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How Has Inuit *Qaujimajatuqangit* Been Considered? A Student Reflects on the 2018 ArcticNet Annual Scientific Meeting

by Andrea N. Hanke

I AM A SECOND-YEAR GRADUATE STUDENT with a passion for critically thinking about knowledge systems and how they interact. In December 2018, I had the opportunity to attend the 14th ArcticNet Annual Scientific Meeting. ArcticNet Inc. is a not-for-profit corporation supported as a Network of Centres of Excellence by the Government of Canada. Its central mandate is to develop, disseminate, and broker knowledge to facilitate climate change adaptation strategies and national policies for the Arctic (ArcticNet Inc., 2019). At the 2018 meeting, we heard about programs running across Inuit Nunangat, including research on ice, permafrost, vegetation, wildlife, outreach strategies, and values. Most of the researchers present were focused on quantitative analyses of various kinds of samples; however, if you listened closely enough, there seemed to be something fundamental shifting in Arctic research.

Inuit across Inuit Nunangat and researchers from the Arctic countries all gathered in Ottawa, Canada to discuss Arctic research. At most sessions, people were questioning how Inuit *Qaujimajatuqangit* (knowledge) fits into the research: "How have you considered Inuit *Qaujimajatuqangit* in your research?" "How can *Qallunaat* (non-Inuit) best engage Inuit in the research that is happening in Inuit Nunangat?" These lines of inquiry into Inuit *Qaujimajatuqangit* parallel what is beginning to progress within the academic literature. Research is no longer only investigating *if* Inuit *Qaujimajatuqangit* is valuable to the problem at hand, but *how* we can mobilize this knowledge into governmental strategies and policies (Berkes, 2009; Robinson and Wallington, 2012, Barber and Jackson, 2015; Löfmarck and Lidskog, 2017; Van Kerkhoff and Pilbeam, 2017; Tomaselli et al., 2018; Tomasini, 2018). As a student, I see academia and Canada's territorial and federal governments striving to fulfill their social responsibility toward reconciliation (see GC and TFN, 1993; Thorpe et al., 2001; ITK and NRI, 2007; GN, 2013; Tomaselli et al., 2018; Ljubicic et al., 2018; GC, 2018).

The need for this change became more and more evident throughout the course of the ArcticNet annual scientific meeting. During one of the student day sessions, we were asked "How does my research deliver on the calls to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada?" (TRCC, 2012). Every researcher in Canada, in my opinion, needs to be able to answer that question regardless of discipline. This thought was taken another step forward by an Inuk biologist during a co-management session who questioned why we tend to value Eurocentric knowledge more than Inuit *Qaujimajatuqangit* in policy. Inuit are speaking up more and more for involvement in research on their homelands, and we all need to truly listen and work together to achieve this goal.

The bias towards Eurocentric knowledge to the exclusion of Inuit *Qaujimajatuqangit* appears to be a result of two colliding cultures and is systemic across Canadian governance and academia (Hall et al., 2000; Tester and Irniq, 2008; Robinson and Wallington, 2012; Walter, 2012; Barber and Jackson, 2015). Together, we need to engage in meaningful collaboration and develop pathways that facilitate the inclusion and consideration of Inuit *Qaujimajatuqangit* in Canadian strategies and policies.

In my research, I highlight a framework that identifies this systemic bias (Fig. 1a) and propose a two-step, long-term aim of how we can overcome it. First, we need to continue to raise awareness of the value of Inuit *Qaujimajatuqangit* (Fig. 1b). Second, we need to involve more Indigenous people of Canada on the review boards for policy and academia and thereby switch our current horizontal approach to knowledge, which values one knowledge system over others, resulting in a hierarchy, to a pluralistic one, which maintains the integrity of each knowledge system and values them equally (Fig. 1c; Hall et al., 2000). By using a pluralistic approach, the power dynamics between the knowledge systems will be more equal, which will help facilitate more balanced interactions.

Albeit, we must remember the limitations of individual researchers. While it is essential we consider all available knowledge, we cannot justly command quantitative scientists to complete qualitative research or vice versa. If we do, I believe we can expect all of our research and relationships to falter and decrease in quality, since it takes a significant amount time and effort to develop expertise in different research disciplines. Instead of this lofty expectation, researchers should all strive to become better community partners and engage in transdisciplinary research teams to respectively and inclusively conduct research.

As I continue in my studies, I am privileged to have the trust and mentorship from my collaborators and the
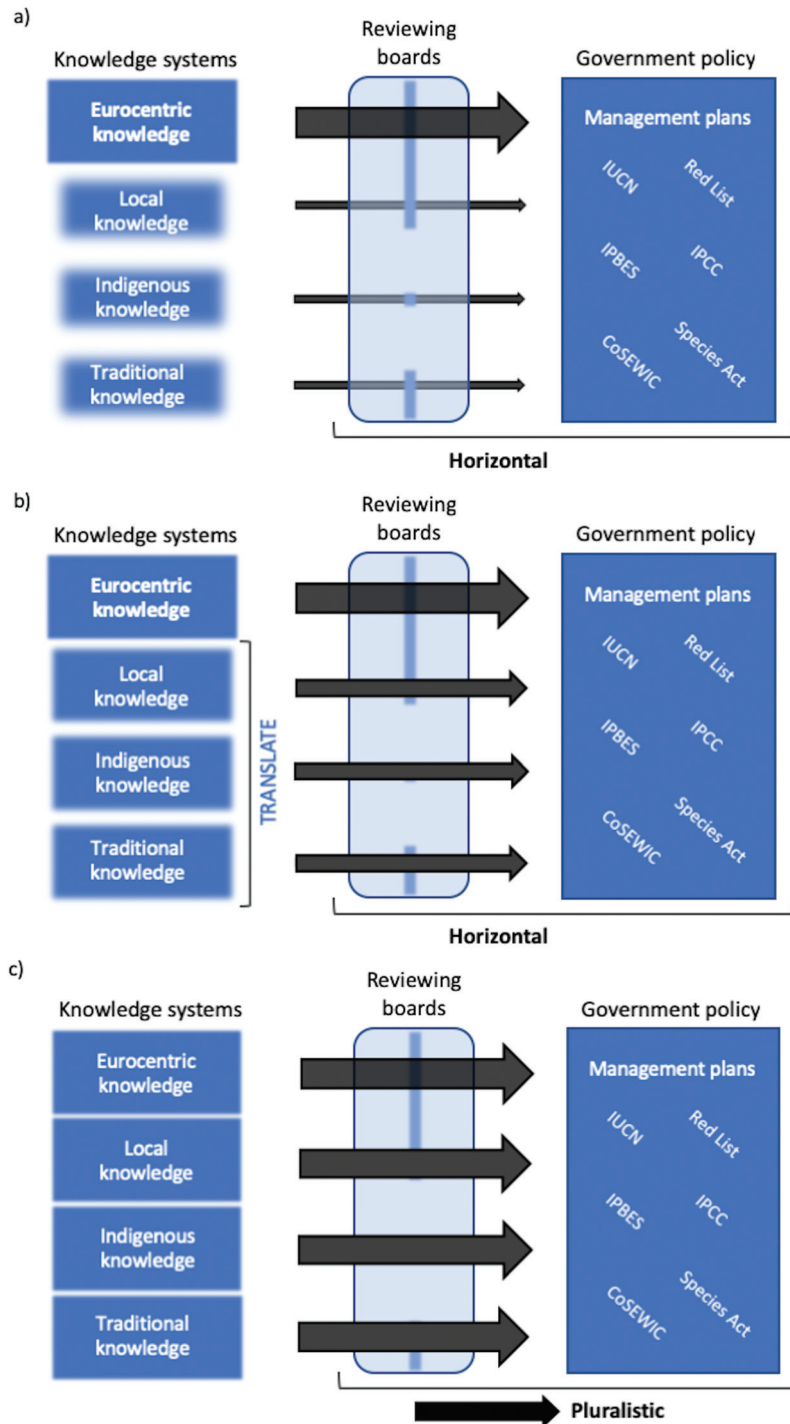
FIG. 1. a) The current approach to incorporating knowledge into government policies. Information from knowledge systems is reviewed by boards, which categorize, filter, and place value on the information. Review boards often consist solely of people trained in Eurocentric knowledge, who therefore place a conscious or unconscious bias on the incorporation of Eurocentric knowledge. This bias creates a horizontal approach to knowledge that favours Eurocentric knowledge over others (such as local, traditional or Indigenous knowledge). b) The next step to incorporating more knowledge systems into government policy is by continuing to raise awareness of the innate value of other knowledge systems, not just Eurocentric knowledge. One way to raise awareness of their value is to translate information from other knowledge systems into a form that can be understood by Eurocentric knowledge holders, while maintaining its integrity. The goal of this step is to create review boards that equitably value the contribution of each knowledge system. c) The final step in the process to creating a pluralistic approach to knowledge governance in policy. Once review boards have been established that can equitably value the contributions of each knowledge system, we remove the dominance of Eurocentric knowledge over other knowledge systems.

community I work with to continue to push forward the calls-to-action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRCC, 2012). Learning from community members, Elders, those at various levels of their careers, and numerous organizations further develops my ability to critique systems, understand my positionality, and the knowledge gaps involved. As a young researcher, I am very grateful for having opportunities to attend conferences like ArcticNet and spend time in the community I work with so I can further understand these various concepts.

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