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Environmental Imperatives and International Relations
Canada's challenge to environmental diplomacy

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Successful negotiation of multilateral environmental treaties poses a formidable challenge to the diplomatic community. The spread of environmental concerns through domestic and international politics has been steady since the late 1960s. Often, efforts to implement measures to protect the natural environment have pitted traditional sources of economic strength and political power against popular demands of active constituents and local communities. For the politically disenfranchised, the environment has provided access to discussions concerning industrial growth and the adverse impacts on communal living.[1] Many of the impacts felt from environmental politics stem from local affairs, but they have implications for global politics that are increasingly audible, specifically among developed nations.

Strong economic growth prospects and a versatile demography indicate that Canada is particularly well suited to meet the economic, social, and political challenges of the twenty-first century. Vast energy resources make Canada a desirable trade partner for large economies in North America and East Asia, but the high environmental costs of developing energy have sparked national debate about the role for Canada in an international setting. These developments cannot be extricated from the environmental discourse and the need to curb greenhouse gas emissions, and as such Canada's challenges in resolving issues of economic growth and environmental protection are an example for the entire international community. As environmental resources expert Robert Paehlke has observed, "[I]f Canada cannot demonstrate the way to a viable post-oil energy future in timely fashion, then it is unlikely that any nation can."[2]

The obstacles to and opportunities for instituting international environmental agreements are presented in Canada's increasingly public exposure to the challenges of ecological protection. Three discussions of environmental politics in Canada elucidate these challenges. One area of interest is Canada's Arctic, a region acutely exposed to the effects of climate change. As the custodian of such an ecologically, socially, and politically sensitive region, Canada has in the past assumed a role of leadership in environmental issues that will continue to be tested by diplomatic pressure from outside nations wishing to exploit the vast energy and mineral resources there. A second area where environmental and political concerns overlap is in the now famous oil sands of northern Alberta. Here, the influence of non-state actors over oil and natural gas production fuels discord about global energy supply and the ancillary health and welfare effects on communities nearby. A third and final consideration is Canada's recent withdrawal from the Kyoto accord. This voluntary self-exclusion from Kyoto marks a considerable regression in international environmental relations, but is nonetheless illustrative of the challenges of negotiating such treaties in the years ahead.

In this paper, I will show how environmental politics broadens the base of popular political participation by including the voices of previously marginalized communities. At the same time,

[1] Adam Rome, "'Give Earth a Chance': the Environmental Movement and the Sixties," *The Journal of American History* Vol. 90 No. 2 (September, 2003): 525-554.
[2] Robert Paehlke, *Some Like It Cold* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2008): 7.

however, the discourse engenders deep ideological divisions that polarize groups along socio-economic lines, privileging industrial interests and subverting environmental ones. The "environment" – as an integrating concept that offers a profile of our global society – provides practical, conceptual, and theoretical means to frame important challenges to the global community.[3] Today, there is an urgent need for integrating concepts such as those provided by the discourse of environmental politics. Migratory pollution and global climate change present opportunities to explore past and current challenges in international relations and the conduct of diplomacy.

Sovereign States and Global Pollution: the case of Canada's Arctic

Migratory pollution transcends political boundaries and obscures traditional conceptions of the nation-state. In April of 1986, a meltdown at a nuclear power plant in Chernobyl, Ukraine, went undetected until radioactive toxins were noticed by scientists in Sweden, some 900 miles distant.[4] Recognition of the transient nature of pollution confronts traditionally static divisions between sovereign states, and requires new legal means to resolve multilateral disputes that arise. Here, discussions of pollution are particularly apposite to those of international law and diplomatic relations.

Canada's Arctic highlights both legal and conceptual challenges to the conduct of diplomacy. Of late, the Arctic has become a region of fascination for a multitude of disciplines, linking environmental, social, cultural, and political studies.[5] For legal historians and political scientists, one event in Canada's Arctic history sheds light on the diplomatic implications of industrial pollution. In 1969, the American oil tanker *S.S. Manhattan* journeyed through the Northwest Passage in what Canada's government believed to be Canadian waters. *Manhattan*, bound for the oil wells of Prudhoe Bay, Alaska, served to test the viability of nautical transportation through the Arctic archipelago, but the ensuing controversy sparked widespread debate about the implications of migratory pollution for international law.[6]

The dispute concerned the legal status of the Northwest Passage, the main arterial waterway through the Arctic. As the first commercial vessel to successfully navigate the passage, *Manhattan* embodied future threats to Canada's own interests in the far north: should an oil tanker run aground or leak, the government argued, the spread of contaminants to adjacent Canadian shores would cause significant disruption to local ecosystems and their subsistent human and wildlife populations.[7] To mitigate this threat, the government introduced the Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Act of 1970 (AWPPA), by which it unilaterally declared its intention to regulate commercial and military traffic nearly 100 miles outside its recognized territorial waters.[8] In extending its defensive capabilities into international waters, the legislation effectively articulated Canada's legal right to national self-defense

[3] For more on the environment as an integrating concept, see Lynton Caldwell, "Environment: a new focus for public policy?" *Public Administration Review* Vol 23 No. 3 (September 1963): 132. This essay is one of the earliest on environmental issues and public policy, and is highly recommended reading for anyone interested in the conceptual bases of environmental politics.
[4] Malcom W. Browne, "Swedes solve radioactive puzzle," *New York Times*, 13 May 1986. Available online at: http://www.nytimes.com/1986/05/13/science/swedes-solve-a-radioactive-puzzle.html
[5] See Michael Byers, *Who Owns the Arctic*? (Vancouver, 2009), Franklyn Griffiths, Rob Huebert and Whitney Lackenbauer, *Canada and the Changing Arctic* (Waterloo, 2011), Shelagh D. Grant, *Polar Imperative* (Vancouver, 2010).
[6] For an overview of the *Manhattan* controversy in Canadian international relations, see in particular Kirton, John and Don Munton, "The Manhattan Voyages and Their Aftermath," in *Politics of the Northwest Passage*, Franklyn Griffiths, ed. (Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1987): 67-90, and Kirkey, Christopher. "The Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Initiatives: Canada's Response to an American Challenge." *International Journal of Canadian Studies*, Vol. 13 (Spring 1996): 41-59.
[7] Trudeau, P.E. "Speech from the Throne," (Hansard, October 23, 1969), 5.
[8] Bill C-202, "Canadian Legislation on Arctic Pollution and Territorial Sea and Fishing Zones," known as the Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Act, was presented to the Canadian House of Commons on 8 April 1970. It passed unanimously, 198-0.

beyond its national borders. Recognition of foreign pollution as a threat to a country's national interests was a first in international law.

To legal experts, Canada's Arctic Waters initiatives complemented shifting paradigms in international law, and the responsibilities of states to limit the spread of harmful emissions.[9] The concept of contiguous pollution zone theory, proffered in the AWPPA, linked global industrial development to national sovereignty, and served as a premise for future multilateral environmental regimes. In the years following, the emerging consensus on the need to address growth-protection imbalances was vital to international environmental politics and law. At the 1972 Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment, as well as in the Montreal Protocol on Ozone Depletion (1988) and during the negotiation of the Law of the Sea (1972-'83), Canada actively promoted these changes.

Yet the advent and growth of international environmental law, and its increasingly broad application in contemporary legal and diplomatic discourse, cannot be separated from the political purposes that it often serves. For many Canadians, the Arctic holds both historical and economic significance,[10-11] and accessing, monitoring, and policing the region requires concerted action by the circumpolar community. This need for coordinated action among nations has brought new voices to the table, specifically those of indigenous communities who live in the Arctic. Like the Arctic Waters initiatives, recognizing the role of these communities requires conceptual shifts away from the traditional norms of territorial space, and towards a more inclusive knowledge of the interdependencies between human communities and the natural environment.[12] At the same time, however, it is vital to recognize the diverse ways in which the typology of "the environment" is conceived and operationalized. Not all peoples experience or view environmental changes in the same light, and environmental or ecological arguments in political discourse are often invoked for very different reasons.

For the Inuit of northern Canada, the environment has served as both a means to maintaining a traditional subsistence lifestyle, and a symbol of political identity. Inuit have made homes throughout the circumpolar region since time immemorial, and have evolved comprehensive knowledge of local and migratory wildlife that has formed the basis of their moral and legal claim to the land. Amidst current concerns for climate change, Inuit are regularly featured alongside the iconic polar bear as being on the front lines of receding ice, and within the diplomatic community often serve as climate change ambassadors.

Northern aboriginal communities, weak in numbers and political might, have strengthened their influence by coordinating social, cultural, and political objectives with neighboring Arctic nations – a practice referred to as indigenous diplomacy.[13] The movement for political autonomy has evolved since the early 1960s, and extended to international bodies such as the Inuit Circumpolar

[9] Utton, Albert E. "The Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Act and the Right of Self-Protection," in *International Environmental Law*, Ludwik A. Teclaff and Albert E. Utton, eds. (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1974): 140-153. See also Richard Bilder, "The Canadian Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Act: New Stresses on the Law of the Sea," Michigan Law Review, Vol. 69, No. 1 (November 1970), 22, and Gerald Francis Graham, "The Canadian Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Act of 1970 and the Concept of Self-Protection." June 1974. Masters Thesis, School of International Affairs, Carleton University: 19.
[10] Chief among the sources of this significance are oil, natural gas, iron ore, gold, diamonds, and copper.
[11] Elizabeth Elliot-Meisel, *Arctic Diplomacy* (New York: Peter Lang, 1998), 7.
[12] See Jyrki Kakonen, ed. *Politics and Sustainable Growth in the Arctic*. Brookfield: Dartmouth Publishing Company, 1993.
[13] For discussions of Indigenous Diplomacy and the rights of First Nations internationally, see Sheryl Lightfoot, "Emerging international indigenous rights norms and 'over-compliance' in New Zealand and Canada," *Political Science* Vol. 62 No. 1 (2010): 84-104. See extensive work in Shelagh D. Grant, *Polar Imperative*, 2011.

Conference (ICC), which joined Inuit communities from Canada, the United States, Greenland, and Russia. Articulated in a policy of 1992, the ICC linked political legitimacy with recognition that native peoples have a fundamentally different relationship to the natural environment than do urban populations further south.[14] Such efforts foreshadowed similar movements by American indigenous communities to bring popular attention to the environmental justice movement.[15]

Of those multilateral organizations operating in the far north, the Arctic Council is most active and notable for its role in facilitating diplomacy. Formed in 1996 under Canadian leadership, the Arctic Council has the distinction of being the only intergovernmental forum that recognizes the political role of indigenous communities as separate from the states in which they reside. In addition to the eight member states that comprise the circumpolar nations – Canada, Russia, the United States, Russia, Finland, Sweden, Iceland, and Denmark (via Greenland) – some 500 000 people from indigenous communities are represented through various Permanent Participant organizations.[16] Along with the ICC, five other indigenous groups are granted full rights to negotiate with member states. The remaining five Permanent Participants are the Arctic Athabaskan Council, the Aleut International Association, the Gwich'in Council International, the Saami Council, and the Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North. While Permanent Participants do not have voting or veto power, the Arctic Council operates on a consensus basis; if any one of the Permanent Participants objects to a resolution or treaty, they can lobby any of the member states.

The Arctic Council's strength as an international organization derives from both its active inclusion of indigenous peoples, and the relatively abrupt rate of change that has been experienced in the region. Here, discourses of environmental change, and the subsequent threat these changes pose to traditional indigenous lifestyles, are regularly invoked to rationalize increased coordination of national Arctic strategies of the circumpolar states. More broadly, the popular association between the Arctic and climate change in general grants legitimacy to the circumpolar nations to act as the region's brokers. In 2011, for instance, the Arctic Council concluded the Search and Rescue Agreement, the first legally binding resolution that obliges circumpolar nations to respond to environmental emergencies.[17] More recently, an agreement was reached regarding oil spill contingency planning – a necessary first step towards increasing the pursuit of hydrocarbon resources throughout the Arctic.

Though steeped in protectionist language and concern for the region's ecological integrity, each of the circumpolar states – and the five littoral states, in particular - stands to gain tremendously from increased access to the Arctic's rich mineral and hydrocarbon resource base. Russia, the United States, Canada, and Norway rank amongst the largest producers, consumers, and exporters of global energy, and all have begun exploration of the extended continental shelves in which vast hydrocarbon

[14] The Inuit Circumpolar Conference "Principles and elements for a comprehensive Arctic policy," of 1992 called for recognition of the rights of Inuit to a subsistence lifestyle and the means to self-govern. See Mary Simon, *Inuit: One Future – One Arctic* (Peterborough: The Cider Press, 1996): 55. "To gain control over our own lives, we must have control over our surroundings. In this way, self-government is intimately tied to the protection of the environment and sustainable development."

[15] See Article 11 of the "Principles of Environmental Justice." Adopted, 27 October 1991, The First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit, Washington, D.C.: "Environmental justice must recognize a special legal and natural relationship of Native Peoples in the US government through treaties, agreements, compacts, and covenants which impose upon the US government a paramount obligation and responsibility to affirm the sovereignty and self-determination of the indigenous peoples whose land it occupies and holds in trust."

[16] The ICC (now called the Inuit Circumpolar Council) is one of six Permanent Participants, and collectively represents Inuit communities from Denmark, USA, Canada, and Russia. Details and documents of the Arctic Council are provided extensively at http://www.arctic-council.org

[17] The Search and Rescue Agreement, with a stated objective to "strengthen aeronautical and maritime search cooperation and coordination in the Arctic," (Article 2) was signed 12 May 2011. It requires that Arctic Council states coordinate efforts to mitigate environmental disasters and assist in recovery, but does not provide the means to resolve outstanding territorial disputes among nations: "The delimitation of search and rescue regions is not related to and shall not prejudice the delimitation of any boundary between States or their sovereignty, sovereign rights or jurisdiction." (Article 3.2).

reserves of oil and natural gas are thought to lie. Greenland, which is steadily working towards full independence from Denmark, is anticipating onshore mining of the nation's rare earth minerals stock, which is made increasingly accessible as the ice cap melts. It is with this in mind, chiefly, that heightened levels of cooperative engagement between Arctic nations have been undertaken, as each has a vested interest in ensuring the viability and legitimacy of present and future treaties negotiated by the Arctic Council.

The offshoot of this is the looming increase in industrial activity in far northern regions, which will undoubtedly impact neighboring communities, though it is worth noting the high levels of disagreement amongst Arctic indigenous peoples over questions of industrial development. In Canada, opposition to offshore and onshore industrial activity – mining and hydrocarbon extraction – is by no means uniform amongst the variety of indigenous peoples in the Eastern and Western Arctics. In fact, there is a long history of northern indigenous lobbying at various levels of government for the right to be heard on issues of resource development, and to have a share in prospective resource wealth. Histories of state expansion across northern Canada, particularly in the postwar period, brought many northern communities into closer and more regular contact with the federal government of Canada, which has been slow to recognize land and territorial claims of indigenous peoples. For many of these communities, industrial development will provide needed jobs and access to material resources, and numerous indigenous groups have actively lobbied in favor of oil, gas, and mining operations on their settled lands. Through the Arctic Council, and through the conduct of indigenous diplomacy, organizations like the ICC have pushed for widespread recognition of the region's ecological sensitivity, but they have also sought to bring awareness of the challenges of indigenous communities to gain recognition from their respective domestic governments for claims to territorial and resource rights.

What does the inclusion of First Nations offer discussions of international relations? For subsistent communities, it is the *way* of life that is the primary purpose of political action. Forums held under the Arctic Council aim to preserve essential practices by ensuring that the process of governing the north is sustainable for years to come, a feature that differs from ends-oriented treaties and accords. In this regard, knowledge of the social costs of migratory industrial pollutants is critical to the future of multilateral conduct, for it imbues diplomatic relations with a sense of moral purpose and direction.

At the same time, however, the broadening of the environmental discourse presents the risk of diluting the concerns of those communities most directly impacted by recent changes. In popular and official discourse, the need to implement protectionist legislation and regulations is deemed paramount, particularly in the Arctic, where climate change serves as a metaphoric measure of the effects of global industrialization. In adhering to politically convenient narratives of treating northern indigenous peoples as victims of climate change, it is easy to over-emphasize the "traditional" means by which many communities continue to live in and interact with their local environments, and to ignore or dismiss claims for legal rights to the region's rich mineral and hydrocarbon base that will be sought on their lands. Thus, while we must recognize the transient effects of global pollution, it is of equal importance that we attend to relationships of power between the various governmental and political actors that are invested in environmental change and development. While environmental protection is a vital and widely shared concern, the uniform application of protectionist language has

the potential to drown out the voices of those most acutely impacted by environmental change and, more importantly, by the political and industrial changes that will take place as a result.

Broadening conceptions of environment and their impacts raise a cumbersome paradox, for not all voices in the Arctic can be heard. In general, diplomatic efforts to establish and maintain legal and political parameters have been cooperative,[18] but difficult decisions lie ahead. Large shipping countries such as India, South Korea, Japan, and China want to see the Arctic straits opened to commercial traffic, and have applied for observer status positions on the Arctic Council. With echoes of the *Manhattan* controversy still audible, heeding these calls without tuning out the voices of the politically disadvantaged will be a difficult balancing act for council members and for Canada in particular, when it resumes the Chair of the Arctic Council in 2013.[19]

Power Lines: the politics of energy development and transport

The challenge of balancing economic interests with ecological imperatives is further demonstrated by the oil sands operations in northwestern Alberta. As an emerging leader in global energy production, how Canada pursues its resources will likely influence energy development projects in other parts of the world. As Prime Minister, Stephen Harper views oil sands development and pipeline expansion as integral to Canada's economic and diplomatic strength, but critics claim that such narrow devotion to a single source inhibits development of alternative energy resources such as hydro, wind, and solar power. Furthermore, they charge that Canada has neglected its moral responsibility to promote clean and efficient energy production among user nations.[20]

Discord over oil sands development is compelling for two reasons in particular. First, issues of if and how to mine the region have piqued interests of investors and detractors from outside of Canada. The array of interests in the oil sands broadly ranges from concerned citizens' groups, climate change deniers, scientists and technologists, and national and global media.[21] Furthermore, deep ideological divisions between advocates and opponents have turned the conversation into an acrimonious debate with little room for compromise. Collectively, these factors make the oil sands not only a discussion of Canada's national interests, but a global discourse on the tensions between economic growth on the one hand, and environmental protection on the other.

Government support through subsidies and tax reductions have lured major international oil producers to northern Alberta.[22] Oil sands exploitation is vast – currently the largest development project on the planet - and at target production rates of five million barrels per day, developers claim they can continue to produce oil for the next 25 years. Yet extraction of bitumen comes at an enormous cost to the natural environment. Oil sands oil is notoriously inefficient to produce: a single barrel of crude requires some twelve barrels of water, and extraction alone exhausts one third of the energy produced.[23] Production also requires extensive use of shale gas obtained through hydraulic

[18] Michael Byers, "You can't replace real icebreakers," *The Globe & Mail* 27 March 2012. Available online at: http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/opinions/opinion/you-cant-replace-real-icebreakers/article2381907/ See comments on Canada-Russia Arctic relations.
[19] The challenges of Arctic Council reform are summarized in Whitney Lackenbauer, "Push to reform Arctic Council raises as many questions as it solves," 13 February 2012. Available online at: http://www.ipolitics.ca/2012/02/17/lackenbauer-security-and-the-arctic-council/
[20] Paelkhe, 13.
[21] On environmental science and public policy, see Samuel Hays, *Explorations in Environmental History*, (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1998): 291-311.
[22] Major production companies in the oil sands include Shell, Chevron, Suncor, SINOPEC.
[23] Michelle Mech, "A Comprehensive Guide to the Alberta Oil sands," May 2011. Prepared for the Green Party of Canada: 14. A net of 4 new barrels of water are required to produce one barrel of oil.

fracturing, or fracking, a chemically intensive process known to leach toxins into adjacent watersheds and supply areas.[24]

Production inefficiencies of this sort have drawn critical attention from environmental groups in Canada and abroad.[25] Resulting from negative press campaigns and public protests, the moniker "dirty oil" has become synonymous with oil sands crude. Opponents have reached a global community through social media and the Internet, helping make the oil sands a focal point for socio-political unrest. A 2010 campaign to discourage tourists from visiting Alberta exemplifies one particularly vitriolic side of the oil sands issue. The campaign was commissioned not by a Canadian organization, but by the New York based National Resources Defense Council, whose efforts to blacken the oil sands have been aided by numerous online resources, books, and environmental organizations.[26]

In fighting the oil sands, environmental groups have found an important symbolic and political ally in First Nations groups who have been directly impacted by the contamination of rivers and the construction of pipelines through traditional hunting grounds. Coinciding with the boom in oil sands production, many indigenous communities in areas proximate to industry have experienced increased incidence of illness among their residents – a phenomenon widely attributed to contamination of the Athabasca River.[27] Native communities have been vocal in opposing the construction of the Northern Gateway pipeline, an inter-provincial pipeline designated to carry oil sands bitumen across northern British Columbia to a the inland port of Kitimat for export to Asian markets. The route of the proposed pipeline runs through the territory of more than fifty native bands.

The full effects of oil sands development on the health and wellbeing of proximate communities has, for the past decade, been a subject of debate and investigation by numerous organizations. In key respects, oil sands development has ushered in heated debates about the impacts of global energy production on local and neighboring communities. At the core of these debates are ideologically loaded contests over definitions of wellbeing and health, contests which in turn raise questions about the role and responsibilities of federal governments trying to expand economic development while ostensibly charged with protecting local residents.

The plight of the community of Fort Chipewyan in northern Alberta exemplifies many of these features. Since the early 2000s, Fort Chipewyan, a community located some 250km north of the industrial city of Fort McMurray, has been known to have unusually high rates of cancer, something that some experts and observers have linked directly to the community's proximity to oil sands development. High incidence of cholangiocarcinoma, a rare form of bile-duct cancer, were first noticed by family physician Dr. John O'Connor,[28] who subsequently made his findings public in an effort to draw federal attention and solicit further medical study of the phenomenon. In addition to rates of cancer and illness amongst people in the community, many local residents and community

[24] Tait, Carrie and Shawn McCarthy, "Fear of fracking: How public concerns put an energy renaissance at risk" *The Globe & Mail* (10 March 2012). Available online at: http://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/industry-news/energy-and-resources/fear-of-fracking-how-public-concerns-put-an-energy-renaissance-at-risk/article2365172/
[25] Among Canadian environmental organizations are the Suzuki Foundation, Council of Canadians, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.
[26] See for instance, Nikiforuk, Andrew. *Oil sands: dirty oil and the future of a continent*. Vancouver: Greystone Books, 2008. Price, Matt and Gillian MacEachern, *Freedom from Dirty Oil: Ontario's oil sands decision*. Toronto: Environmental Defence Canada, 2009. See also dirtyoilsands.org.
[27] "The Tipping Point: the age of the oil sands" from *The Nature of Things,* directed by Tom Radford and Niobe Thompson (Edmonton, AB: Clearwater Media and CBC-TV, 2011), documentary series.
[28] "Cancer rates downstream from oilsands to be probed," *cbc.ca* 19 August 2011. Available online at: http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/edmonton/cancer-rates-downstream-from-oilsands-to-be-probed-1.1030670

elders reported increased illness and deformities in local fish and various wildlife hunted by the Chipewyan. Studies undertaken at the University of Alberta confirmed O'Connor's hypothesis that environmental contamination was the source of his findings. In 2009, scientists found that levels of polycyclic aromatic compounds (PAC), known to increase the likelihood of cancer, were higher in the traditional fishing grounds of the Athabasca Chipewyan than had been previously known.

O'Connor's concerns, however, were met with institutional resistance by the Alberta College of Physicians and Surgeons. In 2007, an official complaint against Dr. O'Connor was made by Health Canada, claiming that his public calls for a fuller investigation into the possible reasons for higher than normal cancer rates, caused "undue alarm." A subsequent study conducted by the Alberta Cancer Board, determined that the observed cases of cholangiocarcinoma and colon cancer were "within the expected range of cancer occurrence." Although the study did find that "the number of cancer cases overall was higher than expected," the source of the higher than normal cancer levels was not pursued.[29]

In key respects, the case of Fort Chipewyan highlights key features and functions of oil sands development debates. Among these are the manner in which the impacts of global development initiatives are affecting local communities, and the questions of governmental responsibility that have been raised as a result. Many activists view oil production in Alberta as the primary hub of global climate change, and have joined subsequent fights against pipelines that have been proposed to export bitumen to the United States, and to the west coast. Residents of Fort Chipewyan have themselves become involved in broader opposition to pipeline development, which is deemed crucial to the expansion of the oil sands more generally. Chief Allan Adam of the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation (ACFN) has become a vociferous opponent of the Keystone XL pipeline, and has been openly critical of reports published by the U.S. State Department which claim that the pipeline is not critical to future oil sands development.[30] In 2011, the ACFN set up a website called the "Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation and the Oil sands," which amalgamates indigenous opposition to oil sands and industrial development that affects native communities more broadly.

More broadly, oil sands debates have often pivoted around what information is constituted as valid for consideration in official government discourse and policy. Competing methodologies and criteria used in analyzing the impacts of oil sands have led to contradictory reports that ultimately obscure scientific or official consensus on the effects of oil sands growth, a function of the debate that virtually ensures the politicization of these discussions. Immense revenue prospects in the oil sands have spawned an opposition to environmental advocates – of which the Canadian government itself is a leading member. This represents not merely pro-business advocates, but a concerted effort to undermine and deny the impact of development through the use of industry- sponsored research and the suppression of independent scientific data. The government, which regularly employs exclusionary and divisive tactics, has made glib distinctions between "allies" and "adversaries" of the oil sands.[31] Environmental groups have been labeled 'radicals,' and efforts have been made publicly to undermine them through accusations of collusion with foreign environmental interests. The oft-repeated claim that oil sands opponents are funded and operated by environmental groups abroad has

[29] Chen, Yiqun. "Cancer Incidence in Fort Chipewyan, Alberta, 1995-2006." Alberta Cancer Board, 2009.
[30] "Chief Adam responds to Obama State department EIS on Keystone XL Pipeline," Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation and the Oil sands , 01 March 2013.
[31] Cox, Bruce. "Mr. Harper, dissent is vital to democracy" *The Globe & Mail* (27 February 2012). http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/opinions/opinion/mr-harper-dissent-is-vital-to-democracy/article2349447/

been another technique of the government to stir nationalist fervor.[32] Meanwhile, the government maintains its prerogative to protect Canada's national interests by streamlining environmental assessment and regulatory processes.

Independent industry advocates have responded with PR campaigns of their own, using national airwaves to promote "innovative" technologies and to establish alternative conceptions of environmental conscientiousness. Counter data is employed to dispute claims, resulting in a general obfuscation of scientific facts – a practice that has been publicly condemned in the pages of international scientific journals.[33] Pro-oil sands websites and organizations, among them the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers and an independent organization that promotes the development and use of oil sands crude as "ethical," exist solely to rebut the allegations of environmental lobbyists.[34]

Fallout from the oil sands debates has had implications for Canadian politics domestically and internationally. The election of Elizabeth May to the House of Commons a year ago marked the first victory for the Green Party of Canada, joining Canada with European nations with Green Party representatives.[35] Abroad, Canada's status as an environmental pariah has resulted in diplomatic backlash. In 2009, Canada was ridiculed at Copenhagen for its obstructionist efforts to lower emissions standards. In 2012, Canada narrowly avoided an official rebuke from the European Union: a resolution to label the oil sands as an egregious emitter of greenhouse gases was defeated only after lobbying by the Canadian government encouraged key allies to abstain from voting.[36]

Despite government insistence on the importance of Alberta oil, the negative press has clearly affected Canada's foreign affairs. Concerned with selling its oil, Canada appears to have shunned European critics to seek closer ties with China and Pacific Rim countries. A marked diplomatic achievement for the Harper government was the conclusion of a bilateral investment treaty with China, and Canada remains eager to join the Trans-Pacific Partnership for economic trade and development, where it will have access to the markets of large East Asian economies. The environmental results of such activity may well be disastrous. One highly respected critic of the oil sands has charged that the terms of Canada's trade relationship with China expressly discourage environmental regulation by enabling private companies to sue the government in instances where legislation obstructs production.[37]

Many of the issues in the oil sands have global implications not only for climate change but also for debates taking place in other regions. Pollution concerns will undoubtedly influence the production of oil in Venezuela and Nigeria, two countries poised to become major oil producers for the global market. As the gas industry booms, more debates of this nature are likely to arise.[38] In particular, the oil sands demonstrate how global demand for energy resources is fueling debates about

[32] Gloria Galloway, "Ditch 'immature rhetoric' on oil sands, David Suzuki tells Tory senators," *The Globe & Mail* 20 March 2012. Available online at: http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/ottawa-notebook/ditch-immature-rhetoric-on-oil-sands-david-suzuki-tells-tory-senators/article2375419/
[33] "Frozen Out," editorial. *Nature* Vol. 483 (01 March 2012): 6.
[34] See http://ethicaloil.org.
[35] The Green Party campaigned largely on the issue of the oil sands. Michelle Mech, "A Comprehensive Guide to the Alberta Oil sands," May 2011. Prepared for the Green Party of Canada.
[36] "E.U. Stalemate on 'dirty' oil label for fuel from oil sands" *The New York Times* 24 February 2012. Available online at: http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/24/business/global/eu-stalemate-on-dirty-label-for-fuel-from-tar-sands.html
[37] Maude Barlow, "Leap Backwards," *The Council of Canadians*, 11 February 2012. Available online at: http://canadians.org/blog/?p=13563
[38] Bill McKibben, "Why Not Frack?" *The New York Review of Books* 8 March 2012.

the environmental and social costs of industrial development. Moreover, aspects of the conflict suggest that diplomatic relations are being defined by conceptions of the national interest inextricably linked to economic and commercial incentives. Pitted against the health and social welfare of their constituents, pro-development government representatives can no longer claim the moral authority to represent those whom their policies harm. Exactly what the role of diplomacy will be in a world fragmented along socio-political lines remains to be seen, but it is clear that the kinds of change wrought by the oil sands debates are fundamental to diplomatic and international affairs in the years ahead.

Conclusion: Lessons from Kyoto

Canada's 2012 withdrawal from the Kyoto protocol to lower greenhouse gas emissions has already had residual impacts on the international community. Following a meek appearance at the UN conference on the environment in Durban, Canada officially withdrew from Kyoto, a move viewed as a death knell to the embattled accord.[39] To be sure, numerous countries had rescinded their commitments to the agreement over the years, but Canada was the first country to renege on all of its emissions targets. To observers, however, Canada's voluntary self-exclusion from Kyoto presented no surprises. In retrospect, they said, Kyoto's failure was inevitable; its conception had been haphazard, its implementation had been a clumsy effort to install change through a tenuous binding-or-nothing mentality. The real problem, one observer commented, was that Kyoto had no teeth, and offered no real incentives to reduce emissions.[40]

The oil sands are central to Canada's Kyoto withdrawal, but this is merely one piece in the larger puzzle of instituting legally binding environmental agreements. From the beginning, Kyoto was beset by a general privileging of industrial development over environmental protection and efficient energy development. Though it was signed in 1997, by the time Kyoto was ratified in 2005, global emissions had increased nearly 20%.[41] Canada had committed to reductions targets of 6% below 1990 levels. By 2007, greenhouse gas emissions were between 17-30% higher than that number.

Kyoto's failure might lead some to view the entire endeavor of multilateral environmental politics as a failure, but this view would be shortsighted. Kyoto's shortcomings merely reiterate what has been widely known since the advent of environmental diplomacy: environmental concerns are outweighed by political will and economic self-interest. What, then, are the prospects for negotiating multilateral environmental treaties in the twenty-first century? Despite shortcomings of Kyoto, and the proliferation of "dirty oil" markets and means of production, there are signs that the subversive aspects of multilateral relations are influencing international affairs. For producers of oil, worldwide demand makes it easier to justify development of even the most invidious energy resources. But it is becoming harder to plead ignorance to the detrimental effects of global pollution, a tacit indication that standards of scientific study are achieving political currency. This is a positive sign, for where the standards of science influence operational and political discourse, the practices of science are more likely to flourish.

[39] Ian Austin, "Canada announces exit from Kyoto climate treaty," *The New York Times* 12 December 2011. Available online at: http://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/13/science/earth/canada-leaving-kyoto-protocol-on-climate-change.html?_r=1
[40] Seth Dunn, "After Kyoto: A climate treaty with no teeth?" *World Watch* Vol. 11 No. 2 (Mar/Apr 1998): 33-35.
[41] Elliot Diringer, "Letting Go of Kyoto" *Nature* Vol. 479 (November, 2011): 291-292.

One fundamental challenge to diplomats is to recognize that we do not all experience global climate change in the same way. Indeed, the notion of environmental or climate justice recognizes the social imbalances wrought by industrial pollution.[42] To this end, policies must identify those features of global society that are not merely important to the integrity of the natural environment, but to the people for whom subsistence is an everyday reality. The 2007 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was a positive step towards broadening international relations concerns, and incidentally realizing the need to protect the natural environment.[43] Similarly, the 2010 resolution recognizing access to clean water and sanitation as a human right places new responsibilities on diplomatic actors to include the poorest citizens in its national representation.[44]

A further challenge for diplomacy is to expand knowledge and understanding of the ways in which the environment and the national interest are linked. If resource economies are the way of the future, as is the case in Canada, then surely it is in the interest of the global community to promote long-term energy production in domestic and foreign markets. Sharing technologies and best practices for resource development and policy implementation can be facilitated not only through intergovernmental dialogue, but with the assistance of concerned citizens' groups with shared interests. Vitiating economic incentives that champion industrial growth over social welfare presents an opportunity to explore ways in which these ends may be met.

A third challenge is to elevate the environmental discourse as a forum for global debate. To those for whom social and democratic growth is a high priority, cultural, scientific, and ethical considerations can be channeled through discussions of the natural environment. In its inherent capacity to promote democracy, sustainability, and innovation, the spread of environmental politics solidifies a role for non-state actors in international relations discourse, but maximizing the value of this engagement means realizing that official political discourse is merely one of many modes of global debate.

Whether these debates take place over the Arctic, Alberta, or elsewhere, they have profound implications for how domestic and international policy makers engage with and respond to the voices of their global constituents. These require taking on practical and legal issues, as well as conceptual ones. The role of diplomats and policy makers, therefore, will be to articulate solutions to problems that transcend the boundaries of sovereign states. To prepare for the challenges of an increasingly globalized world, diplomats must articulate linkages between economic interests and environmental imperatives; they must facilitate sustainable growth with the purpose of promoting democratic engagement; and they must seek and identify alternatives to inefficient energy resources and modes of production. Most of all, however, they must be prepared to listen.

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[42] See Giovanna Di Charro, "Indigenous Peoples and Biocolonialism," in *Environmental Justice and Environmentalism: the social justice challenge to the environmental movement*, Ronald Sandler and Phaedra C. Pezzulo, eds. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2007): 251-283.
[43] United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 13 September 2007, New York.
[44] UN resolution 64/292, "The human right to water and sanitation" Available online at: http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/64/292

extraction, and energy transportation in shaping the relationship between the Canadian state and First Nations.