

## **Methodology**

The Canadian Polar Commission's study on the state of northern knowledge in Canada focuses on research gains, gaps and opportunities in the Yukon, Northwest Territories, Nunavut, Nunavik and Nunatsiavut, during the seven-year period commencing with International Polar Year in 2007. The methodology was developed and initiated under the guidance of a five-person advisory committee of northern research experts.<sup>1</sup> This support was supplemented by ongoing feedback with the science advisors of the governments of Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut,<sup>2</sup> as well as other northern research experts and practitioners.

As an initial step, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 114 northern research experts and practitioners, of which approximately two-thirds were based in the North. These informants were asked to identify key research gains, gaps and opportunities within their areas of expertise (see Appendix A for the interview guide). These observations, which were organized by research topic (e.g. housing, food security, etc.) were then validated and supplemented with peer-reviewed and "grey" literature.

The resulting observations were analyzed to identify predominant cross-cutting functional themes to form the basis of a report comprising the Commission's high-level synthesis of the resulting output in terms of recent advances and remaining knowledge gaps and research opportunities. Observations were reviewed and prioritized for inclusion in the report based on relevance to Northerners and alignment with northern priorities. Over 40 northern research experts and practitioners were engaged in this review and prioritization process.

Methodological hurdles include the challenging volume of research implicit in the report's comprehensive scope and time period covered, as well the limited time and staff resources available to undertake this effort. As such, it is not a comprehensive or in depth examination of the state of northern knowledge. Instead, it provides a snapshot of some of the key recent advances and remaining knowledge gaps and research opportunities that are practical, timely, and of significance to Northerners.

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<sup>1</sup> The Advisory Committee consisted of: Dr. Frances Abele (Chair) – Professor, School of Public Policy and Administration, Carleton University; Jean-Marie Beaulieu – Senior Science Advisor, Canadian Polar Commission; Dr. Carolyn Relf – Director, Yukon Geological Survey; Dr. David J. Scott – Executive Director, Canadian Polar Commission; and Tom Sheldon – Director, Environment Division, Nunatsiavut Government

<sup>2</sup> The science advisors are: Andrew Applejohn – Senior Science Advisor, Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Government of the Northwest Territories; Aynslie Ogden – Senior Science Advisor, Yukon Government; Mary Ellen Thomas – Senior Research Officer, Nunavut Research Institute

## **Appendix A: Semi-structured Interview Guide**

### Introduction:

The Canadian Polar Commission is conducting interviews with individuals from Aboriginal organizations, governments, academia, and research institutes and networks from across the North and southern Canada to inform a report which examines the state of northern knowledge, which is intended for a broad public audience. Focusing on the Yukon, NWT, Nunavut, Nunavik and Nunatsiavut, this report will aim to do the following:

- Provide an overview of the major gains in northern knowledge from 2007 to the present;
- Identify key gaps and areas of research that still need to be addressed; and,
- Identify opportunities that are particularly timely, which can lead to tangible benefits for Northerners.

This report will be used to facilitate dialogue and inform decision makers and funders. Information obtained from this interview will be used to guide the identification of each of these aspects – gains, gaps and opportunities. Names of key informants will be listed in an appendix, but interview responses will not be attributed to any particular informant.

### Questions:

- 1) In addition to your primary position, what other research-related organizations, networks, committees, etc. are you are affiliated with?
- 2) What are the most critical issues facing the North?  
*Probes and follow up:*
  - a) What makes these issues more pressing than others?
  - b) In which regions of the North are these issues pressing?
  - c) What role do involved stakeholders play in addressing the issue?
  - d) What are the implications for the people of the North?
  - e) If applicable, to what extent do implications vary within or across regions?
- 3) What are some of the major research gains in the past five years that address those issues?  
*Probes and follow up:*
  - a) Why is this gain important?

- b) What pressing issues has this gain helped to address?
  - c) In which regions of the North is it having an impact?
  - d) How is it impacting Northerners?
  - e) Are there any lessons learned in research approaches that could be applied to future projects?
  - f) Are you aware of any literature that has identified this as a major gain?
- 4) What are some of the key gaps in research in the North?
- Probes and follow up:*
- a) What key areas of research are not being sufficiently addressed?
  - b) Why is it a more critical gap?
  - c) To what extent is research being conducted in this area?
  - d) What are the implications for Northerners?
  - e) In which regions of the North is it a key gap?
  - f) Are you aware of any literature that has identified this as a major gap?
- 5) What could be done to address some of the key gaps in research which you have identified?
- Probes and follow up:*
- a) Will it benefit Northerners?
  - b) What resources would be required?
  - c) Whose support is needed?
  - d) Is additional research needed before this opportunity can be fully pursued?
  - e) What might be some potential challenges or barriers with respect to implementation?
- 6) If applicable, for the area(s) of research on which you focus or have involvement in (e.g. health, wildlife, etc.), what are the major sources of funding?

This concludes our list of questions. Is there anything that you would like to expand on, or anything else that you would like to add?

Do not hesitate to contact us if you think of anything else that you would like to mention or if you have any questions or concerns.