

Conclusion

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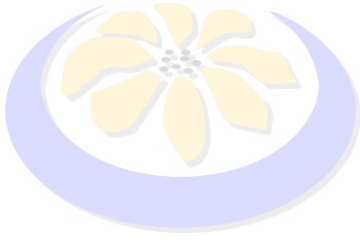
The circumpolar world is home to many rich cultures and diverse peoples. Before the arrival of European traders and settlers, these peoples exercised great ingenuity and determination to survive and flourish in the harsh northern climate. There have been many great changes during the past five hundred years, when other people attempted to colonize and assimilate the indigenous peoples of the North. The political and economic climate during the colonial and post-colonial eras turned out to be a much greater threat to the survival of northern indigenous peoples than the Arctic climate to which they had successfully adapted.

One of the goals of this course is to outline the culture and history of the primary societies who live in the circumpolar North. As we saw in Modules 2, 3, and 4, the circumpolar world was home to a variety of distinct ways of life based on reindeer herding, marine mammal hunting, hunting and gathering, or fishing. Many of these ways of life still thrive across Arctic and Subarctic regions. Students should come away from this course with a greater appreciation of these primary cultures and their relationships to the land and environment.

A second goal of this course is to outline and examine the impacts of the contact and interaction between primary and secondary societies in the North. Driven by trade and resource development, European secondary societies expanded north in Scandinavia, east across Siberia, and west to Greenland and North America. The development of trade and exploration by European peoples led to the development of early administration of indigenous peoples and lands. You should have a better understanding, through Modules 5 and 6, of this initial period of contact between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples in the North and the immediate events and consequences of this interaction.

The third goal is to familiarize you with the lasting effects of colonization and influence of the South on the lives of indigenous peoples. As we saw in Modules 7, 8, 9, and 10, modern state-building, consolidation, collectivization, and industrialization have had profound and usually detrimental consequences for the lives of the original northern residents. You now have knowledge of specific case studies and events in this period that contributed to the completion of the transformation of indigenous northerners from primary to secondary societies.

Why is this important today? Understanding the peoples and cultures of the circumpolar North, as well as their histories, is essential to understanding the contemporary issues in the North and expressions of self-determination today.



Peoples and Cultures of the Circumpolar World I

The right to self-determination of peoples is a fundamental principle of international law. It is enshrined in Article 1 of the Charter of the United Nations, in Article 1 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and article 1 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, as well as in other international human rights instruments. (United Nations 1996)

What forms of political self-determination are likely to emerge? How will self-determination be expressed through language and identity? How will self-determination be expressed through media and literature? These are some of the questions that are explored in the next course, BCS 322: Peoples and Cultures II.

References

United Nations. 1996. *Right to Self-Determination: 23/08/96. Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) General Recommendation 21: General Comments*. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Geneva, Switzerland. [Online] <http://tinyurl.com/fymq5>