and indirectly on the legacy of the Being Caribou expedition.

### **Tactical Trajectories III: *Being Caribou* on the Path from the Berger Inquiry to the Peel Decision**

The terms of reference for the Berger Inquiry—markedly different from the terms set for much more recent reviews of the Enbridge Northern Gateway, Kinder Morgan, and Line 9 pipeline proposals—included not only looking at a proposed pipeline through the Mackenzie Valley, but also understanding the project in the holistic context of the effects of associated infrastructure along the whole pipeline corridor, including road construction, gravel pit mines, shipping fleets, etc. At preliminary hearings in Yellowknife, Inuvik, and Whitehorse, Justice Berger consulted with stakeholders about how to conduct the consultations; the resulting feedback led to him delaying hearings by a year, and petitioning for funding for First Nations, and other interveners—including the

environmental community, municipalities, and mental health advocates—to be able to hire lawyers and experts.

In response to the requests of indigenous leadership, Justice Berger physically took the Inquiry to every community along the proposed pipeline route. He and other inquiry experts visited fish camps, hunting sites, and other points of interest on the land.<sup>523</sup> At the same time, the inquiry was opened to anyone who wanted to speak, with Justice Berger often keeping hearings going long into the bright summer nights. Over one and a half years, the inquiry heard from thousands of witnesses. Every night, Justice Berger wrote on a sheet of paper what he learned that day that he had not known the day before, an exercise which he described as constantly helping a picture to emerge in his mind (Berger, *40 Years*).

Justice Berger additionally arranged for the power of radio and television to be harnessed to circulate the inquiry's stories. Broadcasters speaking Cree, Gwich'in, Inuktitut, and four Dene dialects travelled with the inquiry. Five minute television spots on the inquiry were produced every night, one per week in each aboriginal language. On CBC radio, one hour a night was devoted to short broadcasts in each language. Through circulating its stories, the inquiry drew the power of the oral tradition into the service of a 'modern' political process, sparking dialogue and exchange throughout the region.<sup>524</sup> The

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<sup>523</sup> As numerous authors have noted (Smith and VGFN; Cruickshank, *Life Lived Like a Story*; Sherry and VGFN; Basso) actually being on the land and speaking in one's native language can be important to accessing certain kinds of indigenous knowledge and stories—stories that might have been missed or had a much lesser impact if told in English in a hearing room in Yellowknife.

<sup>524</sup> Northern First Nations and Inuvialuit also took initiative to circulate information about and from the inquiry through their communications networks, such as *Inuvialuit*, the newsletter published by COPE, the Committee of Original Peoples Entitlement, and

debate also generated broad interest in southern Canada where, for the first time, northerners were being brought into the dialogue over Canada's vision not only of the north, but also of itself as a northern nation.<sup>525</sup>

The long hours of hearings in Old Crow, Inuvik, Aklavik, Fort McPherson, and other Gwich'in and Inuvialuit communities<sup>526</sup> were one forum in which Gwich'in and Inuvialuit people learned the art of effective dialog with the Canadian state. This dialogue hybridized between bringing in rhythms, values, and processes of Gwich'in and Inuvialuit traditional knowledge and culture (for example, having the whole community come to the hearings and listen as people took turns sharing their perspectives, each speaking until he or she was finished) and drawing on the technical expertise of lawyers, scientists, and others to speak to the State in its own language. In creating an opportunity for northern First Nations and Inuit people to try out a version of a state process that reflected a design they themselves had proposed, the Berger inquiry provided a living example of what state governance mechanisms could look like.

Justice Berger's rationale for his recommendations for the north Yukon (no pipeline but a park) drew on Gwich'in stories very similar to those laid out in earlier chapters: references to a 30 000 year long history of human-caribou relations; descriptions of the caribou fences; and an unfolding of the story of the caribou's yearly

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various radio programs produced with the support of the Native Communications Society.

<sup>525</sup> The published report, which Berger wrote in plain language and worked *in media res* with French translators on, rather than having translated as a finished document, generated tremendous interest in southern Canada. It made national bestsellers lists and *Le Devoir* reviewed it as "la poésie véritable". It is the bestselling Canadian government report of all time in Canada, and has gone into reprint (Berger, *40 Years*).

<sup>526</sup> In Old Crow, eighty-one people testified in near unanimity against the pipeline proposal (Berger, *Northern Frontier* 62-66).

migration, with a focus on their heightened vulnerability and sensitivity on the calving grounds (Berger, *Northern Frontier* 58-60).<sup>527</sup> When Justice Berger's final recommendations took into account the narratives of Gwich'in and Inuvialuit communities, and included most of the key points that these communities had brought forward, it created confidence that engagement with the Canadian state could lead to positive outcomes, and created further impetus for indigenous leaders to press for self-government and the settlement of land claims.<sup>528</sup>

The special place that the Berger Inquiry still holds in Canada's north can be seen in the tremendous reception that northern communities gave "Inquiry", a hands-on photography and history exhibit commemorating the now over forty-year old Inquiry. Exhibit curator Drew Ann Wake describes how, taking the project for its first presentation in Nahanni Butte in 2011, she and photographer Linda MacCannell were warned by the school principal that "Possibly no one will show up" (Wake). Yet, upon arriving at the school, nearly the entire community of 120 people was in attendance:

We found the building surrounded by all-terrain vehicles. The elders had asked their children and grandchildren to drive them to the school so they could relive a great moment in Dene history. The elders took over the event. When they switched the discussion from English to the Dehcho

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<sup>527</sup> Justice Berger also notes the testimony of biologists, as well as the impressions the caribou made on him both as he flew over the calving grounds by helicopter and when they passed by as he visited Gwich'in at their camps in the Old Crow Flats (Berger, *Northern Frontier* 58-9, 67-9).

<sup>528</sup> Looking through back issues of *Inuvialuit*, I was strongly struck by the synergies between reports from the Berger Inquiry, and efforts of Inuvialuit leadership to engage the territorial and federal governments in other venues to address issues related to lands management, resource development, and indigenous rights, and also to ensure both funding and access to the airwaves for native communications.



Dene language, we knew we had touched a chord (Wake).

Over five summers, Inquiry has toured twenty-five communities touched by the original Inquiry.<sup>529</sup> The exhibit and the inquiry it references have become incorporated into northern community history and storytelling, with exhibit stops sparking debate and knowledge transmission as elders share their recollections and younger generations take up the questions of pipeline and oil and gas development today.

In the north, such connections between art and community storytelling continue to work as powerful forms of political expression. In Yukon, three of the four groups that filed the Peel court case –CPAWS and the First Nations of Tr’ondek Hwech’in and Nacho Nyak Dun, sponsored the Inquiry exhibit in their communities, with exhibit curator Wake publicly drawing parallels between First Nations’ desire for greater self-determination as expressed at the Berger Inquiry and the issues at stake in the Peel case (Wake). At the exhibit opening at the Yukon Arts Center in Whitehorse, just two and a half weeks before the parties were scheduled to return to court, Thomas Berger QC — former head of the Berger Inquiry and now acting as lead council for the proponents in the Peel case—appeared via Skype for an event that was billed as a “historic and interactive exhibit about the Mackenzie Pipeline Inquiry ... and parallels to today.”<sup>530</sup>

The case that Berger was presenting to the court rested upon the responsibilities established in the UFA being interpreted in a holistic way, in which the honour of the

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<sup>529</sup> The exhibit also toured outside the north. In total, the exhibit will have visited fifty locations, including the Smithsonian in Washington DC and a number of university campuses, including in British Columbia and Ontario, before making a final stop in Yellowknife (Gray; Wake; Bickford).

<sup>530</sup> This quote is taken from the Yukon Conservation Society Facebook page announcement of the event, dated September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2014.

Crown depends upon upholding the spirit of the treaties rather than falling back to a narrow interpretation of the letter of the law. This is consistent with the principles of relationality underlying First Nations legal orders, as discussed in Chapter 8. ‘Spirit’ and ‘honour’ are concepts that are profoundly relational; they gain their purchase only as lived understandings and interactions. Storytelling and community building, extended across generations, subtend First Nations interpretation of UFA law: First Nations legal orders depend upon social participation as well as acts of imaginative recognition that bring communities into the lifeworld.

In supporting and strengthening their legal case, First Nations and conservation groups have worked not only within court and administrative systems but also across the public sphere to build cross-cultural understandings and respect for the relationships that the Peel watershed supports between flora, fauna, First Nations and other Yukon communities. This understanding of law—as something collaborative, that only retains its power when people live it—strongly informs social justice movements. In narrating his experiences and perspective working on civil rights in 1960s America, Marshall Ganz (Ganz, “Scaling”) describes that the key turning point—the Montgomery bus boycott—came not from a change in law by the courts (although *Brown vs. the Board of Education* was an important education moment and campaigning-building peak), but through ordinary black Americans withdrawing support from the dominant system through simply changing their daily practice of taking the bus. This withdrawal was cathartic: it promoted solidarity, empowered the community, and encouraged people to take leadership. Black Americans realized that their mass withdrawal of participation could cause racist systems to collapse.

Ganz is not alone in locating the ‘group catharsis’ that builds social movements and challenges law as residing in the empowerment of people in their everyday lives, often through storytelling. Drawing on examples from Latin American social movements, Paula X. Rojas argues for more holistic forms of organizing centered upon the vital work of building community and relationships of solidarity and love. Such work, which cannot be delegated/outsourced from everyday life, is a source of power and renewal for even the most marginalized.<sup>531</sup> Rojas is in effect arguing that successful social change work is the work of bringing power to the people through locating political participation in the places where ordinary people dwell. Paralleling some of the tenets of indigenous legal orders, change comes about from shifts in the practices of everyday life, including practices of interpretation/storytelling, that form the “language of interaction” that governs individual and collective behaviour (Napoleon 8).

Shifting caribou governance within northern communities is long-term social change work. The Being Caribou project, as a storytelling effort of remarkable breadth and ambition, played a role by engaging Yukon and NWT communities on questions of caribou governance in ways that extend beyond the 2004 to 2006 period. Its influence can be seen not only in the trajectory of other multi-media expedition and outreach tours focused on the calving grounds, but also in the ways that First Nations and the conservation community have chosen to build support to protect the wintering grounds of the Porcupine caribou in the Peel.

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<sup>531</sup> Rojas makes the point that part of the work of neoliberal economic globalization is to instrumentalize and isolate people by attenuating and breaking the bonds of community and social practice, stripping relations down to the purely economic.

As described in Chapter 7, from 2004-6, *Being Caribou* acted as a crucial catalyst around which an amalgam of public storytelling and community building practices<sup>532</sup> coalesced in support of calving grounds protection. The Being Caribou project built upon a series of trajectories, from thousands of years of Gwich'in traditional knowledge and practice, to a generation's worth of traveling awareness raising multimedia projects on the calving grounds, to what were at the time emergent social media practices supporting social movement storytelling and distributed organizing. As a link in a chain of outreach and movement building efforts, *Being Caribou* both created continuity/maintained interest in the calving grounds issue and innovated, helping to "scale up" community engagement across North America, and propelling the trajectory of Arctic Refuge work forward.

Since 2007, other multi-media expedition and outreach tours have followed Being Caribou, making new connections to calving grounds issues and drawing in different constituencies. Beginning in June of 2007, Malkolm Boothroyd, who as a child had accompanied his father Ken Madsen of Caribou Commons on the 2002 Walk to Washington tour,<sup>533</sup> set out with his parents to cycle, sail, and walk across North America on a Bird Year, stopping along the way to speak with birders about climate change and its impact on birds, and particularly migratory birds breeding in the Arctic Refuge.<sup>534</sup> Most

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<sup>532</sup> These include but are not limited to house parties, protests, potlucks and celebrations, and ceremonies.

<sup>533</sup> The family travelled by bicycle and biodiesel van.

<sup>534</sup> In North American birding circles, certain birders compete to see as many species within a year as they can; however, the unintended consequence is huge individual fossil fuel consumption from flying and driving to see birds. The concept of the Bird Year was to see as many birds as possible but using sustainable transport, in order to spark discussion among birders about the consequences of fossil fuel use and accelerated

recently, Miho Aida spent the summer of 2014 cycle touring over 1000 miles from Seattle to San Francisco showing her film *Gwich'in Women Speak*, and encouraging people to take action on the Arctic Refuge. As a woman of colour, Aida “wanted to make sure that Native American women's voices were out and were being heard so that when we talk about protecting public land, their representation is out and people know about it” (Aida).<sup>535</sup> After her journey, Aida travelled to the 2014 Gwich'in Gathering in Old Crow, where she screened her film. Both Boothroyd and Aida brought new dimensions and constituencies into conversations about the Arctic Refuge. In continuity with their predecessors, their tours drew on multi-media storytelling and existing activist networks in order to share experiences and strengthen local-to-local connections between the Arctic Refuge, northerners, and other North Americans.<sup>536</sup>

Regionally in Yukon/NWT, the Being Caribou project played a crucial role in creating continuity in efforts to bring concerns about the Porcupine caribou into the public sphere. By providing the momentum of an amazing and involving story,<sup>537</sup> *Being Caribou* did much of the substantive narrative work supporting calving grounds advocacy through a critical time. This eased the pressure on some perennial movement volunteer

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climate change on bird habitat, and in particular on the Arctic Refuge breeding grounds of many migratory birds. Information on the Bird Year is accessible through [www.cariboucommons.com](http://www.cariboucommons.com). See also Little.

<sup>535</sup> Aida also founded the “If She Can Do It, You Can Too Project” which aims to empower women through outdoor role models. The project is discussed in supplementary segments that are included with the DVD of *Gwich'in Women Speak*.

<sup>536</sup> Boothroyd and his family lived in Whitehorse for many years.

<sup>537</sup> Almost without exception (one Alaskan campaigner found the ‘outsider adventurer’ trope blocked her identification with the protagonists and overshadowed the film’s effectiveness), both Gwich'in and non-Gwich'in calving grounds advocates described the film as galvanizing audiences and drawing people into Allison and Heuer’s extraordinary journey.

organizers, who were able to step back from a breakneck/burnout pace of campaigning (E. Heuer, Interview; Peter Mather, Interview).<sup>538</sup> As Corrigan-Brown (*Patterns of Protest*) notes, being able to move in and out of social movement work is an adaptive strategy for long-term engagement; however, given the relatively small populations in Canada's north, even in strong community organizations, core activists are few, and committed organizers can easily burn out.<sup>539</sup> In the case of northern caribou advocacy, some movement organizers found rejuvenation in the creativity, energy and new faces that *Being Caribou* helped attract to Arctic Refuge work, while others found renewal through devoting their energies to their personal lives or creative pursuits.

Longtime Caribou Commons organizer Peter Mather offers an example of how the Being Caribou project has had indirect, longer-term effects on caribou advocates and on caribou education and advocacy. He described being on a public tour through mid-western states during one of Caribou Commons' peak activity periods, shortly before the Being Caribou project came on the scene. The tour schedule was grueling, with full shows almost every day. Sometimes, as when the representative from Minnesota swung

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<sup>538</sup> This was quite strongly the case for Caribou Commons, a small, shoestring organization which had put a huge effort into the 2002 campaigns. While Caribou Commons maintained a local presence, and played an important role in Yukon organizing in the 2004-6 period, behind the scenes some organizers needed to rest/rejuvenate and redirect their energies to their personal lives. As the Peel land use planning began to become more contested, Caribou Commons and its former members (especially Malkolm Boothroyd, active in the Peel Youth Alliance) again became more and more active, with a kind of generational shift taking place with younger advocates taking on more and more leadership.

<sup>539</sup> Environmental groups particularly face this dilemma: Canada's north has a disproportionate share of relatively 'wild' landscapes, and of large multinationals willing to invest a lot of time and money in resource extraction projects. Yet the total base of potential donors and volunteers for a community-based organization is a tiny fraction of that of a large city.

to support the Refuge in a key vote, Mather felt that Caribou Commons tour was having an impact. But at other times—when turnouts were low, or when it seemed a presentation didn't come across effectively—he felt disheartened. Mather was slowly becoming discouraged, and exhausted; a state made worse by doubt about his own effectiveness. When the Being Caribou project took on the narrative work of sustaining public engagement, Mather used the time to step back, reevaluate his approach, and work through some of his questions about effective campaigning and storytelling (Mather, Interview).

Mather expresses admiration for the amazing story of *Being Caribou*.<sup>540</sup> The film brought home to him what a difference a compelling story made; at the same time Mather felt *Being Caribou*'s incredible story didn't fully reach its potential audience because it didn't circulate through high profile avenues (like *National Geographic* magazine) that have a very high standard for storytelling and imagery (Mather, Interview). Spurred on by a belief that high quality visual storytelling is essential to growing the reach of conservation/land use planning campaigns,<sup>541</sup> Mather strived to become one of a top tier of nature and wildlife photographers,<sup>542</sup> and to use this talent to further awareness about Gwich'in people, the caribou, and threats to the calving grounds and the Peel watershed.

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<sup>540</sup> Mather also expressed that in his experience, Gwich'in people had the most compelling stories to share (2012b).

<sup>541</sup> Mather also talked about telling powerful stories, stressing that Gwich'in had had the most powerful stories to tell during public campaigns about the calving grounds (Mather, Interview).

<sup>542</sup> Mather has become an International League of Conservation Photographers (ILCP) Fellow. The 2014 ILCP expedition into the Peel Watershed was supported by the Wilburforce Foundation and CPAWS. It resulted in many stellar images of the Peel becoming widely disseminated. Mather has also worked for National Geographic photojournalist Paul Nicklen (Westover).

Mather spearheaded a summer 2014 trip through the Peel watershed by members of the International League of Conservation Photography. To date, Mather's efforts have contributed to the Peel conflict being showcased in a February 2014 feature in *National Geographic* on Yukon's mining boom<sup>543</sup>, and in the production of the film *Headwaters of the Wild*, by National Geographic filmmaker Andy Maser, which opened the Whitehorse tour stop of the Wild and Scenic Film Festival (CPAWS-Yukon, "Wild and Scenic").

Mather's experience is but one example of the ways in which work to protect the Peel watershed—which involves many First Nations and northern community groups that have played a role in Porcupine caribou advocacy, as the area is part of the wintering grounds of the herd<sup>544</sup>—has both directly and indirectly drawn on the related successes of the regional Arctic Refuge campaign in 2004-2006. For example, the "Protect the Peel Watershed Wakeup" fundraising coffee blend sold by Bean North is a direct descendant of the "Bean Caribou" blend.<sup>545</sup> Similarly, protests since 2012 inside and outside the Yukon Legislature over the government's handling of the Peel watershed planning process have adopted tactics, such as raising a Protect the Peel banner on the flagpole, and having protestors fill the legislative gallery wearing Protect the Peel shirts, that first

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<sup>543</sup> Mather worked for a year and a half assisting Paul Nicklen as he took photographs for the *National Geographic* feature (Winter).

<sup>544</sup> Gwich'in communities have certainly been the public face of calving grounds campaigning. However, other NWT and Yukon First Nations are part of the Porcupine Caribou Management Board and played a role in its establishment.

<sup>545</sup> Erica Heuer's email is listed on the packaging as the contact person. The style of the packaging—with a back sticker listing actions to take for the Peel as well as further information on the issue and how to get involved—closely mirrors Bean Caribou's packaging during the height of campaigning.



came to prominence in the March 2005 Arctic Refuge protest that emerged from the weeks-long series of showings of *Being Caribou* led by Erica Heuer.<sup>546</sup>

These showings, in which *Being Caribou* acted as a catalyst for asking people to become involved and contribute ideas, time and effort to protecting the Arctic Refuge, were part of a shift in local organizing towards more consciously building grassroots leadership.<sup>547</sup> The kind of creativity that Erica Heuer describes as behind the 2006 Yukon Arts Centre Arctic Refuge fundraiser<sup>548</sup> is abundant in the types of events and outreach conducted in the last two years for the Peel campaign. In addition to the more traditional art and music fundraisers, these events have included a Peel Climb-a-thon, a Zip-line for the Peel fundraiser, a First Nations Feast and Dance with cultural activities such as Indian bingo,<sup>549</sup> Yoga for the Peel, Kluane-Chilkat bike rally teams riding under Peel inspired names, “Playing for the Peel” musical rally and a “Party for the Peel” (CPAWS-Yukon, “Public Action”).<sup>550</sup> This diversity of events reflects a unity of purpose and sense of connection that, in the case of the Peel watershed planning process, extends across

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<sup>546</sup> See A Cruikshank and “Peel Protesters” for more detail on two of the protests at the legislature that drew on the tactics described.

<sup>547</sup> Many factors and constituencies have played into this shift. For example, a number of Yukon youth became active in the Canadian Youth Climate Coalition, the International Polar Year, Powershift, and other groups which brought them into contact with national and international level work on climate justice. Yukon youth have had a strong influence in grassroots local work on environmental justice, for example through the Peel Youth Alliance.

<sup>548</sup> This creativity was also evident in other actions emergent from that time. For example, Juno award winning Yukon songwriter Kim Barlow wrote a song inspired by *Being Caribou* (Nemetz).

<sup>549</sup> See <https://www.facebook.com/events/627297100673786/?ref=4>.

<sup>550</sup> The Party for the Peel was a local fundraiser by Tr’ondek Hwech’in in Dawson. The party included moose and veggie stew, a loonie auction, music and a slide show, speakers and door prizes. See

<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=618054724937534&set=gm.10152316761670733&type=1>.

numerous small First Nations communities as well as a number of distinct yet overlapping constituencies of northerners.<sup>551</sup>

While creating and sustaining such energized, creative, and determined commitment across large physical distances and many complex social differences in the north has been the work of decades,<sup>552</sup> events like the Caribou Commons and Being Caribou tours have had a distinct role to play in bringing people together. Such multimedia tours have helped galvanize northerners to take action. Stunning visual imagery and powerful storytelling have reminded community members that they have much to be proud of in their relationships with the land and the caribou. At the same time, by building grassroots linkages across North America, such tours have helped overcome the sense of isolation many feel in small communities (Mather, Interview), underlining—often in a positive and energizing social setting—that northern First Nations have strong backing in taking up their unique stewardship roles.

The ambition and scale of *Being Caribou* has also been one example, among many, building towards northerners becoming more and more ambitious in their advocacy efforts on land use planning and conservation issues. This is true not only of artistic/multimedia advocacy projects (2014 alone saw, among other events,<sup>553</sup> a number

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<sup>551</sup> An example of the breadth of community support is that on the Jan 29<sup>th</sup>, 2014 day of protest events were held in Mayo, Dawson City, Haines Junction and Whitehorse in Yukon, and Inuvik, Fort McPherson and Aklavik in the Northwest Territories. See “Peel Plan Protestors.” The CPAWS-Yukon press release (“Public Action”) also mentions a rally in Old Crow.

<sup>552</sup> Concentrated effort on this front has been ongoing at least since the 1970s when Jonathan Solomon and Bob Childers began to work intensively on what became the Porcupine Caribou Management Agreement (Childers).

<sup>553</sup> I am including only some of the events related to awareness-raising about the Peel watershed. There were a number of other very important land use issues also ongoing at

of sold-out Yukon Wildlands Concert multimedia shows by Caribou Commons in February, two Yukon Arts Centre shows to launch Matthew Lien's Headwaters CD for the Peel in October, the "What about the Peel?" art show at the Yukon Artists at Work Gallery, and Halin de Repentigny's "Tributaries" art show at the North End Gallery) but of expeditions/journeys undertaken to raise public awareness. In addition to the numerous river expeditions launched on the Peel and its tributaries,<sup>554</sup> in 2014 Gwich'in ultra-runner Brad "Caribou Legs" Firth undertook two remarkable journeys. In the spring, he ran 1200 km from Inuvik to Whitehorse—much of it through the Peel watershed, and often through intense cold and inclement weather—to deliver to Yukon Premier Darrell Pasloski a packet of letters from Mackenzie Delta residents concerned about the fate of the Peel watershed. Next, Firth ran 3200 kilometers from Vancouver to Whitehorse, again to protest the Peel land use process. Firth averaged forty to sixty kilometres of running a day. On his southern run he often camped by the side of the road with only a tarp and the clothes on his back ("Caribou Legs"). Firth's journey echoed not only the tremendous physical feats of Gwich'in travellers in historic times (which northern First Nations and Inuit viewers often referenced/recollected when viewing *Being Caribou*), but the more recent athletic prowess of his sisters, renowned Gwich'in cross-country skiers Sharon and Shirley Firth, who made Canada's national cross-country ski team for a

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the time, from decisions about fracking to changes to Yukon's environmental assessment legislation, in which there has been ongoing lively and creative public participation.

<sup>554</sup> These date back to not only the early work of Caribou Commons, but also the CPAWS sponsored Three Rivers project which began with artists river journeys in 2003 but continued to raise public awareness for over a decade, garnering a 2007 Silver Community Award at the Canadian Environment Awards 2007 gala for its art shows (CPAWS, "CPAWS Wins"), with poet Brian Brett book's, *Wind River Variations*, coming out in 2013 (Ronson, "The Peel Put to Poetry").

record seventeen consecutive years,<sup>555</sup> competing at four successive Olympic winter games from 1972-84. While not widely acknowledged by media outside the north, Firth's journey was well publicized and popular in Yukon and NWT, with communities he passed through organizing meetings and fundraisers for him, and First Nations youth and other community members sometimes accompanying him for stretches of the run (D. Davidson, "Caribou Legs' Firth Feted").

The support Firth received, and the forms it took, particularly in the small communities along his northern route, reflected and extended traditional First Nations ways and values. At the same time, the mobilizations in support of Firth's run exemplified the greater degree of sophistication that has been building in recent years as First Nations assert themselves as self-governing peoples, as conservationists and First Nations continue to build relationships and work together,<sup>556</sup> and as Yukon and NWT residents become more inspired, ambitious, and empowered in asserting both First Nations and conservation values in the public sphere. Northerners have been organically evolving a style of grassroots awareness-raising that strongly emphasizes community storytelling and coming together, the long term relationships of First Nations with their traditional territories, and the rugged and biologically important character of exceptionally large undeveloped northern landscapes. Many initiatives and campaigns have contributed to this evolution; however, as an exceptionally successful awareness-raising tool—and one that based its storytelling power in an astonishing demonstration of

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<sup>555</sup> As Marshall describes, "Between them, the sisters won 79 medals at the national championships, including 48 national titles."

<sup>556</sup> The environmental community publicized Caribou Leg's run and turned out in large numbers along with local First Nations for a rally to receive him in Whitehorse. See Ronson ("Caribou Legs Faces Off with Premier").

the extraordinary challenges of living in northern landscapes—the Being Caribou project contributed powerfully to northerners gaining confidence in this trajectory.

In the case of the Peel, there is no doubt that the vigils held outside the court every day of the Peel trial, the sold-out music shows, the rallies in Yukon communities, and the myriad creative public expressions of support for the Peel plan (ziplining for the Peel, etc.) serve to signal to the judiciary the direction of public conversation and collaboration. Through such public action, First Nations and environmental groups have attempted to make apparent their support within the social order.

While the final determination of the future of the Peel watershed plan is far from over, the December 2, 2014 decision by Justice Veale clearly signaled that the court recognizes the roles of democratic participation and indigenous legal principles within northern governance. Justice Veale explained as the rationale for his ruling, considered by experts to be a “total victory” for the plaintiffs, that:

As treaties, the Final Agreements are to be given a large and liberal interpretation consistent with the objectives of the treaty and in a manner that upholds the honour of the Crown. The Final Agreements must be interpreted in a manner that furthers the objective of reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal societies (*Media Summary*).

The decision further elaborates that the vision of the treaties included the right for First Nations to participate in the management of public resources through a consultative and collaborative process. The language of the judgment, touching on mechanisms and objectives, constraints and modifications, clearly invokes Western legal tradition. At the same time, indigenous legal orders imbue its interpretation of reconciliation and

relationship, the need for holistic and flexible approaches, and “the honour of the Crown” as arising from mindful and respectful co-presence.

The Yukon Territorial Government announced on December 30<sup>th</sup>, 2014 that it would appeal the Peel decision. As is the case with the Arctic Refuge, the values and forms of governance which will guide decision-making remain highly contested. Yet, if the story is far from over, it is also far from what it was a generation ago: through the steady, patient work of sharing stories and building community, First Nations, Inuvialuit, and conservation community groups have slowly shifted public perceptions.

An ecosystem of stories is no simple thing; it forms, like all ecosystems, a complex interconnected web of trajectories whose individual effects are difficult to separate out or even anticipate. Yet a robust ecosystem can be distinguished from a weak one. There is no doubt that the careful nurturing and carrying on of caribou stories across generations, landscapes, and changing social orders, has played an important role in creating and maintaining the landscapes which have allowed the Porcupine caribou to thrive. As changing physical and political climates buffet the caribou, storytelling becomes a more and more important ballast: it lies at the heart of respectful, reciprocal relationship between caribou and human communities, and is therefore key to mutual survival.

## Conclusion

The accomplishments of the Being Caribou expedition reach far beyond Allison and Heuer's remarkable achievement in pushing through a journey of physical, emotional, and spiritual extremes to follow the Porcupine caribou. The *Being Caribou* film, books, blog posts, and other media products brought and have continued to bring the caribou and their migrations into the consciousness of countless people. Caribou stories, through Allison and Heuer's experience, gained purchase in American popular culture at a crucial time.

The survival of the Porcupine caribou herd has, on numerous occasions in the last dozens of years, depended on such stories. This concluding chapter reflects on the Being Caribou project as an act of ecological restoration: that of nurturing and developing a vibrant ecology of caribou stories. This ecology of story has played out powerfully in public discourse, bolstering support for calving grounds protection, and helping to slowly reorient public thinking about the trade-offs and rebalancings that are part of our current petroculture. The Being Caribou expedition's successes in public storytelling speak meaningfully to challenges in the present day: after summarizing the key research findings, this chapter takes a pragmatic turn, applying these learnings to a current context in which the Keystone XL, Enbridge Northern Gateway, Kinder Morgan, Energy East, and other controversial pipeline proposals are bringing questions of indigenous and rural self-determination, climate change governance, and the role of civil society in democratic decision making to the fore. Finally, this chapter returns again to the banks of the Firth River, and the caribou migration witnessed by Karsten Heuer fourteen years ago, to

propose a model in which storytelling is integral to the work that we might call ecological (and cultural) restoration—or simply living on the land in a good way.

### **Summarizing the Key Findings: *Being Caribou* in an Ecosystem of Stories**

if you really want to understand the tree, you have to encounter it in the forest. If you want to understand the river, you have to explore the watershed. If you want to understand the story, you have to go beyond it, into the ecosystem of stories (Bringhurst, “The Tree” 15).

Karsten Heuer’s fascination with the Porcupine caribou was sparked in June of 2001, as a cacophony of falcons, foxes, and bears flowed in the wake of thousands of caribou streaming up the banks of the Firth River. Following the cues of First Nations spokespeople, a cornerstone of my research approach was to take a ‘long view’ of this ancient journeying, situating the *Being Caribou* expedition and its particular human/caribou migration within a more expansive ecology of caribou stories. These stories, and their presence on the land, extend back for thousands of years, through a shifting ecology of repeatedly recalibrating relationships between caribou, the landscape, Gwich’in and Inuvialuit, and newer populations and governments.

Taking the long view contextualized the *Being Caribou* expedition as part of this broader set of caribou stories, each carrying on its generation, living out its migrations on the land and within communities. Heuer’s presence on the Firth River in 2001 arose from a long chain of caribou stories, encompassing the caribou fences, the formation of Ivvavik and Vuntut Parks, the establishment of the Porcupine Caribou Management



Board (PCMB), and different soundings and sensings of the world as expressed through Gwich'in and Inuvialuit traditional knowledge. Speaking these stories made clear the power of traditional knowledge as a driving force shaping the landscape—and thus the landscape of possibilities—that inspired the Being Caribou journey in the first place. Traditional knowledge, with its principles of respect and consideration for the animate and spiritual dimensions of the land and its creatures, acted as an important framing both for the stories that the Being Caribou expedition eventually produced, and for the values, decisions, and actions that guided Allison and Heuer in the face of strenuous physical and spiritual challenges.

Methodologically, taking a long view also helped to contextualize Being Caribou and its stories within the broader history of a North American conservation movement. For over a century this movement has drawn on paintings, photography, serialized letters and expedition narratives, public speaking tours, essays, and other forms of public storytelling in order to speak to, and shift, foundational narratives of Canadian and American culture. Mass circulation of such narratives targeted not just the general public, but carefully cultivated networks of influential elites such as civic leaders, judges and elected officials, and powerful business people. This ecology of relationships, nurturing 'wilderness values,'<sup>557</sup> accomplished a kind of rewilding of the public sphere.<sup>558</sup> Through

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<sup>557</sup> I am including in this mix a heterogeneous and contradictory set of resonances of 'nature' as a place of physical and spiritual renewal; a harsh test of one's fortitude, courage and mettle; a civilizing influence; a 'pure' place untainted by the ills of civilization, etc.

<sup>558</sup> The conservation biology use of the term rewilding is commonly traced to Soulé and Noss's 1998 paper "Rewilding and Biodiversity", but in recent years the term has been taken up in popular culture to describe ecological restoration, particularly surrounding or within areas that continue to have prominent human populations. See Fraser.

seeding stories of large ‘undisturbed’ North American landscapes as cornerstones of Canadian and American identity and culture, it countered popular accounts of frontier conquest and economic development as foundational to prosperity.

Contextualizing the *Being Caribou* stories still further, with respect to the decades of Arctic Refuge roadshows (with slides, music, and speakers) that preceded them, makes apparent a pattern in which storytelling was integral to the day-to-day work of building, organizing and maintaining vibrant grassroots Alaskan conservation networks. Chapters 4 and 5 detailed the ways in which Inuit and northern First Nations, spurred in no small part by proposed oil and gas development,<sup>559</sup> since the 1970s became increasingly adept at engaging publics and governments at regional, national, and international levels, and at bringing their stories to bear in creating new governance mechanisms.<sup>560</sup> At the same time, as the American environmental community began to devote more and more energy to legislative initiatives promoting Alaskan conservation, it reached out to include Alaskans and Alaskan native groups in its strategies and storytelling. From the late 1980s onwards, the Gwich’in Steering Committee (GSC) along with the PCMB, and other Gwich’in organizations collaborated with allies ranging from the Canadian government to churches to the conservation community, engaging Washington lawmakers to protect

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<sup>559</sup> As discussed in Chapter 4, Prudhoe Bay development helped spark what Martin (“Global Values, Local Politics”) labels “Inuit Internationalism”; as Chapter 9 reviewed, the MacKenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry played a similar catalytic role in northwestern Canada.

<sup>560</sup> In the case of the Porcupine caribou, these stories played out in reshaping governance from the international to the regional level, and in policy makers’ improved understandings of subsistence communities and the need for their inclusion in protected area strategies including the International Conservation Agreement, signed in 1987 and the Porcupine Caribou Management Board (PCMB), and Ivvavik and Vuntut Parks, established as outcomes of land claims and self-government agreements.

the calving grounds. A crucial corollary to this strategy was boosting public support through broad-based public storytelling, in order to create grassroots voter response networks that could be mobilized at a moments notice in response to legislative developments. For the GSC in particular, sharing Gwich'in stories and experiences about the caribou in a way consistent with Gwich'in culture and values formed a core part of its mandate of calving grounds protection.

In bringing Being Caribou slides and film clips to northern communities and to Alaska Wilderness Week in 2003 and 2004, Allison and Heuer were activating circuits of a grassroots, translocal network that had been built through decades of slideshows and community storytelling efforts. Gwich'in, working with allies such as Lenny Kohm and Caribou Commons, had toured throughout the United States and Canada, forging local-to-local connections through storytelling. In describing their culture and its connection to caribou through powerful oratory, in community venues ranging from church basements to schools to meetings of Native American organizations, Gwich'in storytelling had encouraged Indigenous Métissage, in which individuals grew curious and questioned their assumptions about indigenous communities and indigenous rights. Such stories opened a pathway for ordinary North Americans to participate in Gwich'in political struggles as allies supporting calving grounds protection. Charismatic packages (Tsing) of travelling stories and their tellers played a key role in rebalancing relationships: through frequent contact, Gwich'in and other Alaska Coalition members sustained connections in which affinities were not assumed but grew out of mutual understanding and shared authority.

In the case of *Being Caribou*, the dialogues Allison and Heuer had in 2003-4 with northern communities and campaigners in Washington (including grassroots activists from across North America) profoundly shaped the stories they came to tell. Allison and Heuer found the courage to speak about their changed perceptions of time, space, and animal co-presence because of the validation provided by Gwich'in cosmology and Gwich'in people, while the powerful 'story of us/story of now' appeal that closes the *Being Caribou* film was a direct result of Allison and Heuer's interactions at Alaska Wilderness Week in September 2003.

The latter chapters of this dissertation explored ways in which overlapping new possibilities for communication, media production, and media distribution amplified the circulation of *Being Caribou* expedition narratives, growing the ecology of caribou stories in public culture. The National Film Board (NFB) played a crucial role in magnifying *Being Caribou*'s reach through a carefully sequenced marketing strategy that saw the film featured prominently at a number of high-profile festivals; the NFB then capitalized on the distinction the film received, both in terms of awards and in terms of cultural capital from its success with tastemakers,<sup>561</sup> to forge new partnerships to further distribute the film. The NFB built on a strong community marketing program, which included innovative new media strategies, to engage partners ranging from outdoor stores, to a UN climate change conference, to repertory cinemas and NFB Film Club members, in circulating *Being Caribou*. Crucially, in late 2004 the NFB provided

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<sup>561</sup> Chapter 5 provided further discussion of Bourdieu and the role of cultural distinction/taste making in bringing artwork and ideas to prominence.

thousands of copies of the DVD and VHS video, at cost, to the Alaska Wilderness League.

In concretizing the interrelationships behind this circulation of stories, I have expanded on ‘lifecycle’ frameworks from film studies<sup>562</sup> and on reflections from participatory documentary theorists, filmmakers, and ‘filmanthropist’ organizations, by broaching research into civic engagement. This novel approach allowed for a focus not so dissimilar to how Gwich’in and other First Nations cultures understand the power of story: as the warp and weft of interrelationship, binding culture (and organizational culture) together. Chapter 7 argues for considering *Being Caribou*’s contribution to building Alaska Coalition grassroots leadership as part of the film’s overall impact. *Being Caribou* house party and community screenings were sites of engagement in which individuals moved up the ‘activist ladder’ from merely interested to engaged, and from engaged to taking on leadership roles in support of Arctic Refuge protection. Movement storytelling presented an opportunity to create connection and empathy, and to inspire people to take ownership of the challenge/choice of calving grounds protection as a ‘story of us’ and ‘story of now’ in which their actions made a difference.

Equally concretely, Chapter 7 describes how *Being Caribou* stories, particularly those of the *Being Caribou* film, were mobilized by the Alaska Wilderness League (AWL) and Alaska Coalition (AC) from late 2004 to early 2006. During this period of sustained threat to the Arctic Refuge, *Being Caribou* was widely distributed throughout AWL and AC networks in ways that were clearly articulated to specific actions citizens

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<sup>562</sup> In which I would include Balides’ models of film franchising; Acland and Wasson’s insights into ‘useful cinema’, and work from Jenkins and others concerning participatory culture.

could take on set action days in order to influence particular Congressional votes. Chapter 7 quantifies total viewership of *Being Caribou* in the 2004-6 period, correlating “Arctic Action Day” film screenings with mass voter actions. Hundreds of thousands of North Americans saw *Being Caribou* at Arctic Action Day house party and community screenings in which they were encouraged to write letters, sign petitions, attend demonstrations, meet with their elected officials, and undertake other crucial actions in defence of the Arctic Refuge. During a period of great threat, *Being Caribou* storytelling was a powerful and perhaps key motivator of the mass voter action that carried the day, protecting the calving grounds from oil and gas leasing.

The longer-term effects of individual or community empowerment, or of changing attitudes brought about through experiences of storytelling ‘métissage’, are difficult to measure but possible to trace. In concluding this dissertation I wish now to return to a theme sketched in my final chapters on the on-going trajectories of the Being Caribou project: that such social movement storytelling has a role to play not only in times of acute political crisis (such as an imminent threat to the Arctic Refuge calving grounds) but in supporting individual and community transformations which are slowly shifting and perhaps unseating the dominant ‘petroculture’. First, however, I will reflect briefly on how this research does and does not speak to social movement storytelling and organizing on a number of acute petroculture conflicts, ranging from numerous pipeline proposals,<sup>563</sup> to hydraulic fracking debates, to organized campaigns against the further

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<sup>563</sup> Including Keystone XL, Enbridge Northern Gateway, Kinder Morgan’s Trans Mountain Pipeline, Energy East pipeline, and Enbridge’s proposed Line 9 reversal.

expansion of Tar Sands infrastructure,<sup>564</sup> and ever-growing mobilizations around climate change, including global mass demonstrations.<sup>565</sup>

## **Cycles of Story, Cycles of Social Change**

As an environmentalist as well as a researcher, my initial interest in the Being Caribou project came from its remarkable success in ‘scaling up’ a grassroots movement at a crucial time. I saw, and still see, clear parallels between Arctic Refuge activism and work such as the large scale public mobilization that resulted in President Obama, just weeks ago, using his veto power for only the third time in his presidency to block a Senate bill supporting construction of the Keystone XL pipeline (Roberts). In Canada, there are obvious resonances between the situation the Gwich’in of Arctic Village faced in 1987, when their concerns about calving grounds drilling were categorically dismissed in U.S. Congressional field hearings, and the way First Nations and civil society actors are systematically being squeezed out of current day energy regulatory processes such as pipeline reviews. In the last two years significant changes to Canadian environmental laws, as well as to the relevant environmental regulator (the National Energy Board), have hugely narrowed the scope of reviews and of who may have standing to participate. If the Berger Inquiry ushered in the arrival of a paradigm in which oil and gas

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<sup>564</sup> These campaigns range from grassroots awareness efforts by local First Nations, such as the annual Tar Sands Healing Walk which Trish Audette-Longo writes about, to efforts at the EU level to cut tar sands oil out of European markets through a Fuel Quality Directive (Neslen).

<sup>565</sup> Examples include Canada’s largest ever climate change march in Quebec City on April 11, 2015, and the People’s Climate March, the largest march ever for global action on climate change, which took place on September 21, 2014. *Peoplesclimate.org* claims 2646 solidarity events took place in 162 countries, with 400 000 people taking part in the largest march in New York City.

infrastructure projects were reviewed holistically, with an effort to enable broad participation and to meet intervenors within their own communities and contexts, the numerous changes contained in Bill C-38, passed in 2012, augur a dramatic shift in the opposite direction.<sup>566</sup> As just one example, former senior government official and BC Hydro CEO Marc Eliesen resigned his intervenor status in the Kinder Morgan Trans Mountain pipeline review in a detailed letter in which he described the National Energy Board as a ‘truly captured regulator’ in which “this so-called public hearing process has become a farce” (Eliesen ).<sup>567</sup> As was the case for Gwich’in in 1987, First Nations and civil society organizers are faced with the task of forcing their recognition and meaningful participation within established processes from ‘outside’, through impressive shows of democratic people power.

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<sup>566</sup> West Coast Environmental Law’s website (“The Smoking Gun”) offers a good summary of these changes, which replaced the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act (CEAA) with CEAA 2012, reduced habitat protections in the Fisheries Act, removed protections for all navigable waterways in Canada excepted for a small number of waterways that appear on a list, and made amendments to the mandate and powers of the National Energy Board (NEB).

<sup>567</sup> 468 of 2000 applicants were refused intervenor status in the Kinder Morgan hearings. Changes in C-32 restricted who was eligible to be an intervenor to those considered to be ‘directly affected’; the onus is on an intervenor to explain in a nine page form why he or she should be eligible to make a submission. The decision on status is non-transparent and cannot be appealed. See Ball. Twenty-seven climate experts, including economists, scientists, and political and social scientists, were rejected because the NEB excluded consideration of climate change impacts from the terms of reference for the pipeline review. See Linnitt. Eliesen went so far as to state that “The evidence on the record shows that decisions made by the Board at this hearing are dismissive of Intervenors. They reflect a lack of respect for hearing participants, a deep erosion of the standards and practices of natural justice that previous Boards have respected, and an undemocratic restriction of participation by citizens, communities, professionals and First Nations either by rejecting them outright or failing to provide adequate funding to facilitate meaningful participation.”



In such circumstances, it is tempting to turn to the part of my research results that theorizes and documents how *Being Caribou* was used to ‘scale up’ grassroots participation before key Congressional votes. Indeed, I believe this is an important research contribution. The insight that, carefully done, storytelling forms part of a robust process of cultivating distributed grassroots leadership, has applications that extend far beyond the case of the Arctic Refuge into more general social movement building. Because of its far longer time frame of coalition building, Arctic Refuge organizing offers insights that the study of more recent petroculture infrastructure ‘flashpoints’ cannot. Additionally, experience from the Being Caribou expedition time period is revealing because interviewees were more transparent than is possible with cases today, when rules have come into effect that stifle the ability of Canadian bureaucrats (other than communications staff) to speak freely, and of researchers to access basic environmental science and stewardship information that once was considered part of the public record.<sup>568</sup>

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<sup>568</sup> The terms of northern land claims and self-government agreements have sheltered northern communities from some of the sweeping changes further south. For example, the Umbrella Final Agreements created Yukon’s own Environmental and Socio-Economic Assessment Act and Board (YESAA and YESAB), which were unaffected by changes to CEAA. More recently the federal government has separately proposed changes to YESAA, which Yukon First Nations have vowed to challenge in court. Similarly, although theoretically they are co-management arrangements, individuals at the PCMB and staff and former staff of the northern parks seemed to feel empowered to speak to me without going through a federal communications minder. However, I have had to be circumspect in presenting information about behind the scenes activities of the Canadian government in Washington in part because of a climate of fear in which interviewees felt that their jobs or the jobs of their colleagues could be at risk through information that was shared with me. The silencing of Canadian scientists and bureaucrats, which has made headlines globally, is further discussed in Roburn (“Dispatch”).

But while it is tempting to focus on storytelling as a tool for scaling up mass action, this emphasis misses an important part of story's work in social movements. As Gwich'in emphasized to me over and over, we must not only tell stories, we must tell good stories. A good story is a story of right relationship, and it is deeply rooted in community and shared responsibility. If we are to tell good stories, the question to ask is not "What stories must First Nations and social movements tell to challenge the excess of petroculture?" but "How do we establish and maintain the strong relationships, shared authority, and good communication that will allow powerful and truthful stories to emerge?"

Social movements, First Nations, social purpose media makers, and philanthropists already consider such questions. However, while a number of good initiatives work at an outreach level—for example, the Sierra Club has built links with Outdoor Afro to bring African Americans into the conservation community<sup>569</sup>—it is much more challenging to meaningfully share power and resources, and to take such questions to heart in developing not just storytelling capacity, but conceptual models for community organizing.

Change makers often turn to indigenous allies and thinkers to address questions that directly pertain to indigenous issues. Yet neither indigenous expertise in storytelling nor in law/governance seem to percolate as easily into evolving social change theory and

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<sup>569</sup> Outdoor Afro is an organization that works to celebrate African American connections to wilderness and outdoor recreation. Founder Rue Mapp was invited on a summer 2014 rafting trip in the Arctic Refuge to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Wilderness Act and was a featured speaker at the Sierra Club's online 'hangout' celebrating the anniversary. Local Sierra Clubs also help promote Outdoor Afro meetups and events. See <http://www.mnn.com/earth-matters/wilderness-resources/blogs/rafting-through-anwr-to-protect-the-last-great-wilderness>.

praxis. For instance, on June 14<sup>th</sup>, 2014, OrganizeBC held a training attended by numerous civil society groups in coastal British Columbia that was billed as the following:

Be inspired and leave empowered with actionable tools to get your community involved in stopping oil tankers and pipelines through our province! Learn to tell a compelling story, recruit and maintain a team, and create a timeline and strategy in this crash course introductory workshop by OrganizeBC. This is a collaborative and hands-on training on the Marshall Ganz Community Organizing model ... This training is what will level up the work that we do and set us up to build the power we need to protect the coast.<sup>570</sup>

The announcement went on to specify that attending organizers would form a core group of anti-pipeline organizers in the Greater Vancouver area. The organizations involved explicitly stress decolonization and, to accomplish their objectives, need to work in alliance with coastal First Nations. Yet their philosophy of organizing is an imported one. Where are efforts to learn about, draw upon, or work with thousands of year old First Nations storytelling traditions as part of developing new models of social movement organizing? The case of the Being Caribou expedition and broader Arctic Refuge organizing challenges social change makers to bring indigenous knowledge more broadly into dialogue with community organizing. What could be gained by integrating Indigenous Métissage and other First Nations thought frameworks into the social change

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<sup>570</sup> The full text of the announcement is visible at [http://www.bcorganize.ca/traceylikesyou/organizebc\\_training\\_vancouver](http://www.bcorganize.ca/traceylikesyou/organizebc_training_vancouver).

theories currently shaping social movement work on climate change and energy development? What if the difficult work of decolonization—of recognizing and reckoning with the historical truths of indigenous dispossession of and alienation from traditional territories, and of subjugation under various Canadian and American laws—were more frequently part of conversations on social innovation and resilience? How might such frames unseat the turn towards positivist quantitative metrics of social change, such as ‘impact assessment,’ that are being taken up by a growing cluster of researchers, training organizations, and members of the Canadian and American philanthropic establishment?<sup>571</sup>

The issue of developing long-term, ‘right’ relationships—a critical concern of Indigenous Métissage—is at the core of challenges common to both calving grounds debates and present day energy development questions. Davis’s work with coastal First Nations within the Turning Point Initiative (“Home or Global Treasure”; “The High

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<sup>571</sup> For example, the McConnell Foundation has a themed Social Innovation program and fund; the University of Waterloo has an Institute for Social Innovation and Resilience whose work increasingly overlaps with such funders as McConnell; and the Hollyhock Leadership Institute runs a number of activities every year as a part of its Social Innovation Conference Series. Social innovation theory acknowledges an intellectual heritage in resilience theory, which includes a focus on traditional knowledge and experiences of indigenous communities adapting to rapid change. However, in practice social innovation initiatives and frameworks tend to focus on ‘applied dissemination’, ‘scaling up’ and impact evaluation metrics. See <http://tamarackcommunity.ca/ssi.html#overview>. Even as social change practitioners and researchers attempt to focus on complexity (Gopal), and incorporate more nuanced models of social movement leadership development (Jagpal and Schlegel), the very nature of evaluation and assessment metrics tend to favour that which is quantifiable. Such frameworks are valuable—achieving social change requires reaching critical mass—but they are also partial.

Stakes”) foregrounds the complexity of alliance building between First Nations and conservation groups as

relationships unfolded through a number of stages: confrontation, learning, alliance building, and shifting terrains. Such relationships were not only sites of intense learning and transformation for the parties involved (particularly non- Indigenous people) but also represented a microcosm of the colonial relationships that exist in the wider society (Davis, “Home or Global Treasure” 10-11).

Davis identified specific ongoing tensions within such alliances around developing respectful, appropriate relationships and coming to a shared vision (33).

“Good stories” are not just important for building mass participation: they are essential to creating shared purpose amongst disparate coalition partners. When shared appropriately,<sup>572</sup> social movement stories provide a flexible framework for reworking relationships and surfacing tensions in a creative and depersonalized setting, where they are more likely to be addressed productively rather than approached with fear. Effective storytelling is inherently relational; whether in First Nations contexts or in social movement building, stories ‘work’ when they engage listeners in a personal reflection/relationship. Rather than scaling ‘up’, such reflections scale wide and deep, connecting individuals to others who might share their values and dilemmas, and causing people to profoundly question their perspectives and understandings.

Meaningful coalition building requires such work. It depends on the subtleties of cross-cultural relationships, on often deeply personal processes of transformational

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<sup>572</sup> An example could be a story being shared using an Indigenous Métissage framework.

change, and on the enduring power of bonds forged through shared experience and common stories. If northern communities are to effectively address not just calving grounds development, but the innumerable changes and challenges brought about by climate change, proposals for northern development, and the economic and social models that subtend our present day petroculture, they will need to continue to work translocally, building shared understandings with allies across North America and the world. In this bridging work, the Being Caribou stories offered an entryway to much older stories of caribou migration, translocal connection, human/animal relationships, and thousands of years of First Nations and Inuit stewardship in the far north. In closing, I would like to offer a final frame for the long, slow work of storytelling: that of restoring an ecology, or rebalancing relationships in the life-world.

### ***Being Caribou and the Work of Ecological Restoration***<sup>573</sup>

There is another way of understanding the call of the caribou to Karsten Heuer on the banks of the Firth River in 2001. It is the way that both he and Esau Schafer struggled to articulate, an instinct that, in listening to the caribou, they were being called, in Robert Bringhurst's words, to "rejoin[ing] the community of speaking beings—sandhill cranes, whitebark pines, coyotes, wood frogs, bees and thunder" (Bringhurst, "The Tree" 20), an act that Bringhurst describes as "rekindling oral culture." For the falcons, the foxes, and the bears that day, the caribou were speaking: their voices carried through the sound of their hooves, the action of their sweep over the land, and their vibration/participation in

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<sup>573</sup> I am grateful to both Audrey Roburn and Brandon Kyikivichik for conversations that helped me elaborate the ideas that follow.

the field of the sensible. These called the other creatures, hungry from the long winter, to follow.

In a similar way, caribou stories—which may be passed down from elders, learned on the land, or communicated directly through dreams in which caribou appear (and speak) —call on human creatures. Through careful consideration of such stories, Gwich'in, Inuvialuit and other northern First Nations people constantly recalibrate their relationships with caribou, deciding where and when to hunt, how to behave in a respectful way in preparing meat and acknowledging the gift of the caribou, and what protocols to follow and choices to make in living in a good way. This recalibration of relationships is what ecology is, or rather, what a restorative ecology is: taking into consideration the state of interrelationships between organisms and their environments, and then acting to create a better balance.

When, with colonization and the establishment of Canada and the United States, decision-making about the Porcupine caribou migrated to a translocal sphere, the relative speech of caribou communities was greatly diminished. The conversations and considerations necessary for human beings and caribou to live in balance simply did not take place on the necessary scale. Caribou stories were local stories: before the Gwich'in and their Alaska Coalition allies began their translocal work, seeding and circulating stories in the body politic, such stories did not reach far-away decision-makers, or were crowded out by more powerful tales of manifest destiny, progress, energy security, and other dominant cultural concerns. The way to rebalance this situation, and prevent a relative decline in caribou speech from turning into an absolute one, was to grow the presence of caribou stories.

The task was, in fact, even larger: because common direct channels to democratic decision makers (hearings, legal briefs, etc.) were often not commensurable with storytelling, Gwich'in and the Alaska Coalition had to grow their storytelling within public culture, and within targeted communities (social movements) where such stories could more easily take root. Caribou stories entered new ecologies, ranging from the Internet to the polity of the Episcopal Church. Where caribou stories appeared, they shifted relationships, challenging preconceived notions of the calving grounds as a cold, blank space, and creating points of connection between Gwich'in and other North Americans.

Building on work that had come before, the Being Caribou project helped grow the ecology of caribou stories to fill the translocal niche occupied by the expanded political jurisdictions that had come to govern caribou relationships. It bolstered the presence of Porcupine caribou as speaking beings within a North American sensible. The exchange of caribou stories was essential for building emotional, intellectual and spiritual reciprocity between caribou and human beings, which was then expressed in how governance systems—be they traditional on the land protocols or Congressional legislation—were enacted. Without caribou stories, the work of protecting the calving grounds could not have succeeded.

The Being Caribou project and the broader sweep of Arctic Refuge storytelling through time also speak to something larger. Storytelling—whether in First Nations contexts or in the broader public sphere—plays a crucial role in rebalancing relations between humans and the more-than-human world. Because the power of story is not prescriptive, but flexible, relational, and open; because the possibility of story is that of



encounter, of the unexpected, and of transformational change; it is spirit more than specificity that can be gleaned from the *Being Caribou* story to apply to present day petroculture. Each situation greets its own story; each community walks its own path. Yet one thing is clear: the ecology of story is vital to ecology itself. In nurturing good stories—stories that are truthful, connected, and reciprocal in their dealings with all beings—we grow the resilience of our cultures, and our ability to greet the future with knowledge and hope.

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## **Appendix 1**

### **Partial List of Northern Consultations by Being Caribou Prior to the Expedition Journey**

Alaska Department of Fish and Wildlife

Canadian Wildlife Service (mainly caribou biologist Don Russell)

Government departments in NWT and Yukon. Some departments have been reorganized and renamed since 2002—for example Yukon’s Department of Renewable Resources has been rebranded Environment Yukon—but consultation was mainly with those responsible for wildlife monitoring, such as Regional Biologist Dorothy Cooley.

Renewable resource comanagement organizations in Inuvik, Aklavik, Tsiigehtchic, Fort McPherson, and Old Crow. The various bodies exist under different land claims agreements and have different structures, but can be inferred from commentary in *Being Caribou* (2006: 13) included the Ehdiitat Gwich’in Renewable Resource Council, Gwichya Gwich’in Renewable Resource Council, North Yukon Renewable Resource Council, Nihtat Gwich’in Renewable Resource Council, and Tetlit Gwich’in Renewable Resource Council.

Inuvialuit Game Council

Inuvialuit Hunter and Trapper Committees in Inuvik and Aklavik

North Slope Game Council

North Yukon Renewable Resource Council

Parks Canada

Porcupine Caribou Management Board

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (who manage the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge)

Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation

Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board

In addition to consulting with organizations, Allison and Heuer consulted with numerous knowledgeable individuals, including Gwich’in elders such as Randall Tetlichi, Inupiat elder Isaac Akootchook, and long-time northern residents including ANWR historian Roger Kaye and bush pilot Walt Audi and his wife Marilyn

**Appendix 2**  
**Partial List of Film Festivals Where *Being Caribou* Screened**

<b>2004 – 2005 Festival Circuit Screenings</b>					
<b>Status</b>	<b>Locale</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Event</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Award if applicable</b>
Award Winner	Missoula	USA	International Wild Life Film Festival	09-Sept-2004	Screening Award
Award Winner	Missoula	USA	International Wild Life Film Festival	09-Sept-2004	Finalist Award
Award Winner	Missoula	USA	International Wild Life Film Festival	09-Sept-2004	Merit Award for Dedication to a Nature Cause
Award Winner	Vancouver	Canada	Vancouver International Film Festival	23-Sep-2004	Federal Express Award for Most Popular Canadian Film – ex-aequo with <i>What Remains of Us</i>
Award Winner	Calgary	Canada	Calgary International Film Festival	24-Sep-2004	AGF People's Choice Award
Selected	Toronto	Canada	Planet in Focus International Environmental Film & Video Festival	28-Sep-2004	
Award Winner	Santa Cruz	USA	Earth Vision Film & Video Festival	27-Oct-2004	Honourable Mention
Selected	Banff	Canada	Banff Mountain Film Festival	30-Oct-2004	
Selected	Shepherdstown	USA	American Conservation Film Festival	04-Nov-2004	
Award Winner	Portland	USA	International Nature and Environmental (PINE) Film Festival	06-Nove- 2004	Award for Best Nature Film
Selected	Whistler	Canada	Whistler Film Festival	02-Dec-2004	
Award Winner	Nevada City	USA	Wild & Scenic Environmental Film Festival	07-Jan-2005	People's Choice Award for Best Film
Award Winner	Victoria	Canada	Independent Film and Video Festival	04-Feb-2005	Audience Favourite Award

<b>2004 – 2005 Festival Circuit Screenings (page 2)</b>					
<b>Status</b>	<b>Locale</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Event</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Award if applicable</b>
Award Winner	Victoria	Canada	Independent Film and Video Festival	04-Feb-2005	Audience Favourite Award
Award Winner	Flagstaff	USA	Flagstaff Mountain Film Festival	17-Feb-2005	Jury's Award
Award Winner	Vancouver	Canada	Vancouver International Mountain Film Festival	20-Feb-2005	Award for Best Canadian Mountain Film
Award Winner	Vancouver	Canada	Vancouver International Mountain Film Festival	20-Feb-2005	Festival Grand Prize - Dan Culver Award
Selected	Whitehorse	Canada	Available Light Film Festival	01-Mar-2005	
Selected	Nanaimo	Canada	Moving Pictures Canadian Film Festival	11-Mar-2005	
Selected	Newport	USA	Newport Beach Film Festival	21-Apr-2005	
Selected	Boulder	USA	Boulder Adventure Film Festival	23-Apr-2005	
Selected	Manchester	England	The Commonwealth Film Festival	29-Apr-2005	
Selected	Trento	Italy	International Festival of Mountain and Exploration Films Citta di Trento	30-Apr-2005	
Selected	Seattle	USA	Seattle International Film Festival	19-May-2005	
Selected	Telluride	USA	Telluride Mountain Film Festival	27-May-2005	Best Environmental Film
Award Winner	Bratislava	Slovakia	International Festival of Mountain Film and Adventure	May 26 to 29 2005	Award – Category: Earth
Selected	Victoria	Canada	Lands and People Festival (music and film festival of the Dogwood Initiative)	02-Jun-2005	
Selected	Lake Hawea	New Zealand	Wanaka Mountain Film Festival	03-Jun-2005	
Selected	Silver Spring	USA	AFI Documentary Festival / Silverdocs	14-Jun-2005	
Selected	Greece	Greece	Rhodes Ecofilm Festival	21-Jun-2005	
Selected	Hot Springs	USA	Hot Springs Documentary Film Festival	Oct 23 and 25 2005	
Selected	Colorado Springs	USA	Rocky Mountain Women's Film Festival	05-Nov-2005	



<b>2004 – 2005 Festival Circuit Screenings (page 3)</b>					
<b>Status</b>	<b>Locale</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Event</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Award if applicable</b>
Selected	Rochester	USA	High Falls Film Festival	12-Nov-2005	
Award Winner	Anchorage	Alaska	Anchorage International Film Festival	December 2-11 2005	
Award Winner	Various venues	Japan	Japan Wildlife Film Festival	Aug-2005	Best Environment and Conservation Film (shared with <i>Strange Days on Planet Earth</i> )
Award Winner	Kendal	UK	Kendal Mountain Film Festival	Nov-2005	Best Environmental Film
Selected for some sites	Various venues	Canada USA	Banff Mountain Film Festival World Tour	2005	
Not Selected	17 festivals				

### Appendix 3

<b>Partial List of Television Screenings of <i>Being Caribou</i>: <i>Being Caribou</i> Air Dates and Audience Viewership in Canada, 2003-5</b>					
<b>Program</b>	<b>Network</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Air Date</b>	<b>Estimated Viewership</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<i>The National</i>	CBC	Feature Documentary segment	October 28, 2003 at 10pm	650 000-750 000	See <a href="http://playbackonline.ca/2005/08/29/ratings-20050829/">http://playbackonline.ca/2005/08/29/ratings-20050829/</a> ; <a href="http://www.rrj.ca/m3497">http://www.rrj.ca/m3497</a> ; estimate based on Nielsen ratings for the program in 2004-2005
<i>The Nature of Thing</i>	CBC	<i>Being Caribou</i> part 1	Thursday June 23, 2005 at 7pm in most markets*	160 000*	These numbers are provided directly by CBC via the NFB. However, due to the CBC strike, the air date in BC and some other regions was different for Part 1, so this figure for estimated viewership is low as it doesn't include markets where part 1 aired on a different day
<i>The Nature of Things</i>	CBC	<i>Being Caribou</i> part 2	Thursday June 30, 2005 at 7pm	216 000	
N/A	CBC Newsworld	<i>Being Caribou</i> part 1	Sunday August 7, 2005 at 7pm and 4am	45 000; IFR (low number but poor data for overnight)	CBC Newsworld data is an average over a 6-hour period
	CBC Newsworld	<i>Being Caribou</i> part 1	Saturday August 13, 2005 at 4pm and 3am	31 000 + 3000	CBC Newsworld data is an average over a 6-hour period
	CBC Newsworld	<i>Being Caribou</i> part 2	Sunday August 14, 2005 at 12 noon	25 000	CBC Newsworld data is an average over a 6-hour period

**Appendix 4**  
**Estimated Viewership of *Being Caribou* in Canada through NFB Sponsored Screenings**

These estimates cover the time from *Being Caribou*'s release till March 31, 2006, the year end for annual reporting purposes

<b>Canadian Screenings as Calculated from National Film Board Data</b>						
<b>Program</b>	<b>Time Period</b>	<b>Assumed Length of Individual Film Loan</b>	<b>Number of Copies in Circulation</b>	<b>Audience Size Estimate per Screening</b>	<b>Total Viewership</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Donation of film to public libraries	Copies shared by end of 2004, estimate for 15-month period	Assume 1 loan per 4 weeks; film in permanent collection	40-50	2 per viewing	2400-3000	Usually DVDs loan out for only a few days; 2 loans a month is a conservative estimate; 2 per viewing is also conservative as some viewings were by groups.
Donation of film to public libraries	From film release in 2004-2005	Public screenings through NFB Film Clubs	10-15	50	500-750	Jane Gutteridge indicated that some of the libraries that received the film did public screenings. Generally, these libraries were part of the NFB Film Club. NFB annual report data for 2006 says Film Club screenings averaged 50 viewers.
<b>Total public library donation program</b>					<b>2900-3750</b>	

Canadian Screenings as Calculated from National Film Board Data (page 2)						
Program	Time Period	Assumed Length of Individual Film Loan	Number of Copies in Circulation	Audience Size Estimate per Screening	Total Viewership	Notes
Community Screening Program	From Dec 2004 – March 31 2006	3 weeks (only 1 for Dec 2004)	35-50	50	38 000-54 000	Gutteridge estimated 35 DVDs and VHS tapes in circulation in our personal interview; However, NFB 2005-6 annual report claimed 50 copies in full-time circulation.
<b>OR</b>						
Community Screening Program	Extrapolation from Gutteridge's Jan-Jun 2005 spreadsheet figures	Took these figures x 2.75 for whole 2004 – March 31 <sup>st</sup> 2006 time period	Assumed report-back rate of 35%; many organizers did not send on their figures.	6757 viewers in 117 screenings in 77 communities	53 090	Most of the report-backs from screenings had viewership numbers; for those lacking I estimated 30 per school screening, 60 per community and 15 per unspecified/house party viewing.
<b>Total community screening programs (NFB internal)</b>					<b>38 000 – 54 000</b>	

Canadian Screenings as Calculated from National Film Board Data (page 3)						
Program	Time Period	Assumed Length of Individual Film Loan	Number of Copies in Circulation	Audience Size Estimate per Screening	Total Viewership	Notes
Living Room Screening Program – Partnership with WildCanada	Only up until March 31; report was for the end of the fiscal year and the “action day” was geared to the 12 <sup>th</sup> of March	N/A		2700 public screenings	“At least” 300 000 people	Jane Gutteridge's report on the campaign (internal NFB document) reported this information and indicated that the NFB directly supported 70 individual screening contacts.

## Appendix 5

This appendix provides materials that were provided along with the *Being Caribou* DVD (or VHS tape) in Arctic Action Day video party kits. The 4 page “Arctic Truth” flyer, which was put together by Erica Heuer, was used by the Alaska Wilderness League and distributed to local organizers, but was not included in all variants of the Arctic Action Kit.

The kit items that follow are:

“Kick Off Your Campaign—Organize a Video Party” instruction sheet

“Exercising Your Right to Write” information sheet

“Video Party Sign-Up for More Information and E-mail Updates”

Arctic action flyer “Simple Things You Can Do to Help Protect America’s Arctic National Wildlife Refuge”

“Ten Grassroots Actions You Can Take” flyer

“50 Things You Can Do to Protect the Arctic Refuge” flyer

“Arctic Truth” flyer



## ***KICK OFF YOUR CAMPAIGN – ORGANIZE A VIDEO PARTY!***

As you begin planning your local Arctic campaign, think about how you can start raising awareness of the Arctic issue in your community. The outreach you do on the issue now will build a foundation for effective Arctic activism and events in the future.

One way to kick off your campaign is to have an Arctic video and letter writing party. The type of event you have really depends on you: it can be a small get together with coffee, cookies, and friends; it can be an afternoon study break or a dorm-wide activity if you are a student; or just part of your organization's scheduled meeting. What really matters is communication: letting people know what is at stake and what they can do to help make a difference. So, to the specifics:

1. Write up an invitation to hand out, mail out, or email. You can invite friends, family, co-workers, hiking buddies, students, members of your parish, or pretty much anyone you like.
2. Three days before, call people and remind them. A reminder call or an e-mail can help folks realize just how important it is for them to come by.
3. The day of the event, make sure your VCR works, and that you have plenty of paper, pens, pencils, envelopes, stamps, etc. It is also nice to have some talking points or sample letters handy (we have this information if you need help). A jar for folks to make donations to help cover postage costs is always a good idea.
4. Show the video to your guests. Talk to them about the issue and what is at stake. Then, have everyone sit down and write letters on the spot. Some will say, "don't worry, I'll do it later". Nine out of ten times they won't and the Refuge needs all the help we can get! Insist they do it now!
5. Finally, get everyone's email address and phone number so when an important vote comes up, you can call them and have them call your Senator and / or Representative's office. The combination of letters before and calls the day of the vote will help them come to the right decision about the Arctic Refuge!
6. If you have any questions, or would like more information, contact Erik at the Alaska Wilderness League at (202)-544-5205, or by email at [erik@alaskawild.org](mailto:erik@alaskawild.org).
7. Most important, HAVE FUN!

***Good luck!***



*"Your voice for Alaska's wilderness in  
the Nation's Capital"*

## Exercising Your Right to Write

*Writing a letter to your Representative is one of the most effective ways to make your voice heard.*

**Here are a couple of important tips to keep in mind when writing your member of Congress.**

### **DO: Address your letter properly**

The Honorable (full name)  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable (full name)  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Representative (last name),

Dear Senator (last name),

### **DO identify the bill or issue**

i.e. The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge Wilderness Act (HR 770 in the House / S 411 in the Senate)

### **DO make your letter reasonably brief**

Keep your letter concise and to the point, and try to keep it to 1 page. It is not necessary that your letter be typed, only that it be legible.

### **DO ask for a response**

i.e. I look forward to hearing your position on this matter.

**You can find more information  
at [www.alaskawild.org](http://www.alaskawild.org)**

### **DO make it personal**

A personal letter is far more effective than a form letter. Express why this issue is important to YOU.  
i.e. I really care about the future of the Gwich'in people, or every spring I enjoy watching tundra swans and semi-palmated sandpipers migrate from their Arctic Refuge nesting areas through Illinois.

### **DO ask for a specific action**

i.e. I am writing to ask you to cosponsor the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge Wilderness Act

### **Sample Writing Points:**

- The Arctic Refuge coastal plain is the last 5% of Alaska's Arctic Slope that is off limits to oil drilling.
- One of the last subsistence native cultures, the Gwich'in people would be devastated by oil development in the refuge.
- The coastal plain is the biological heart of the Arctic Refuge. It is home to a variety of wildlife including polar bears, musk ox, wolves, caribou, and millions of migratory birds from four continents.
- The oil fields of Prudhoe Bay, which average 500 oil spills a year, demonstrate that even "responsible" drilling can cause tremendous damage.
- Like Yellowstone National Park, the Grand Canyon and the Everglades, the Arctic Refuge is part of our national heritage and must be protected for future generations.
- . . . that is why I am asking you to co-sponsor legislation (HR 770 in the house and S 411 in the senate) to permanently protect the Coastal Plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

***The letters you write are a small investment in time and energy, but will have an important impact!***



### Video Party Sign-Up for More Information and E-mail Updates

Location: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Contact person: \_\_\_\_\_

Name	Address/City/State/Zip	Phone	Email	I want to volunteer

Keep one copy

Send original to the Alaska Wilderness League, 122 C Street NW, Ste 240, Washington DC, 20001



## Simple things you can do to help protect America's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge

**1. Write a letter to your senator or representative!** Keep the letter concise and focus on why you think the Arctic Refuge should be protected.

Senator X  
US Senate  
Washington DC, 20510

Representative X  
US House of Representatives  
Washington DC, 20515

**2. Call your senators' and representative's offices and tell them you oppose drilling in the Arctic Refuge.** Use the Arctic hotline number to do it tollfree: 1-888-8-WILDAK (1-888-894-5325).

**3. Participate in Arctic Action Day on March 12!**

On Saturday, March 12, people all over the country, in their living rooms, local libraries, and theaters will be hosting screenings of documentaries about America's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

Order a DVD to hold your own showing or go to <http://groups-beta.google.com/group/arcticaction> to find one to attend.

- To order the *Being Caribou* DVD and action kit, email: [arcticaction@alaskawild.org](mailto:arcticaction@alaskawild.org)
- To order the *Oil on Ice* DVD and action kit, visit: [http://sierraclub.org/oilonice/house\\_party/](http://sierraclub.org/oilonice/house_party/)

**4. Write a letter to your local newspaper.** For information on how to send a letter to your local paper, or even to find out which paper to write to, go to <http://capwiz.com/awc/dbq/media/>. Remember, letter to newspapers should be 200 words or less!

**5. Have a letter writing party!** Invite some friends over to talk about the Arctic Refuge and write letters to your senators and representatives.

**6. Pump 'em up!** The U.S. could save as much oil in a year as would be produced by drilling the Arctic Refuge if drivers simply pumped up their car tires to proper inflation levels. Go to [www.pumpemup.org](http://www.pumpemup.org) to find out how to participate in this campaign!

**7. Organize a rally in your town for America's Arctic Wildlife Refuge!**

**8. Get the word out.** Set up a table at the local mall, shopping center, community park, or zoo and pass out information about the Arctic Refuge and ask people to write letters. Get in touch with [erik@alaskawild.org](mailto:erik@alaskawild.org) for materials.

**9. Do a photo petition.** Set up a table in an area with lots of pedestrian traffic. Make a small sign to asking your senators and representatives to protect the Arctic Refuge. Have a Polaroid camera ready, and everyone who comes by write their name and address on a blank piece of paper. Take a photo of each person holding their name sign and the Arctic sign. Collect the photos and mail them to your senators and representatives!

**10. Raise your wrist for the Refuge!** Show your support for protecting the Refuge with our new green bracelet — all you pay for is shipping. To get yours, send an email to [bracelet@alaskawild.org](mailto:bracelet@alaskawild.org).



## 10 Grassroots Actions You Can Take

*~fun and effective ideas for protecting the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge~*

### 1.) Contacts with Congressional Offices:

- a.) Letters
  - ✓ Hand-written letters are most effective.
  - ✓ Make the letter personal- tell why the issue matters to you.
  - ✓ Ask for a written response.
- b.) Phone Calls
  - ✓ More effective when time is limited.
  - ✓ Ask for the Environmental Legislative Aide.
- c.) E-mails: not always recommended, varies from office to office
- d.) Petitions: use sparingly.
  - ✓ More useful for getting a list of supporters/ volunteers than for influencing the office.

### 2.) How to get letters/ phone calls:

- a.) Meetings
- b.) Tablings
- c.) Phone trees
- d.) Phone Banking

### 3.) Congressional meetings

- a.) Getting an Appointment
  - ✓ Find out the Congressional recess schedule in advance- call the district office.
  - ✓ Get letters and calls in to the office before you try for an appointment.
  - ✓
- b.) At the Meeting:
  - ✓ Make a specific request (co-sponsorship of a bill, etc.).
  - ✓ Dress appropriately; be polite.
  - ✓ Try to make a personal connection.
  - ✓ Don't lie- if they ask you something you don't know. Tell them you don't know, but you'll find out and get back to them. Don't fudge your way- you'll lose credibility.
- c.) After the Meeting:
  - ✓ Send a thank-you
  - ✓ Answer any questions you couldn't answer before
  - ✓ Follow up on your request

### 4.) Grassroots Media – Letters to the Editor

- a.) Why:
  - ✓ Respond to positive or inaccurate news article or editorial.
  - ✓ Put pressure on your target.
  - ✓ Show how your issue relates to other issues being covered in the paper.
  - ✓ Furnish news that's not being covered.



b.) Tips:

- ✓ Follow the paper guidelines – length, etc. (try to keep under 200 words).
- ✓ Be timely: relate the letter to an article or editorial recently in the paper.
- ✓ Stick to one subject and one angle: rather than listing three. reasons Rep. So- and So should co-sponsor a bill, stick to one.
- ✓ Concentrate on the local angle.
- ✓ Call the editorial department to ask if they'll print your letter
- ✓ Fax your published letter to your Congressman's office with a note
- ✓

5.) **Bird-Dogging:**

- ✓ Find out the member's schedule – town meetings, appearances, etc.
- ✓ Show up at one of these public events with signs and handouts promoting the cause.

6.) **Guerilla Theater / Street Theater:**

- ✓ Can be pulled off quickly, get good results.
- ✓ Have good visuals, costumes.
- ✓ Perform in a busy location.
- ✓ Bring petitions for people to sign.
- ✓ Alert the press.
- ✓ Can be combined with other tactics (such as a press conference).

7.) **Rallies:**

- ✓ Rallies only work if they're big.
- ✓ Press attention is key.
- ✓ Visuals are really important!!!
- ✓ Don't do too often or they will lose their impact!

8.) **Sign-On Letters:**

- ✓ Set a goal on group signers.
- ✓ Try to get non-traditional allies on board.
- ✓ Good recruitment tactic.
- ✓ Do a press release.
- ✓ Follow up with more pressure.

9.) **Building Strategic Alliances:**

- ✓ Reach out to non-traditional allies – religious community, scientific community, medical community, for support.
- ✓ Find communities, organizations, or individuals who are likely to have more influence with your target (e.g. of the same religious faith, etc.).
- ✓ Ask the person / organization to do something easy – sign-on letter, meeting, etc.
- ✓ Don't assume they don't care about the issue.
- ✓ Build a long-term relationship.

10.) **Use your creativity and think of other ways you can make a difference for the Arctic!**

- Lead a local hike, emphasize wilderness in your area and in the Arctic
- Have an Alaska themed arts/crafts display
- Have an 'Alaska Night' at the climbing gym
- Tabling for the Arctic on campus, at the local mall, at community events
- Offer to speak to other groups about the refuge
- Contact teachers to "Adopt the Arctic Refuge" and teach the Arctic message
- Write an Op-Ed
- Appear on radio talk shows
- Create an Arctic Campaign page on group's website
- Put Arctic articles in other group newsletters and e-mail lists
- Work with public access TV channels to promote the issue
- Organize a video or slide show party

## ***50 Things You Can do to Protect the Arctic Refuge***

1. Thank my Representative for meeting with me, follow up with additional information
2. Lead a local hike, emphasize wilderness
3. Have an art/crafts of Alaska display
4. Give out black snow cones to raise awareness
5. Have an "Alaska Night" at the local climbing gym
6. Contact state environmental leaders to help coordinate a state Alaska Coalition
7. Organize letter writing drive
8. Organize letter to the editor drive
9. Write article on refuge for environmental magazines (Audubon, Sierra, Mountaineers)
10. Give a presentation about my DC experience to group members
11. Start an e-mail distribution list
12. Set up a phone tree
13. Have group write letters after Lenny's show
14. TALK! TALK! TALK! to friends, family, colleagues, anyone!
15. Petition Drive
16. Tabling for the Arctic on campus, at local mall, at community events
17. Offer to speak to other groups about the refuge
18. Collect Arctic Refuge handouts to give to friends and group members
19. Contact teachers to "Adopt the Arctic Refuge" and teach the Arctic message
20. Research my politicians' voting records and backgrounds
21. Arrange at outing to the Arctic Refuge (*and invite Jen*)
22. Build coalitions with non-traditional groups such as hunters, fishers, religious organizations, community service groups, etc.
23. Get a group of people to attend my Congressman's town meetings
24. Play video on school/public access TV
25. Write an Op-ed
26. Put together a slide presentation for editorial boards
27. Use Arctic Action e-mail list to inform and alert group members
28. Ask for interviews with the media
29. Build existing Alaska Coalition
30. Recruit new members to the campaign
31. Publish literature on personal journey to the Arctic Refuge
32. Hold a press conference following a large petition drive
33. Appear on radio talk shows
34. Create an Arctic Campaign page on group's website
35. Make an editorial board visit
36. Hold a large community event to promote issue; bring together diverse speakers, public officials, group leaders
37. Continue to keep in touch with contacts from Arctic Wilderness Week
38. Put Arctic articles in other group newsletters and e-mail lists
39. E-mail friends info about the refuge
40. Keep in touch with Congresspersons
41. Get other people to write letters
42. Reach out to student organizations
43. Find more resources (\$ and speakers)
44. Create own slide show from refuge trip
45. Work with educational TV channels (i.e. public access, discovery) to promote issue
46. Bring Ken or Lenny to my area
47. Organize a video or slide house party
48. Set up another meeting with my Congressman back at home
49. Host a Bringing Home Alaska house party
50. Utilize contacts in the music industry to seek out celebrity support for the refuge



# Arctic Truth



Photo: Karsten Heuer

## Top 10 Distortions in the Arctic Refuge Debate

*And Some of the People who Spread Them*

By Erica Heuer of Being Caribou

After 20 years of trying, the U.S. government has the representation it needs in the Senate and House of Congress to approve oil and gas drilling in Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. It is predicted the final vote to open the Refuge will take place in mid-September. While the Bush administration and its oil industry backers swear this is the oil that will free America from its dependence on foreign oil, scientists estimate a 6-month supply that won't hit markets for at least 10 years. The Refuge has become the symbol of a battle to access all America's protected wild lands. Unfortunately, the caribou, Gwich'in and Canadians will pay the price because this is precisely the

ribbon of land that has been the calving grounds for the 120,000-member Porcupine Caribou Herd, for 27,000 years.

This narrow band provides the perfect balance of abundant food and protection from predators and insects creating the ideal place to calve. Will 2005 be the year this changes forever?

Despite the U.S. Congress passing a budget with language to open the Refuge, the Refuge is still not open. And the caribou continue, for now, their age old circle of life.

In Whitehorse, people gathered on March 30 to ask our own and visiting

Alaskan politicians to do whatever was required to protect the Refuge. The participation of over 300 people got organizers a meeting with the Alaskans and during that discussion, Alaskan senators and representatives repeated many of the distortions addressed here.

**DISTORTION #1 Senator Ted Stevens:** The 1002 area is not in the Refuge and provisions of ANILCA "allow us to explore and develop" that area.

The Coastal Plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is also known as the 1002 area – named after Section 1002 of the Alaska National Interests Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) which makes clear in Sections 1002 and 1003 that the Coastal Plain is specifically closed to oil and gas production. The 1002 area has been part of the Arctic Refuge since its establishment in 1980, and has been set aside for its conservation values since 1959.

The Coastal Plain itself was "withdrawn from all forms of entry or appropriation under the mining laws, and from operation of the mineral leasing laws." Importantly, Congress

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also provided in section 1003 of ANILCA that:

Production of oil and gas from the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is prohibited and no leasing or other development leading to production of oil and gas from the range shall be undertaken until authorized by an Act of Congress.

## **DISTORTION #2** *Senator L. Murkowski: Exploration will occur on only 2,000 acres.*

Yes – within the 1002 lands which are only 100 miles long by 30 miles wide. The entire 1.5 million-acre coastal plain would still be opened to leasing.

Plus, the 2,000-acre provision applies only to some development infrastructure, facilities, or operations with no requirement that the 2,000 acres be concentrated in one spot.

In fact, the U.S. Geological Survey said whatever oil and gas is under the coastal plain is in small deposits spread throughout the plain. This is why the bill includes the entire coastal plain and not a smaller portion of it. To produce oil from this vast area, supporting infrastructure would have to stretch across the coastal plain.

## **DISTORTION #3** *Senator L. Murkowski: Gwich'in are not in the 1002 area – implying they have nothing at stake.*

This is a simple human rights issue. We have a right to continue our subsistence way of life. Oil drilling in the birth place and nursing grounds of the Porcupine Caribou Herd would hurt the caribou and threaten the future of my people." - Sarah James, Arctic Village.

About 7000 Gwich'in people live in 19 villages along the Porcupine Caribou Herd migration route in Alaska and northwest Canada. Archeological evidence suggests Gwich'in caribou hunters have lived there for more than 20,000 years. The 120,000-strong Porcupine caribou herd are at the

centre of Gwich'in culture and life. In many villages, caribou, fish and wild foods exceed 70% of the diet.

## **DISTORTION #4** *Senator L. Murkowski: Alaska's oil industry is the cleanest most tightly regulated in the world.*

There is no getting around it. Oil development and production create industrial sprawl – at present across more than 1,000 square miles of the North Slope. This huge industrial complex can be seen from space and includes production pads, gravel roads, airfields, pipelines, and huge amounts of pollution.

Prudhoe Bay experiences an average of one oil spill per day.

## **DISTORTION #5** *Senator Bennett: Oil activities will only occur in the winter.*

What, do they pack up the facilities and take them away in the summer?

Once oil is discovered, oil companies have never ceased production activity in the summer months on the North Slope. Vehicle, helicopter and airplane traffic, production plant noise, air pollution, and other activities create conflicts with wildlife in every season. Nowhere do caribou calve within 30 miles of any development. The 1002 lands are only 30 miles wide.

Winter exploration disturbs polar bears in their maternity dens and muskoxen, impacts fish habitats by removing massive amounts of water to build ice roads and ice pads, and damages plants and permafrost through snow and ice with seismic trails.

## **DISTORTION #6** *Senator P. Domenici: Alpine drilling is done from what looks like a "row of outhouses".*

Alpine is a northern site that began with promises of directional drilling. Ice roads were cited as a reason this

footprint could be so "small" – two drilling pads, a runway for jet airplanes, three miles of in-field roads and facilities that cover 100 acres of tundra and a 150-acre gravel mine.

Now, plans have been approved to build five more drill sites connecting to the initial Alpine oil field for a total of 7 drill sites, 33 miles of permanent gravel roads; two airstrips; two gravel mines; and 72 miles of pipelines. Information from Interior's Bureau of Land Management shows future oil and gas development for the Alpine Project is planned to include 24 more production drill sites, 122 more miles of roads, 7 more airports, 150 miles of pipeline, and 1262 more acres of tundra smothered by gravel.

## **DISTORTION #7** *Senator Pete Domenici: No roads.*

Every oil field on Alaska's North Slope has permanent gravel roads.

The original Alpine field – promoted to this day as a "roadless development" – has a permanent road connecting its drill sites. Late last year, 33 new miles of Alpine roads were approved. 122 more miles are predicted for the next phase of Alpine expansion.

Alpine is still promoted as "roadless" with this explanation: "Roadless never meant no roads, only that construction of permanent roads would be minimized."

## **DISTORTION #8** *Senator Pete Domenici: One million barrels a day potential.*

EIA's March 2004 report, "Analysis of Oil and Gas Production in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge," which optimistically used USGS estimates of technically recoverable oil, found:

If oil were discovered in commercial quantities, it would take 10 years before Refuge oil could first be produced. In 2015, it would only make up 0.3% of world oil production (300,000 barrels per day). Even when production peaked



Photo: Karsten Heuer

(in 2025), Arctic Refuge oil would make up only 7/10 of 1% (876,000 barrels per day) of world oil production and only 3% of U.S. oil consumption. Production would diminish steadily after 2025.

## **DISTORTION #9 and 10** *Senator Ted Stevens: The Central Arctic Herd has 300,000 members. Oil activities don't harm wildlife.*

The Central Arctic Herd has 32,000 members. While some bulls have become habituated to development, calving areas have moved completely away from oil activity and facilities – not an option in the 30-mile wide 1002 lands. Biologists have concluded that no calving occurs within 30 miles of any development.

The National Academy of Sciences and other studies show widespread harm to wildlife. "Animals have been affected by industrial activities on the North Slope... It is unlikely most disturbed wildlife habitat on the North Slope will ever be restored... the effects of abandoned structures and unrestored landscapes could persist for centuries."

# 11 Easy Ways to Really Help

Our goal is for every Canadian and American to see the film, *Being Caribou*, and then tell their politicians to act against drilling in the Refuge. **You can help:**

**1 Watch *Being Caribou*.** Phone, write, meet your local federal representative. Ask them to act against drilling in the Arctic Refuge. In Canada, ask

them, with the Prime Minister, to meet with and put pressure on key U.S. Senators. Ask them to stop transboundary projects – like the railway study and pipeline – with the Alaskan government, prime pushers of drilling in the Refuge.

**Get *Being Caribou* from the National Film Board (NFB).** Follow links at [www.beingcaribou.com](http://www.beingcaribou.com) to Buy a Film.

**2 Share *Being Caribou* with friends, family, co-workers.** Get it on your local cable TV.

**3 Make a list,** with mailing addresses, of everyone you know who should see *Being Caribou*. Send the film and list to the first person. Ask them to share it with everyone they know, then mail it to the next person on the list.

If you can buy more than one copy of the film to do this, please do.

**5 Ask everyone to: write and phone their politicians and go to [www.beingcaribou.com](http://www.beingcaribou.com) to order a film and start a mailing list.**

**6 [www.beingcaribou.com](http://www.beingcaribou.com).** Take Action and send a letter.

**7 Ask local groups** to host public screenings of *Being Caribou* and ask people to Take Action. (Excellent fundraiser.)



# The Human Perspective

By Tammy Josie, Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation

*"This is a simple human rights issue. We have a right to continue our subsistence way of life. Oil drilling in the birth place and nursing grounds of the Porcupine Caribou Herd would hurt the caribou and threaten the future of my people."*

- Sarah James, Arctic Village

Old Crow is a small town of 300 aboriginal people; known as the Vuntut Gwitchin. We are located at the confluence of the Crow and Porcupine Rivers – the only village in the Yukon without road access. We are also the only Yukon community located north of the Arctic Circle.

For thousands of years our ancestors used and continue to use the land and its

resources. We are called the "Vuntut Gwitchin" meaning "People of the Lakes". We are one of nineteen communities spread across the US State of Alaska and Canada's Yukon and western Northwest Territories.

We rely heavily on the land and on the Porcupine Caribou Herd for our food, shelter and medicines. Each family group in Old Crow has their own trapping area, referred by each family as "their" or "my country". This is an area that has been passed down from generation to generation.

Our main livelihood is trapping, hunting, and fishing. The Porcupine Caribou have been our source of meat as well as hide for boots, mitts, moccasins and traditional outfits, for generations. Everything of the caribou is used by our people. This next paragraph is a true story of our people, who to this day, live off the land and coexist with the great Porcupine Caribou Herd the way our ancestors did 20,000 years ago.

Gwitchin Elders deliberately placed all Gwitchin communities in areas where the Porcupine Caribou Herd roam on an annual basis. All parts of the caribou are used, from the head to the hooves. The head is saved to either roast over a fire or to make head soup – a delicacy reserved for special feast days – while the hooves are either boiled down into a jelly and eaten or hung and dried to later be tied to hunters' belts, becoming caribou chimes that clatter together and imitate the sound of walking caribou, masking the sound of the hunters' steps through the snow in the spring and over the tundra in the autumn. We the Vuntut Gwitchin live today as we have for tens of thousands of years. And we have the human right to continue to practice our traditional way of life.

Today, this traditional way of life is being threatened. Oil and gas companies want to develop and thus invade such a sacred land, the caribou calving grounds and the wintering areas of the Porcupine Caribou Herd.

In 2002, a U.S Geological Survey report based on 12 years of studies said the Porcupine Caribou herd is especially sensitive to development in the Arctic Refuge coastal plain. In 2002, the Porcupine Caribou Management Board's summer ecology report said how important the refuge coastal plain is to caribou calving, post-calving and its vulnerability to disturbance.

Often compared with the African Serengeti, this area is truly America's 'Last Great Wilderness.'

And ever since it became threatened back in 1987, the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation has been on the front lines, battling for permanent protection of this area. For the Porcupine Caribou Herd is the centre of the Vuntut Gwitchin culture and life; we still live in the traditional way, hunting the caribou for food and traditional clothing. Nothing is wasted. For the Vuntut Gwitchin, the caribou are our life. In a Vuntut Gwitchin General Assembly Resolution in August 1995, we created the Caribou Coordination Department – a Vuntut Gwitchin Government Department that deals exclusively with the '1002 issue' and any threat to the entire range of the Porcupine Caribou Herd, including its wintering grounds. (References: <http://www.oldcrow.ca>)

## IMAGINE by Monique Musick

*Imagine a land  
Of powder blue sky  
Where caribou roam  
And many birds fly  
Imagine a river  
So wide and so clean  
Imagine a people  
So strong and so lean  
The Vuntut Gwitchin  
A proud ancient band  
Live off the earth  
And love this land*

*See now the sky  
Turn ashy and black  
Watch animals flee  
And never turn back  
A fragile ecosystem  
Destroyed and gone  
While loud oil rigs  
Drill on and on...  
Now imagine the power  
You hold in your hand  
To stop oil development  
And save this great land*

Randall Tetlich on his caribou hunt. Randall is one of many hunters that provides meat to Elders in his community of Old Crow.



Photo: Karsten Heuer

*"Caribou is always important, if something happen to caribou we're going to be sad. Everyone was happy to see Caribou, last year we never see any, now lots come and everyone got meat to eat! I want to see caribou all the time in the future, that's what I want to see. I'm glad to see my grandchildren eat caribou meat!"*

- Chief John Joe Kyikavichik

**8** **Get Being Caribou** to schools, universities, colleges, your local PIRG.

**9** **If you attend** professional conferences, ask organizers to show Being Caribou as an option for evening entertainment. Contact us for help: 867.393.4440 or [erica@beingcaribou.com](mailto:erica@beingcaribou.com).

**10** **Spread the word.** One viewer went home, sent an email to 100 people in his address book asking them to

visit [www.beingcaribou.com](http://www.beingcaribou.com), get a copy of the film, watch it and if they were moved to, Take Action and share the film with others.

**11** **Contact Being Caribou** for more info, to discuss ways to help, donate, buy a film, or chat: 867.393.4440 or [erica@beingcaribou.com](mailto:erica@beingcaribou.com).

Know a **BIG** celebrity in Canada or the U.S.? Help us contact them. We are also trying to get onto "Oprah". Can you help?



Photo: Karsten Heuer



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## Just the Facts

By Don Russell

### Population:

- Climbed from ~100,000 animals to 178,000 from the mid 1970's to 1989
- Grew at 4% per year during this increase phase
- Has been in decline since 1989. Last count was 123,000 in 2001
- Declined at 3.5% during this decrease phase
- Among herds with good data, the Porcupine herd is the least productive herd.

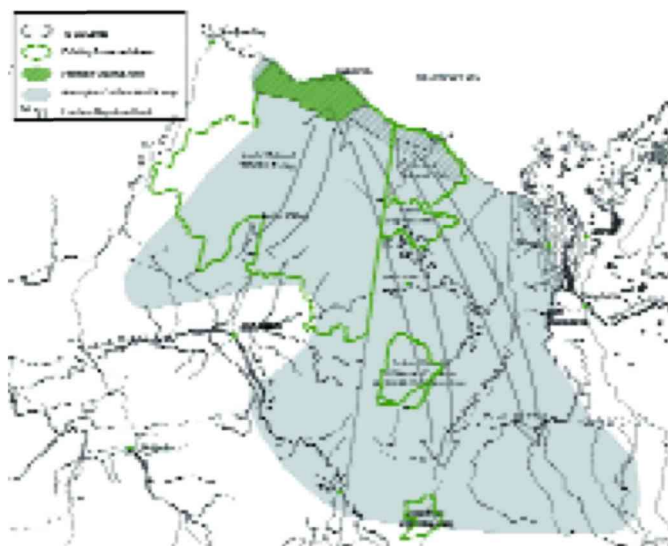
### Range:

- Whole range is 290,000 km<sup>2</sup>
- Average area of concentrated calving (the area where 50% of calves are born) in any year is 1,100 km<sup>2</sup>
- Concentrated calving was primarily in 1002 area in 12 of the last 22 years
- In the 1990's, 60% of all calves were born in the 1002 area

- The 1002 area is important for calving because this is a region with large expanse of rapidly growing vegetation at the critical post-calving period – cows must have free access to this forage

### Calves:

- On average 20% of calves die in their first month of life
- Survival of calves is 8-11% greater if born in the 1002 area compared to outside the 1002
- There is a strong relationship between amount of green vegetation on calving grounds and calf survival.
- If calving cows were displaced 27 km from their concentrated calving, the increase in calf mortality that would result would have been enough to halt the herd growth experienced between 1975-89.



## 5 REASONS THE PORCUPINE CARIBOU ARE VULNERABLE TO OIL DEVELOPMENT ON ITS CALVING GROUNDS

1. Already low productivity of the Porcupine Caribou Herd
2. Strong link between calf survival and free movement of cows
3. Porcupine Caribou calves and cows cannot compensate, later in the summer, for poor physical condition in late June
4. Demonstrated displacement of the Central Arctic Herd concentrated calving away from development
5. Lack of high-quality alternate calving habitat



Photo: Karsten Heuer

### In Summary:

- We know a lot about the herd
- The calving and post-calving habitats are the most critical parts of the herd's annual range
- Every researcher that has worked on the herd, in both the U.S. and Canada, has predicted major impacts on the productivity and future well-being of the Porcupine Caribou Herd if oil development were permitted in the 1002 lands.

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## **APPENDIX 6**

### **Sample Consent Forms and Information Letters**

My research involved several stages of field work. Forms and information sheets for initial scoping work done in 2008-9 (including parts of the project that were dropped) are not included here but are available upon request. Also not included for reasons of brevity, but available upon request, are the various research licences and agreements with northern partners that are part of the research, as well as individual consent forms for several dozen interviews. Included in this appendix are:

Sample consent form for the interviews done in 2008 specifically as initial Being Caribou project research.

Sample consent form for interviews done in northern Canada in 2012. Two forms were used—initially the project included a research component relating to Inuvialuit whaling, and interviews done with Inuvialuit had a consent form incorporating this aspect.

Sample consent form for interviews done in Washington in 2012 and for supplementary interviews with conservation community activists and government officials, usually by phone, between 2012 and 2014.

# **Sample Consent Form for the Interviews Done in 2008 Specifically as Initial Being Caribou Project Research**

## **CONSENT FORM TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH**

*Please note – participants should be given two copies of the consent form – one to keep, and one to sign and return to the researcher.*

### **CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH ON "BEING CARIBOU"**

This is to state that I agree to participate in a program of research being conducted by Shirley Roburn (sroburn@telus.net, 514-303-2184) of Concordia University's Department of Communication Studies.

#### **A. PURPOSE**

I have been informed that the purpose of the research is as follows  
To learn more about the Being Caribou project--from conception to creation of 'products' such as the film and Being Caribou book, to distribution of these products-in the context of the campaign to protect the calving grounds of the Porcupine Caribou Herd.

#### **B. PROCEDURES**

Over the coming weeks, subjects will be asked to share their perspectives in correspondence, interviews, and through documents produced by or for the Being Caribou project and by or for its associates (such as the National Film Board of Canada).

The subjects being approached have all either been involved directly in creating or promoting Being Caribou, or represent organizations that in the past have had this role. The research is focused on the project, and only tangentially on related personal information (for example, personal exhaustion of the subjects from a punishing touring schedule for promoting the film could be discussed for the 'learning moment' it provides with regards to organizing similar projects). No special safeguards are being taken to protect subjects beyond regular ethical protocols and standards.

#### **C. RISKS AND BENEFITS**

The risks are twofold:

- (a) that my research may produce critical feedback that project members might feel takes away from the accomplishments of the project; as the project is heavily dependent on public enthusiasm and participation, maintaining a positive public image of the work is essential.
- (b) that certain of the information researched may have differing degrees of sensitivity--for example, a report to a funder may contain valuable information, but framed in a way appropriate to that context, and which risks misinterpretation when removed from that context.

I intend to mitigate these risks by

- (a) framing my research as a productive effort to learn from the project and suggest ways these learnings could apply to future projects and to the continued efforts to protect the Porcupine Caribou herd. So the critical element of the project is also constructive, and primarily addressed towards the subjects and others actively engaged in similar endeavors.

(b) I will attempt to be communicative and clear with subjects about the nature of information to be shared and its appropriate uses within defined contexts.

The benefits of the project are three-fold:

- (a) publicizing and sharing more widely the concerns around threats to the future of the Porcupine Caribou herd (this is an explicit goal of the Being Caribou project)
- (b) feedback and learnings from the research can inform the future projects of Necessary Journeys (which continues to embark on multi-media projects based on human-powered journeys through the Canadian landscape)
- (c) the research will be helpful more broadly for various filmmakers, community activists, and other organizers interested in undertaking and documenting 'journeys' as part of issue-specific awareness-raising campaigns.

#### **D. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION**

- I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at anytime without negative consequences.
- I understand that my participation in this study is  
NON-CONFIDENTIAL (i.e., my identity will be revealed in study results)
- I understand that the data from this study may be published.

I HAVE CAREFULLY STUDIED THE ABOVE AND UNDERSTAND THIS AGREEMENT.  
I FREELY CONSENT AND VOLUNTARILY AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

NAME (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_

If at any time you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact Adela Reid, Research Ethics and Compliance Officer, Concordia University, at (514) 848-2424 x7481 or by email at [areid@alcor.concordia.ca](mailto:areid@alcor.concordia.ca).

Please return this form to:

Shirley Roburn  
4229 Rue Laval  
Montreal, Quebec  
H2W 2J6

## **Sample Consent Forms for Interviews Done in Northern Canada in 2012 (2 Forms)**

### **CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN BEING CARIBOU RESEARCH**

I understand that I have been asked to participate in a program of research being conducted by Shirley Roburn (sroburn@telus.net, 514-303-2184) of Concordia University's Department of Communication Studies., under the supervision of Dr. Peter Van Wyck.

#### **A. PURPOSE**

I have been informed that the purpose of the research is to learn more about the Being Caribou project--from conception to creation of 'products' such as the film and Being Caribou book, to distribution of these products-in the context of the campaign to protect the calving grounds of the Porcupine Caribou Herd. I understand that this research is part of the thesis work for Shirley Roburn and will contribute to her attaining a doctoral degree in Communication Studies. Additionally, elements of the research project may be shared with the academic community via academic publication (academic journals or book chapters) and with the larger community via plain language communication such as a newsletter article. The researcher, Shirley Roburn, is the only person who will be using unpublished information from interviews.

#### **B. PROCEDURES**

I understand that the researcher will ask me to share my perspectives on the Porcupine Caribou herd and efforts to protect its calving grounds, including but not limited to the efforts that took place from 2003-2006 when the Being Caribou expedition took place and the Being Caribou film and book were in wide circulation.

I understand that this interview WILL \_\_\_ or WILL NOT \_\_\_ be taped and that the researcher will be responsible for storing the mp3 file of the interview solely for her use with regards to this research.

#### **C. RISKS AND BENEFITS**

I understand that the research may produce critical feedback about the efforts to protect the calving grounds of the Porcupine Caribou herd. The spirit in which this research is undertaken is to better understand what has been effective in promoting public dialogue around conservation of the Porcupine Caribou herd calving grounds, and what has been effective in bringing the issues facing the herd before decision-makers outside of the north, such as Senators in Washington DC. The critical element of the project is intended as a constructive effort that can help others in undertaking future work.

I understand that certain of the information researched may have differing degrees of sensitivity. The researcher and I as a research participant will both make efforts to be

clear about the nature of information that is to be shared, and its appropriate use in the context of the research project. I understand that the researcher has obtained the proper license and permissions to do this research, including consulting with First Nations governments as appropriate. I understand that the researcher will share her results with the participating institutions as appropriate, and with individual research subjects who want to know the project results.

#### **D. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION**

- I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at anytime without negative consequences. I understand also that I may refuse to answer any questions that I do not want to answer or that I feel are inappropriate.
- I understand that my participation in this study is

CONFIDENTIAL (i.e., the researcher will know, but will not disclose my identity)

**OR**

NON-CONFIDENTIAL (i.e., my identity will be revealed in study results)

If non-confidential, I understand that information I provide will be credited to me, including with specific quotes as appropriate. The researcher will make ever effort to ensure quotes are accurate and not taken out of context, and will check back with either the interviewee or with the appropriate Gwich'in organization (Gwich'in Steering Committee) to make sure that research drafts that draw on the interview information are accurate.

- I understand that the data from this study may be published.

**I HAVE CAREFULLY STUDIED THE ABOVE AND UNDERSTAND THIS AGREEMENT. I FREELY CONSENT AND VOLUNTARILY AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.**

NAME (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

PLACE  
\_\_\_\_\_

COMMUNITY OF  
INTERVIEWEE \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_

DATE  
\_\_\_\_\_

If at any time you have questions about the proposed research, please contact the study's Principal Investigator

Dr. Peter Van Wyck, Department of Communication Studies, Concordia University,  
7141 Rue Sherbrooke Ouest Montreal, QC H4B 1R6  
(514) 848-2424 X 2561

If at any time you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Research Ethics and Compliance Advisor, Concordia University,  
514.848.2424 ex. 7481 [ethics@alcor.concordia.ca](mailto:ethics@alcor.concordia.ca)

## **CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH**

I understand that I have been asked to participate in a program of research being conducted by Shirley Roburn (sroburn@telus.net, 514-303-2184) of Concordia University's Department of Communication Studies, under the supervision of Dr. Peter Van Wyck.

### **A. PURPOSE**

I have been informed that the purpose of the research is to learn more about the experiences of whalers and whaling communities, and to understand if there are similarities between what these communities are experiencing and the experiences of communities working to protect the Porcupine caribou herd. I understand that this research is part of the thesis work for Shirley Roburn and will contribute to her attaining a doctoral degree in Communication Studies. Additionally, elements of the research project may be shared with the academic community via academic publication (academic journals or book chapters) and with the larger community via plain language communication such as a newsletter article. The researcher, Shirley Roburn, is the only person who will be using unpublished information from interviews without further review.

### **B. PROCEDURES**

I understand that I will be asked to share my perspectives on these matters in an interview.

### **C. RISKS AND BENEFITS**

I understand that the research will produce feedback about efforts by indigenous communities and environmental groups to influence public debate on regulation of development in the Arctic Refuge and in the Arctic Ocean. The research aims to discover what has been effective in promoting public conversations and actions around conservation of the Porcupine Caribou herd and protecting arctic whale habitat. Some elements of the feedback produced may be critical as opposed to positive: the critical element of the project is intended to help evaluate the success of efforts to date in order to help others in undertaking future conservation work.

I understand that certain of the information researched may have differing degrees of sensitivity. The researcher and I as a research participant will both make efforts to be clear about the nature of information that is to be shared, and its appropriate use in the context of the research project.

### **D. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION**

- I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at anytime without negative consequences.



- I understand that my participation in this study is

CONFIDENTIAL (i.e., the researcher will know, but will not disclose my identity)

**OR**

NON-CONFIDENTIAL (i.e., my identity will be revealed in study results)

- I understand that the data from this study may be published.

I HAVE CAREFULLY STUDIED THE ABOVE AND UNDERSTAND THIS AGREEMENT. I FREELY CONSENT AND VOLUNTARILY AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

NAME (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_

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## **Sample Consent Forms for Wilderness Week and Subsequent Interviews**

### **CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN BEING CARIBOU RESEARCH**

I understand that I have been asked to participate in a program of research being conducted by Shirley Roburn (sroburn@telus.net, 514-303-2184) of Concordia University's Department of Communication Studies, under the supervision of Dr. Peter Van Wyck.

#### **A. PURPOSE**

I have been informed that the purpose of the research is to learn more about the Being Caribou project--from its beginning through to its 'products' such as the film and Being Caribou book, to distribution of these products--and how these were part of the campaign to protect the calving grounds of the Porcupine Caribou Herd.

#### **B. PROCEDURES**

I understand that the researcher will be taking part in Wilderness Week and may take notes and make observations of her experience. These notes may include observations about participants in the Week.

I understand that I may also be asked to share my perspectives on Wilderness Week and campaigning for Alaskan conservation--including but not limited to the Being Caribou project --in an interview or through written correspondence.

#### **C. RISKS AND BENEFITS**

I understand that the research may produce critical feedback about the Alaska Wilderness League, and the Being Caribou project. The research aims to discover what has been effective in promoting public conversations and actions around conservation of the Porcupine Caribou herd. The critical element of the project is intended to help others in undertaking future conservation work.

I understand that certain of the information researched may have differing degrees of sensitivity. The researcher and I as a research participant will both make efforts to be clear about the nature of information that is to be shared, and its appropriate use in the context of the research project.

#### **D. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION**

- I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at anytime without negative consequences.

- I understand that my participation in this study is

CONFIDENTIAL (i.e., the researcher will know, but will not disclose my identity)

**OR**

NON-CONFIDENTIAL (i.e., my identity will be revealed in study results)

- I understand that the data from this study may be published.

I HAVE CAREFULLY STUDIED THE ABOVE AND UNDERSTAND THIS AGREEMENT. I FREELY CONSENT AND VOLUNTARILY AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

NAME (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_

If at any time you have questions about the proposed research, please contact the study's Principal Investigator

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## **CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN BEING CARIBOU RESEARCH**

I understand that I have been asked to participate in a program of research being conducted by Shirley Roburn (sroburn@telus.net, 514-303-2184) of Concordia University's Department of Communication Studies, under the supervision of Dr. Peter Van Wyck.

### **A. PURPOSE**

I have been informed that the purpose of the research is to learn more about the Being Caribou project--from its beginning through to its 'products' such as the film and Being Caribou book, to distribution of these products--and how these were part of the campaign to protect the calving grounds of the Porcupine Caribou Herd.

### **B. PROCEDURES**

I understand that the researcher took part in Wilderness Week and took notes and made observations of her experience. These notes include observations about participants in the Week.

I understand that I may also be asked to share my perspectives on Wilderness Week and campaigning for Alaskan conservation--including but not limited to the Being Caribou project --in an interview or through written correspondence.

### **C. RISKS AND BENEFITS**

I understand that the research may produce critical feedback about the Alaska Wilderness League, and the Being Caribou project. The research aims to discover what has been effective in promoting public conversations and actions around conservation of the Porcupine Caribou herd. The critical element of the project is intended to help others in undertaking future conservation work.

I understand that certain of the information researched may have differing degrees of sensitivity. The researcher and I as a research participant will both make efforts to be clear about the nature of information that is to be shared, and its appropriate use in the context of the research project.

### **D. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION**

- I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at anytime without negative consequences.
- I understand that my participation in this study is

CONFIDENTIAL (i.e., the researcher will know, but will not disclose my identity)  
**OR**  
NON-CONFIDENTIAL (i.e., my identity will be revealed in study results)

- I understand that the data from this study may be published.

I HAVE CAREFULLY STUDIED THE ABOVE AND UNDERSTAND THIS  
AGREEMENT. I FREELY CONSENT AND VOLUNTARILY AGREE TO  
PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

NAME (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_

If at any time you have questions about the proposed research, please contact the study's  
Principal Investigator

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