

Module 11

Research in the North: Emerging Issues and Practices

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Key Terms and Concepts

- indigenous intellectual property rights
 - indigenous self-determination
 - participatory research
 - codes of conduct/codes of ethics for research
 - informed consent
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Learning Objectives/Outcomes

This module looks at the ways—both positive and negative—in which research has been used in the circumpolar North. It outlines the development of northern research capacities and emerging research practices across the circumpolar North. When you have finished this module, you should be able to outline the history of northern research practice in the eight Arctic states as well as describe the nature of the contemporary debate over indigenous intellectual property rights. You should be able to discuss the measures being taken to respond to demands for increased indigenous involvement in, and control of, research that affects northern peoples, and provide possible explanations for the different degrees of concern over this issue among the eight Arctic states. You should then be able to offer examples of innovative research approaches being used in the circumpolar North.

Upon completion of this module, you should be able to

1. outline the nature of the contemporary debate over indigenous intellectual property rights.
2. outline the history of the debate over northern research practice in Canada and more recently in the United States.
3. describe the state of northern research practice in other Arctic states.

4. describe the measures being taken to respond to demands for increased indigenous involvement in, and control of, research that affects them.
 5. describe innovative research approaches that are currently being used in the circumpolar North.
 6. discuss possible reasons for the different degrees of concern over research in the Arctic Eight.
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Reading Assignments

ACUNS (2003), *Ethical Principles for the Conduct of Research in the North* (revised edition; reprint from 1998 [first edition 1982]. [Online] <http://www.cyberus.ca/~acuns/ethics.html>.

IASSA (1998), Guiding Principles for the Conduct of Research, *IASSA Newsletter*, Fall, page 4; [also online] <http://www.uaf.edu/anthro/iassa/>.

Korsmo, Fae L., and Amanda Graham (2002), Research in the North American North: Action and Reaction, *Arctic* 55 (4): 319–328.

Overview

Research is a reflection of circumpolar autonomy. Frustration with being seen as a “ready-made laboratory” for southern research is leading to an emphasis on conducting research in ways that directly and indirectly benefit northern residents. This has been accompanied by the development of northern scholarly capacity and by the development of research ethics specifically for the North (e.g., the ACUNS *Ethical Principles for the Conduct of Research in the North*; and IASSA’s *Guiding Principles for the Conduct of Research*). There is also increased emphasis on the respect for and inclusion of Aboriginal traditional knowledge.

This module outlines the various issues leading to the development of northern research capacity and to the emerging research practices (e.g., community-based research, oral histories, participatory action research). Using a number of case studies and examples to illustrate, consideration will be given to similarities and differences across the circumpolar North.

Lecture

The Early Tradition of Research in the Arctic

The practice of scientific research in the circumpolar North cannot be understood without reference to its broader social context, in a historical perspective. For centuries, until it was entirely mapped and the land attributed to nation-states whose centres of gravity lay far to the south, the circumpolar North was a land of discovery. Commercial interests in the fur trade and the fisheries, in the quest for non-renewable resources and for shorter marine routes between continents—and while appropriating these regions for a nation-state—ran alongside the spirit of adventure and the attraction of charting hitherto unmapped regions. Scientific research became an increasingly important component of such exploration. Early scientific interests had a wide focus. Indigenous peoples, whenever encountered, were described in just about the same perspective as plants, fauna, the climate, and geology.

The first International Polar Year (IPY), in 1882–83, was the first concerted international effort to gain new scientific knowledge of the polar regions (Barr 1985). Systematic climatic and geomagnetic observations were among the central objectives. However, at about the same time, ethnographic descriptions of Arctic indigenous peoples were also systematized to a higher degree than they were before. The extensive ethnographic observations of John Murdoch at Barrow (Alaska) were directly related to his program for the IPY. Other famous and precious ethnographies were carried out in the last third of the nineteenth century, for example, in the Bering Strait region (Edward Nelson), in Southern Baffin Island (Franz Boas), in Quebec-Labrador (Lucien Turner), in East Greenland (Gustav Holm), in Chukotka (Valdemar Bogoraz), and in northern Kamchatka (Waldemar [Vladimir Ilyich] Jochelson). The second IPY, in 1932–33, focused almost exclusively on the natural sciences. The Cold War (1948–88) between the United States and the Soviet Union drastically increased competition and thus reduced scientific exchanges across the circumpolar North. Arctic issues were much less prevalent during the International Geophysical Year of 1957–58 than in the previous two IPYs.

Research in the North, therefore, has a long tradition of being conducted from southern institutions, with barely any regard for northern residents, except as objects of research. From the perspective of scientists, almost all of whom were based outside the circumpolar North, the Arctic was (and remains) a faraway area, a field with the characteristics of a “natural laboratory” (Korsmo and Graham 2002, 320). It is only in recent years that, beginning in Canada and in the United States, research practices have been questioned and put under pressure to change. Simultaneously, northern regions have been building their scholarly capacities. Colleges, universities, and research institutions have been founded and are steadily growing in size, competence, and recognition.

These developments have occurred within the context of decolonization, indigenous land claims, and claims for self-government, and the affirmation of the right to cultural assertion and survival in the face of assimilationist policies. In a broader context of international politics, the debates over indigenous intellectual property rights have also become a component of research policies.

Student Activity

On the Internet, find the home pages of institutions of higher learning and research in the circumpolar North. Check out when they were founded, what their current enrolment is, and what faculties, departments, or disciplines they have.

Indigenous Intellectual Property Rights

According to standard-setting documents formulated by indigenous peoples, “indigenous cultural and intellectual property rights [refer] to such things as indigenous art, songs, poetry, literature, biological and medical knowledge, ecological knowledge and environmental management practices, and other aspects and expressions of indigenous cultural heritage” (Simpson 1997, 18). Indigenous peoples’ use of intellectual property law is linked to the fact that states have been put under pressure to protect intellectual property, within a Western, legalistic tradition. However, the terminology and concepts of such legislation are quite alien to indigenous ways of thought. “Property” is not a universally recognized concept, especially not under its aspect of individual rights that can be alienated and sold. Likewise, the distinction between “cultural” and “intellectual” is reductionist and not necessarily relevant outside the legal context. The whole issue is framed in concepts originating in Western property law and legal systems. Dr. Erica-Irene Daes, who has long been chairperson of the United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Populations (WGIP) (which convenes every summer in Geneva), has suggested that “indigenous heritage” would be a more “simple and appropriate” expression than “indigenous cultural and intellectual property rights” (cited in Simpson 1997, 20).

The work of ethnographers (anthropologists focussing on the detailed description of cultures) has long consisted in describing indigenous societies and their cultures, and in collecting their artifacts and their knowledge. Until recently, this has been done without seeking the consent of those who shared

their lives and their knowledge with them. The publication in books—and exhibition in museums—of their most private and sacred knowledge and artifacts is extremely offensive to many people, and indigenous peoples have repeatedly been subjected to this treatment. The Internet increases tremendously the potential to violate the confidentiality that indigenous peoples assign to some aspects of their heritage (Daes 2003, 67–69). In the last decades of the twentieth century, some aspects of indigenous knowledge have also emerged as commodities of increasing economic value to non-indigenous peoples. In this context, indigenous peoples of the circumpolar North have voiced their concerns about the unauthorized appropriation of their heritage by outsiders and the commodification of this heritage without their control.

Besides problems with definitions that lack pertinence in indigenous contexts, the *enforcement* of intellectual property laws represents a major obstacle. Thus, for the moment, voluntary codes of ethics, elaborated by professional, governmental, and indigenous organizations, represent a common way to strengthen the potential for indigenous peoples to be consulted about, and to participate in, scientific research that may affect them. In any case, indigenous intellectual property rights cannot be dissociated from the wider issue of indigenous self-determination, and they can only be meaningfully defined and enforced within this context.

Student Activity

The issue of indigenous intellectual property rights in terms of unauthorized appropriation is common to indigenous peoples worldwide. Using the Internet and any other resource, illustrate similarities and differences between northern and non-northern indigenous peoples with respect to this issue. Find examples of commoditization and commercialization of indigenous heritage.

Towards New Approaches to the Practice of Research in the North

The Second World War (1939–1945) and the subsequent Cold War put northern indigenous peoples in the way of rapidly increased contact with outsiders and with the realities of world politics and military confrontation. Change reached the most remote communities, and the pace of transformations accelerated. In North America, starting in the 1960s, northern indigenous peoples mobilized themselves politically to bring forward land claims and pleas for self-determination. In the 1970s and 1980s, in the Northwest Territories of Canada, many researchers were involved in vast efforts to document Inuit land

use (e.g., Freeman 1977). A good deal of the research consisted in eliciting the knowledge of Inuit people. The purpose of such studies was to delineate the nature and extent of Inuit land use for the purposes of the Nunavut land claims. During the same period, indigenous peoples became more openly critical about some aspects of scientific research, which they considered unwelcome and potentially threatening.

In the mid-1970s, Canadian governmental agencies and research institutions started to draft codes of ethics (Korsmo and Graham 2002, 321). The most influential early effort was the *Ethical Principles for the Conduct of Research in the North*, published in 1982 by the Association of Canadian Universities for Northern Studies (ACUNS). These principles have been widely disseminated in English and French, as well as Inuktitut and Russian. They were aimed at promoting “co-operation and mutual respect between researchers and the people of the North.” According to Fae L. Korsmo and Amanda Graham in their article *Research in the North American North: Action and Reaction* (2002), the ACUNS principles “express social sciences guidelines concerning anonymity for human subjects, informed consent, respect for privacy and dignity, and the goal of sharing data and research benefits with the community” (Korsmo and Graham 2002, 321): this applies to the 1982 original ACUNS principles as well as to the revised version approved in 1997, published in 1998, and reprinted in 2003.

In northern North America, several other codes of conduct for research were developed and adopted by diverse bodies over the past 10–20 years. In 1990, the United States Interagency Arctic Research Policy Committee (IARPC) published *Principles for the Conduct of Research in the Arctic* (<http://www.nsf.gov/od/opp/arctic/conduct.htm>). In 1993, the Alaska Federation of Natives endorsed the creation of an Alaska Native Science Commission (ANSC) “to bring together research and science in partnership with the Native community” (ANSC n.d.). The ANSC has drafted a “sample code of research ethics” (<http://www.nativescience.org/index.html>), which is intended to regulate the rights and obligations of communities and researchers as partners. In northern Canada, the Science Institute of the Northwest Territories was created in 1984. This institute was given the prerogative of licensing all science conducted in the Canadian North, and the licensing process included the consultation of relevant representatives of the communities involved. As Nunavut was becoming a reality, a separate Nunavut Research Institute (NRI) was created, as well as the Aurora Research Institute in Inuvik, to serve the needs of the remaining Northwest Territories (Korsmo and Graham 2002, 322). The NRI developed a research policy booklet entitled *Nunavut Research Agenda: Research Policy and Needs for Nunavut* (1997), followed by a joint publication with the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada, *Negotiating Research Relationships: A Guide for Communities* (in English and Inuktitut, 1998). Both papers emphasize research as a negotiated partnership, encouraging participatory research involving local communities and the use of traditional knowledge whenever feasible and pertinent. These publications, however, fail to

address the issue of the rights of researchers and the obligations of communities towards them and the scientific community.

National professional associations also came up with codes of conduct. The *Statement of Principles for Ethical Conduct Pertaining to Aboriginal Peoples* adopted by the Canadian Archaeological Association (CAA) in 1997 (see <http://www.canadianarchaeology.com/aboriginal.lasso#index>) is only one example among quite a few others. At the international level, the International Arctic Social Sciences Association (IASSA), founded in 1990, published its *Guiding Principles for the Conduct of Research* in 1998 (<http://www.uaf.edu/anthro/iassa/>). IASSA now has observer status at the Arctic Council and advises the International Arctic Science Committee (IASC) on matters pertaining to human and social sciences research.

The Inuit Circumpolar Conference (ICC) published the *Principles and Elements for a Comprehensive Arctic Policy* in 1992, which it had drafted several years before. The book contains a sub-chapter on “Archaeological and Other Cultural Property,” and a chapter on “Educational and Scientific Issues,” both of which provide guidelines concerning the conduct of scientific research and the repatriation of cultural heritage.

Since its creation in 1990, the IASC has taken a leading role as the international institution dealing with research in the Arctic. It organized the first International Conference for Arctic Research Planning (ICARP) in 1995 in Hanover (New Hampshire, USA). This conference initiated a series of international priority research projects to be implemented in the Arctic (see the IASC Project Catalogue 2004 at <http://www.iasc.no/>). A second ICARP is scheduled for November 2005 in Copenhagen. The type of research encouraged by IASC is innovative in its intention of “bringing together the physical, biological and social sciences to address substantive themes” (<http://www.iasc.no/>). Among its “Project Selection Criteria” one reads, “addressing the concerns of those who live in and near the Arctic” (*idem*). For the time being, however, IASC has given up on issuing “guidelines for ethical principles for research affecting Arctic residents,” its regional board (including representatives of the eight circumpolar countries) having “concluded that a set of common principles as a guidance to arctic researchers was not feasible, as the socio-political situation in the arctic countries was too different” (IASC meeting report 1996, 46).

Large-scale, internationally coordinated research is also currently being planned for the fourth International Polar Year, which should take place in 2007–2008. A “planning group” has been appointed by the International Committee of Scientific Unions (ICSU). It considers proposals sent by national committees set up by national scientific associations recognized by ICSU and issued an “Initial Outline Science Plan” in April 2004 (<http://www.ipy.org/>). Despite earlier intentions to give more room to interdisciplinary projects involving “human dimensions” (for the Arctic), the current plans are disappointingly devoid of

references to Arctic residents, indigenous peoples and organizations, and human and social aspects.

So there is a clear trend towards more involvement of circumpolar residents, and in particular of northern indigenous peoples, in research that may affect them. Increased control of and participation in research are aspects of indigenous self-determination—as are intellectual property rights (as discussed earlier in this module); and these aspects are linked to the emergence and growth of northern scholarly institutions.

One may also note that the evolutions in research practices are not universally distributed across countries, social milieus, and scientific disciplines. The more the research is—seemingly at least—remote from humans and human interests, the less inclined are the research milieus to take the interests of local residents into account. Some of the above mentioned codes of conduct (ACUNS, IARPC) explicitly apply to all types of research and to all scientific disciplines. Nevertheless, they recognize that some types of research are less likely to affect northern residents than others.

Student Activity

Read the codes of conduct mentioned in the reading assignments for this module (ACUNS and IASSA), and find at least three other codes for the conduct of research or similar texts. Compare them and find out which concepts and elements are common to all of them. Discuss the notion of “informed consent.”

Variations across the Circumpolar North

As we have seen in the previous section, northern North America has been leading the trend of innovations in research practices during the past two or three decades. The main progress has consisted in acknowledging and taking into account the concerns, the needs, and the knowledge of northern residents, in particular indigenous peoples. The evolutions in other circumpolar countries with indigenous peoples can be described as following in the footpath set in North America, but they can also be seen as particular trajectories shaped by national traditions.

As confirmed by recent statistics, research in Greenland is increasingly conducted out of institutions based in Greenland. Their share of the total amount of Danish and Greenlandic research conducted in Greenland has increased from

15 per cent in 1995 to 42 per cent in 2002. During the same period, the share of research conducted by Denmark-based institutions in Greenland has decreased by half (Greenland Press 2004). And within Greenland, more and more research positions are filled by Greenlanders (a Greenlander being defined in the statistics as a person born in Greenland, a criterion that allows a less than precise ethnic ascription). Since shortly after the introduction of Home Rule in 1979, the responsibility for education and research has been taken over by Greenlandic authorities. The country has its own university—Ilisimatusarfik in Nuuk obtained university status in 1987—with four faculties. Since 1995, it also has a Nature Institute, which conducts most research on renewable resources in Greenland. The Commission for Scientific Research in Greenland (<http://www.kvug.dk/>), which has existed since 1878, was reorganized a few years ago. It now has an equal number of members from Greenland and from Denmark, and its chair alternates between Denmark and Greenland. It funds the projects of researchers based in Greenland as well as in Denmark. It also issues five-year plans for research (see the priority plan for 2003–2007 [strategi for perioden 2003–07] at <http://www.kvug.dk/>). Research priorities set by this commission are usually in close agreement with those of the Research Unit of the Greenlandic Home Ministry for Culture, Education, Research, and Church. The plan announced by this research unit a few years ago to elaborate ethical guidelines for research in Greenland has not been concretized, yet. This delay may to a great extent be explained by the fact that relations between the Greenlandic public and the research community (in Greenland and in Denmark), are generally smoother than they have been in northern North America—with the following recent exception.

Research on renewable resources conducted by the Nature Institute in Nuuk provides input to political decisions about the management of wildlife and fisheries. Recent decisions curbing hitherto unlimited rights to harvest, in particular some seabird species, are quite unpopular. Residents of remote communities think that the administration in Nuuk has alienated itself from their concerns, and the gap between natural scientists and the general population seems to be widening. In contrast with the current situation in the North American Arctic, traditional ecological (or environmental) knowledge (TEK), or indigenous knowledge (IK), is not recognized in Greenland, where one speaks of “users’ knowledge” instead.

Research in Greenland is also conducted by researchers and research institutions from countries other than the Danish realm. Part of this research is announced to, and licensed by, the Danish Polar Center (DPC) in Copenhagen (<http://www.dpc.dk/>); but some research, for example in social anthropology, can still be conducted without any official licensing or prior announcement.

There are leading universities and research institutions in northern Fennoscandia—for example, in Rovaniemi and Oulu (Finland), Luleå (Sweden), and Tromsø (Norway)—as well as Sami research departments and

education centres, such as the Nordic Saami Institute in Kautokeino (<http://www.nsi.no>) and the Centre for Sámi Studies at the University of Tromsø (<http://www.sami.uit.no>), Norway. These institutions conduct research in the European Arctic and are part of the local social fabric and, so, by necessity are sensitive to local needs and aspirations. Local aspirations are of course not monolithic, and conflicts between different types of land use, and the people advocating them, are rampant. Reindeer herding, closely (but in Finland, not exclusively) linked with the Sami, requires vast undisturbed pastures, which are threatened by forestry and other industrial and touristic developments. On the other hand, research partnerships on topics such as human–environment interactions in Sami reindeer herding, for example, are increasingly common (Müller-Wille and Hukkinen 1999; University of Lapland, RENMAN research project [mentioned below]).

Research in the former Soviet Union was influenced by the political developments in society at large. In Soviet Russia, more so than in Western countries, science was one of the instruments of political propaganda. Quite a few scientists disappeared in the Stalinian purges of the 1930s, and scientific publications were subject to censorship. Within the human and social sciences, research dealt mostly with the past (history, and its particular form of “ethnogenesis”), and with the “traditional.” Contemporary developments were avoided, and when they were broached, they were interspersed with uncritical praises of the progresses brought about by socialism.

Perestroika and the end of the Cold War at the end of the 1980s signalled important changes (Schweitzer 2001). The economic crisis of the 1990s hit the world of Russian scientific research hard, and, within it, fundamental research in the humanities even harder. Fieldwork in the Arctic, where the logistics are particularly expensive, almost came to a halt. Simultaneously, these regions were opened to foreigners for the first time since the Soviet revolution, which had started in 1917. Many Russian scientists were only able to continue their work by associating with foreign scientists. Western scientists did introduce the practices and formal research ethics codes they had been accustomed to and in that respect were agents of change. It should not be forgotten, however, that many individual Russian researchers—ethnographers, archaeologists, and so on—followed implicit research ethics in their relations with the communities they investigated that were quite comparable to that of their Western colleagues. Starting in the 1990s, in northern Russia just like in other parts of the Arctic, residents and indigenous communities became increasingly involved in controlling and participating in research that could affect them. Grassroots as well as official indigenous associations began to claim the right to veto certain types of field research.

Innovative Research Practices

A revised version of the *Ethical Principles* first published by ACUNS in 1982 (see above) has appeared in 1998. The revisions

reflect political and social changes in the Canadian North brought by land-claim settlements and self-government agreements. The revised principles call for community consultation at all stages of the research, including design and implementation and, where possible, for incorporation of local research needs into the research design and incorporation of relevant traditional knowledge into all stages of the research. The keyword is partnership: researchers and community members are to be equal partners in the design and conduct of research. (Korsmo and Graham 2002, 321)

Participatory approaches are indeed one of the main innovative practices of recent years in research in the North. For instance, indigenous organizations from different Arctic countries are now as a matter of course represented in the steering committees of large international scientific assessment projects sponsored by the Arctic Council (e.g., the upcoming Arctic Climate Impact Assessment [ACIA], and the upcoming Arctic Human Development Report [AHDR]). In recent research projects, partnerships may include local communities or associations, and they may link southern and northern-based research institutions. Participatory approaches imply involving all potential partners from the first stages of the research, when the research design and research questions are drafted.

Research training of local residents is an important aspect of many recent projects. More and more new projects involve, whenever pertinent, inter- or multi-disciplinary approaches. To take but one example, it is increasingly recognized that conservation and management of renewable resources (flora and fauna) are social issues as much as they are scientific ones, and that to be successful, conservation projects must involve social scientists (Mascia et al. 2003). The readiness to include indigenous knowledge whenever pertinent and feasible represents another major innovation in research practices. One may also mention, as one aspect of the participatory approach, the requirement to disseminate results to a broad public, in plain language, and first and foremost to the communities involved in or potentially affected by the research and its results. In recent years, some projects have aimed at “knowledge repatriation” of data collected in the past (e.g., Krupnik 2000, 2002). National funding agencies in Canada and the United States, and increasingly so in the Nordic countries, support these innovative practices.

Student Activity

Look at the following websites describing recent projects in different parts of the circumpolar North. In what aspects is each project innovative? Discuss with your “classmates.” The course instructor may also suggest other projects to consider.

- Community-University Research Alliance (CURA) research project: Memory and History in Nunavut, <http://www.getic.ulaval.ca/ang/recherche/projets/tex1.html>
 - Reindeer Management (RENMAN) research project, <http://www.ulapland.fi/home/renman/>
 - Sustainability of Arctic Communities, Alaska-Yukon-NWT, <http://www.taiga.net/>
 - Survey of Living Conditions in the Arctic: Inuit, Saami and the Indigenous Peoples of Chukotka (SLiCA), circumpolar project, http://www.iser.uaa.alaska.edu/projects/Living_Conditions/
 - Sacred sites in northern Russia and other projects involving the Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North, <http://www.raipon.org/english/index.html>
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Summary

Research practices in the circumpolar North are rapidly changing. The Arctic used to be considered a “natural laboratory” where one could conduct field research freely, without consideration for northern residents. In the past few decades, researchers have been under pressure to adopt innovative research practices involving partnerships with local communities and taking into account indigenous and local knowledge. Professional associations, as well as indigenous organizations and funding agencies, have developed codes of conduct for research in the North. Such codes are instrumental in enforcing the respect of indigenous intellectual property rights.

Study Questions

1. What are the main issues and problems associated with “indigenous intellectual property rights”?
2. What are the main common elements of the existing codes of conduct of research in the North?
3. Discuss different ways of implementing “informed consent” in an oral history project?
4. What steps should be taken when designing a new research project—from the first steps of the project to its completion—if one wishes it to conform to the innovative research practices discussed in this module?
5. Some people have argued that stakeholders’ control over certain aspects of research represents an unwelcome restriction of the freedom and independence of researchers. Are there ways to accommodate the points of views of both the academic and the local communities?

Supplementary Reading/Resources

Alaska Native Science Commission (ANSC),
<http://www.nativescience.org/index.html>

Canadian Archaeological Association (CAA),
<http://www.canadianarchaeology.com/aboriginal.lasso#index>

Centre for Sámi Studies, <http://www.sami.uit.no>

Commission for Scientific Research in Greenland, <http://www.kvug.dk/>

Danish Polar Center (DPC), <http://www.dpc.dk>

International Arctic Science Committee (IASC), <http://www.iasc.no/>

International Arctic Social Sciences Association (IASSA), *Guiding Principles for the Conduct of Research*, <http://www.uaf.edu/anthro/iassa/>

International Polar Year 2007–2008, <http://www.ipy.org/index.php>

Nordic Saami Institute, <http://www.nsi.no>

Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North (RAIPON),
<http://www.raipon.org/>

United States Interagency Arctic Research Policy Committee (IARPC),
Principles for the Conduct of Research in the Arctic,
<http://www.nsf.gov/od/opp/arctic/conduct.htm>

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