

Contemporary Sovereignty Issues: Arctic Council Simulation

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Learning Objectives

Students will....

- Identify regions represented by the Arctic Council.
- Appreciate the role of diplomacy for future peaceful management of the Arctic.
- Research the perspective of a Member State or Permanent Participant of the Arctic Council.
- Propose priorities for the management and development of the Arctic region in a simulated meeting of the Arctic Council.
- Consider social, political, economic and environmental priorities from a specific perspective.
- Make decisions that reflect the position of the assigned perspective and express those decisions in a vote to determine Arctic priorities.

Time required

Two 60 – 90 minute periods

Suggested Grade level

Secondary (Grades 9-12)

Materials

- Passage from *Polar Imperative* (Appendix A)
- Arctic Sovereignty Issues Timeline (Appendix B)
- Simulation Activity Sheet (Appendix C)
- Map: Stakeholders of the Arctic (Appendix D)
- Access to the Internet for research purposes: Arctic Council (See the 'About Us' section for information on Member States and Permanent Participants)

<http://www.arctic-council.org/index.php/en/>

Set-up

This lesson can be used as a stand-alone simulation on Arctic sovereignty issues. It also provides a strong cumulative conclusion to a comprehensive unit of study on Arctic sovereignty if it is used after completing the five preceding lessons.

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Introduction

Project the Stakeholders of the Arctic map for the class to examine. (If students have completed the introductory lesson in this resource package, they will already be familiar with the map.) Ask students to explore the map and see if they can identify how the information is organized. Who is represented? Is each region a country? What defines a region in the Arctic?

Inform students that the regions represent membership in the Arctic Council and that this organization is providing leadership for how the Arctic will be managed in the future. Share the passage from *Polar Imperative* and the Timeline (read aloud, read it together, or ask students to read it individually). Ask students to explain the change in approach to settling disputes over Arctic sovereignty from the past. Equipped with knowledge from the past, students will explore current information from the Arctic Council and simulate a meeting to set priorities for future management and development of the Arctic.

Development

Distribute the Simulation Activity Sheet. Depending on class size, assign students to work independently or in pairs for the simulation. Review the instructions and steps together. Ask students to limit their search for information to the Arctic Council website and information from this lesson. If they really feel the need to search beyond these sources, encourage them to use an advanced search (with careful thought to the search parameters) or Google Scholar to find vetted and academic sources of information.

Monitor and discuss findings with students as they conduct their research. Encourage them to prepare and organize their presentation carefully so that they can speak with conviction during the simulated meeting. Encourage students to dress, speak and present themselves professionally as they would if they were invited to a meeting of this nature. During the meeting, assume the role of moderator and recorder. Make a list of priorities that can be used for the final vote. Encourage students to write down their thoughts and opinions as their peers present their proposals. These notes may assist them in the decision-making required for the vote at the end.

Conclusion

Allow time for discussion, debate, negotiation or lobbying, before the vote takes place. Conduct a vote to decide which two priorities will be the focus for the upcoming term of the Arctic Council. Debrief with the class after the vote to discuss the choices students made and why.

Extend your geographic thinking

Take the next step: Write a letter to a representative of the Arctic Council to express your views and opinions on future priorities for Arctic management and development based on what you have learned in this lesson.



Read the passage from *Polar Imperative* to understand the context of this lesson in relation to the topic of Arctic sovereignty. Consult the Stakeholders of the Arctic Map, Timeline and the Glossary to equip yourself with the spatial relationships, facts and vocabulary used in the lesson. Make copies of the Simulation Activity Sheet, *Polar Imperative* passage and Timeline as necessary. Explore the Arctic Council website.

Optional: Many educators are finding the practice of ‘front-loading’ and ‘flipped’ teaching to be very effective as a way to make the most of class time together. This could be attempted with this lesson by making the passage from *Polar Imperative*, Map, Timeline and Glossary available to students **before** the lesson activities. They would be responsible for reading and reviewing the material and come to class ready to participate in activities and discussions.

Links to Canadian National Standards for Geography

Essential element 4: Human Systems

- Patterns of global power and influence
- Cooperation and conflict in the division and control of Earth’s surface

Appendix A: Passage from *Polar Imperative*

It is for the Great Powers to decide, by their policies and their plans, whether...development can be conducted in an atmosphere of friendly cooperation between all the Arctic nations, and with a resultant benefit to all, or whether the Northern Hemisphere is to become an area of national rivalries, fears and ambitions. (Lester B. Pearson, December 1945) (Grant, 2010, p.339)

The history of Arctic sovereignty in North America belongs to more than just the Inuit, Britain, Canada, the United States and Denmark. For over 300 years, it also involved the Dutch, Russians, Portuguese, French and Spanish Basques, all vying for control over the Arctic seas of the Old and New Worlds. Success or failure depended on a number of factors: the effect of European wars and internal conflicts, adoption of new technologies, accessibility of resources and market demand; the Protestant Reformation; as well as changes in economic and political power within the global community. Overriding all else during the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was an event beyond anyone’s control – the cumulative effects of the Little Ice Age – when cooler temperatures increased the area and depth of Arctic sea ice, temporarily halting exploration. By the time a warming trend reopened the northern waters of Davis Strait, shifts in economic and military power had changed the world map. Not only were different nations competing for control of the Arctic, but their objectives and priorities had also changed (Grant, 2010, p.56).

In Ancient and medieval times, countries went to war to settle sovereignty disputes. In the North Pacific, Britain appeared at first to be winning the battle with its mercantile trade and sea power, but ultimately lost in the end by alienating Russia through decisive defeat in the Crimean War. Instead, a peaceful transfer of sovereignty resulted from converging political forces in Washington and St. Petersburg, with Britain excluded from the discussions. Over the longer term, the U.S. was clearly the winner. Discovery of gold on the Klondike River may have ended complaints that the land was worthless, but its true value lay in the fact that it allowed the U.S. to become a bone fide “Arctic nation,” enabling direct participation in critical circumpolar negotiations with regard to security measures, laws of the sea, sovereignty, economic development and environmental concerns (Grant, 2010, pp.132-133).

American assertiveness, individualism and libertarianism characterized most government actions in the nineteenth century, motivated in part by their belief that someday the entire continent would be unified under one flag. Peaceful annexation of British North America failed to materialize, yet during World War II and the Cold War, the United States slowly but surely expanded its hegemony across Arctic regions, by assuming the major responsibility for continental defence.

The North American Arctic is once again threatened, this time by potential pollution from increased commercial shipping. Should Canada fail to provide the means to enforce necessary regulations to protect the environment, will the U.S. again step in and assume responsibility? And if so, what are the implications for Canada’s Arctic sovereignty?

There are other factors that have influenced changes in Arctic sovereignty. New technologies – whether improved seagoing vessels to navigate ice-strewn waters or advanced equipment to detect and extract the area’s resources – added further incentive to explore and exploit. While current interest in seabed mining creates added value for the region, it also multiplies the number of non-Arctic countries seeking to share in the economic benefits, either directly from minerals that might be extracted from unclaimed seabed of the Arctic Ocean or indirectly through shipping, supply of equipment and technological services. Understandably, some multinational corporations will benefit from the melting sea-ice and may consider any delay in mitigation of man-made causes an advantage (Grant, 2010, pp.400-403).

As never before, the onus rests with the media as the key source for public information to ensure that their facts are accurate, the opinions expressed justified and their message supportive of transnational cooperation.

The Arctic may be the homeland of indigenous peoples, but it is in each and every one’s interest that it be protected (Grant, 2010, p.469).

Appendix B: Arctic Sovereignty Issues Timeline

1494	Treaty of Tordesillas gives Spain and Portugal control over the only sea routes to the Orient. (p.58)
1576 - 78	Martin Frobisher leaves a stone cairn and flag off southern Baffin Island in the Arctic to signify possession by England.
1741	Captain Vitus Bering of the Russian Imperial Navy reaches the Aleutian Islands and claims them for Russia. Traders follow and set up posts in what is now Alaska.
1799	Russian-American Trading Company is granted an imperial charter over mainland and adjacent islands of what is now known as Alaska.
1824	The United States signs the Russian-American Convention recognizing Russian claims to Alaskan mainland and islands.
1825	Similar agreement signed with Great Britain, but British ships continue to attack Russian trading vessels on the High Seas.
1867	Russia sells Alaska to the United States to prevent it from falling into British hands. The official transfer takes place on June 11.
1867	The British North American Act creates the Dominion of Canada, effective July 1.
1870	British government loans Canada money to annex the Hudson's Bay Company lands, including Rupert's Land and the Northwestern Territory.
1880	Britain transfers her claims to the Arctic Islands by a simple order-in-council, without Parliamentary approval or defining the boundaries.
1897	Commander William Wakeham leads an expedition to the eastern Arctic and lays claim to Cumberland Sound on behalf of Great Britain.
1904	A Canadian expedition goes to Ellesmere Island and Lancaster Sound to build cairns, raise the flag and lay claim to adjacent lands for the Dominion of Canada.
1906 - 11	As directed by the Liberal government, Captain J.E. Bernier leads 3 expeditions to the high Arctic, wintering over on three occasions and laying claim to the Arctic Islands for Canada.
1907	A motion in the Canadian Senate articulates the Sector Principle (also referred to as the Sector Theory) by declaring its western marine boundary as the extension of its mainland boundary, running along the longitudinal meridian to the North Pole. The eastern boundary is drawn midway between Greenland and the Arctic Islands. Prime Minister Sir Wilfrid Laurier rejects the use of the Sector Principle as a means to define Canada's Arctic boundaries, and directs that no official statement be issued until it's assured there are no foreign settlements on lands claimed by Canada.
1909	Robert F. Peary allegedly plants the American flag at the North Pole.
1911	The Liberals lose the election and Conservative leader Robert Borden becomes Prime Minister, rejecting Laurier's plans to establish Arctic sovereignty as too costly.

1913 - 1918	Vilhjalmur Stefansson leads the Canadian Arctic Expedition (CAE) and explores the Western Arctic, claiming four previously undiscovered islands for Canada.
1921	Permanent Court of International Justice (PCIJ) is established in The Hague. Its purpose was to consolidate the international legal system and provide a means to settle disputes between states. The PCIJ would be replaced by the International Court of Justice in 1946.
1922	With the Liberals back in power, expeditions to the eastern Arctic resume on an annual basis and new RCMP posts are built on Ellesmere, Devon, and Baffin Islands to provide evidence of “effective occupation.”
1930	PCIJ rejects Norway’s challenge to Denmark’s claim to northeast Greenland; a decision that gives support to Canada’s claims to the Arctic Islands.
1939	Canada declares war on Germany, while the United States remains neutral until the bombing of Pearl Harbor in December 1941. Meanwhile the United States assumes protection of Greenland in 1940, after Denmark falls to the Nazis.
1941 - 45	The United States assumes the major responsibility for the defence of North America, including construction of weather stations, airfields and communication centres throughout the Canadian Arctic and Greenland. In Canada, US activities are approved by the Permanent Joint Board on Defence.
1946 - 1970s	Following the Mutual Joint Defence Agreement signed by Canada and the United States, and a similar agreement with Denmark, U.S. military activities continue with the construction of weather stations and airfields during the postwar years to defend against possible invasion by the Soviet Union. Additional activities take place during the Cold War, including aerial reconnaissance (as part of NORAD), submarine patrols, ballistic missile defense and extensive radar lines that crossed from Alaska through Arctic Canada and Greenland.
1973	Canada and Denmark sign an agreement defining the maritime boundary between Greenland and what is now Nunavut.
1977	The Inuit Circumpolar Conference (ICC) is created bringing together Inuit from Alaska, Canada, Greenland and Siberia to advance their rights and protect the fragile Arctic environment.
1982	United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS); Russia ratifies in 1997; Canada ratifies in 2003. The United States is the only major country that fails to ratify the agreement, which is now legally in force after a sufficient number ratified the agreement.
1996	Canada chairs the newly created Arctic Council, a body comprising 8 circumpolar nations.
2007	Russia claims rights to the seabed at the North Pole as an extension of its continental shelf. This claim is being challenged by Denmark and Canada, and Russia has been asked to submit further scientific data by December 2013.
2008	The five Arctic coastal states make the Ilulissat Declaration, which states that they are the appropriate states to govern the Arctic region, and that they would obey existing laws set out in UNCLOS.
2010	Alongside numerous Arctic policies issued by the Arctic Countries, the European Union, the Inuit Circumpolar Council and NATO, Canada releases its most recent policy statement in July.

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- 2013** Canada assumes chair of the Arctic Council for a two-year term. At the Arctic Council meeting held in Sweden, several non-Arctic countries are granted observer status. Countries such as China, India, South Korea and southeast Asia are now demanding shipping and mineral rights in the Arctic Ocean that are tantamount to declaring the region a global commons. In May, the United States finally issues an updated “National Strategy for the Arctic Region,” which includes a commitment to further scientific research, protection of the environment balanced with economic development and cultural issues, but with a firm commitment to protect the security interests of the United States and its allies.
- 2014** Russia’s action in Ukraine threatens to weaken the previously close cooperation of the eight Arctic states.

FROM: POLAR IMPERATIVE, BY SHELAGH GRANT

Appendix C: Simulation Activity

Instructions:

In this simulation, Member States and Permanent Participants are asked to propose two issues that they feel should be the Arctic Council's priorities during the upcoming two year term.

A meeting will be held and each delegate will have the opportunity to put forward a proposal that outlines their perspective, top priorities, and reasons for these priorities.

After all of the proposals have been presented, there will be a vote to decide which two priorities will be the Arctic Council's focus for the next two years.

Roles:

Choose to be a delegate from the list below:

Member States	Permanent Participants
Denmark	Arctic Athabaskan Council
Finland	Aleut International Association
Iceland	Gwichin Council International
Norway	Inuit Circumpolar Council
Sweden	Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North
USA	Saami Council
Canada	
Russian Federation	

Steps:

- Research your role and assess your main priorities to present at the meeting. Make sure that you explain the social, economic, political and environmental reasons for your choices.
- Prepare your presentation (2-5 minutes, make them count!)
- Present your proposal at the Arctic Council meeting.
- Take notes on the proposals of other delegations to help you decide how you will vote.

(If necessary, students can take on the role of a Permanent Observer and represent the UK, France, Germany, Poland, Netherlands, Spain, China, Italy, Japan, South Korea, Singapore, India. They may present a proposal, but they do not get a vote at the meeting.)

Appendix D Stakeholders of the Arctic



- Inuit Circumpolar Conference (ICC)
- Arctic Athabaskan Council (AAC)
dark: area of potential member communities (north of 60°)
light and dark: Athabaskan cultural area
- Gwich'in Council International (GCI)

Permanent Participants of the Arctic Council

Permanent participation is equally open to other Arctic organizations of indigenous peoples with majority Arctic indigenous constituency, representing:

- a. a single indigenous people resident in more than one Arctic State; or
- b. more than one Arctic indigenous people resident in a single Arctic State.

- Saami Council (SC)
- Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North (RAIPON)
- Aleut International Association (AIA)

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