AN HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONALIST PERSPECTIVE OF RUSSIAN INUIT POLITICAL AUTONOMY

by

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Abstract

Yupiget of the Chukchi Autonomous Okrug, Russian Federation are the only Inuit in the circumpolar north who do not hold a formal agreement with the state regarding self-governance, nor do they have any formal means of control over the range of activities carried out on their traditional lands. This thesis will examine this circumpolar anomaly by using historical institutionalism to help explain how political changes at the domestic and international levels, and over three distinct time periods have affected Yupiget struggles for self-determination and political autonomy. A documentary analysis supplemented with key informant interviews has shown that Yupiget involvement with international Indigenous organizations such as the ICC is instrumental in maintaining ties to their Inuit counterparts and inclusion in Arctic policy-making. Furthermore, Russia's increasingly centralized legislative and legal institutions are hindering the further development of non-governmental organizations while redefining a distinctly Russian variation of civil society. While Yupiget political development is currently impeded, changes in the domestic political situation in Russia and/or Chukotka could lead to a redoubling of efforts of the international community to support their political autonomy.

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CERD	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
ChAZTO	Chukotka Association of Traditional Sea Mammal Hunters
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CoE	Council of Europe
DFAIT	Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (Canada)
DIAND	Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (Canada)
FCPNM	Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities
ICC	Inuit Circumpolar Council
ILO	International Labour Organization
INRIPP	Institution Building for Northern Russian Indigenous Peoples' Project
IRC	Inuvialuit Regional Corporation
ITK	Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami
IWC	International Whaling Commission
IWGIA	International Working Group for Indigenous Affairs
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NNC	Naukan Native Cooperative
NORDEP	Canada-Russia Northern Development Partnership Program
NWT	Northwest Territories
RAIPON	Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North
RSFSR	Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic
TTNU	Territories of Traditional Nature Use
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UN	United Nations
UNDRIP	United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
YESC	Yupik Eskimo Society of Chukotka

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Inuit throughout the circumpolar north are increasingly engaging with their respective states in political activities in order to preserve their cultures and traditions, and to regain control over their traditional lands and daily affairs. Inupiaq and Central Yupiit in Alaska are beneficiaries of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971. Greenland's Kalaallit established "Home Rule" in 1979, and later "Self Rule" in 2009. In Canada, the Inuvialuit Final Agreement settled Inuvialuit land claims in 1984 followed by the creation of the territory of Nunavut with the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement in 1999, the Labrador Inuit Land Claims and Self-Government Agreement in 2005 and finally the Nunavik Inuit Land Claims Agreement in 2006.

Yupiget[1] from the Chukotka Autonomous *Okrug* in the Russian Federation are the only Inuit in the circumpolar north without a formal agreement with the state regarding political autonomy, or any recognized means of control over the range of activities carried out on their traditional lands. In fact, the Russian state increasingly restricts their ability to operate and participate in their own civil society institutions. However, Yupiget participation in the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC) simultaneously enables them access to decision-making processes that affect their traditional territories at the international and circumpolar level, while allowing them to share in the experiences of their Inuit kin in cultivating and re-establishing their own domestic political, economic and cultural practices. In fact, the ICC currently provides the only forum with which to support and develop Yupiget political agency.

The object of this thesis is to help explain this circumpolar anomaly. There appears to be

[1] Yupiget is used in this thesis to describe the Inuit residents of Russia's Far East. "Yupik" and "Yupiget" are used as the singular and plural forms because Yupiget use neither the terms "Inuk" nor "Inuit" to describe themselves. "Yupiget" differentiates Russian Inuit from their Alaskan (Central) Yupiit cousins.

two sets of clashing institutional forces affecting Yupiget: Russian government institutions such as the federal and regional governments and international cooperative institutions such as the ICC and the Arctic Council. This inquiry is concerned with which set of institutions is dominating. Lately, institutions of the Russian state are increasingly edging out the influence of Yupiget international relations. Whereas international relations have been instrumental in establishing and maintaining self-determination for other Inuit across the circumpolar north, Yupiget still struggle for political autonomy largely because they face a very different internal institutional context and their foreign ties evoke suspicion from the Russian state. An in-depth examination of the historical trajectories of the institutions established throughout the Soviet period and into the 21st century will help explain the current situation and assess the future prospects for Yupiget political autonomy and self-determination in the Russian Federation.

Little research has been conducted regarding the political institutions and organizations involved in the decision-making processes that both directly and indirectly impact Yupiget today. Through the process of gathering literature for this thesis, there appears to be a paucity of English language political research regarding not just Yupiget and other Indigenous peoples of the Chukotka Autonomous Okrug (Chukotka), but Indigenous peoples in the Russian Federation in general. Scholarly research regarding Yupiget is largely anthropological and very few studies have examined particularly their political activities at home and abroad. Authors such as Diatchkova (2001; 2002; 2010), Gray (2001; 2005; 2006; 2007; 2012), Kertulla (2000), Krupnik and Chlenov (2007; 2013), Krupnik and Vakhtin (1997; 2002), Poelzer (1996), Schindler (1992; 1994; 1996), Sillanpää (2005) Thompson (2002; 2008), and Wilson and Kormos (2015) have investigated a range of political phenomena in Chukotka, involving both Indigenous and settler populations. While their works are extremely insightful and valuable, stark changes in the political landscape in Russia over the last decade compel a narrower case study and a more up-

to-date inquiry. One of the main purposes of this research is to focus on Yupiget political development and to analyze and explain the current state of Yupiget political autonomy.

Research Question

The rigid institutions of the Soviet Union and its successor state, the Russian Federation, greatly influence the degree to which Yupiget can participate in decision-making on their ancestral territories and in their traditional political, economic and social activities. Currently, the Russian state maintains a strong influence on the development of, and participation in, civil society. The Soviet Union too maintained ultimate control over civil society. However, influence and control of the state has shifted over time. While there was a great deal of hope and optimism in the late Soviet and early post-Soviet periods, the last 15 years or so mark a steady decline in the development of civil society within Russia. In fact, Russian authorities have already interfered in the local organization of Yupik individuals and Indigenous groups at the regional and national levels, making it difficult for Yupiget to effectively use their collective voice. In this thesis, I will examine their struggle to preserve their culture, language and traditional ways through participation in the institutions established by both state and non-state actors, and the relationships maintained between these institutions and individuals.

This research is guided by the broad question: How have shifting institutional contexts influenced Yupiget ability to advance their own political, economic and cultural interests? In order to answer question, I will investigate the connections between a mixture of formal and informal institutions, ranging from transnational non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as the ICC and the legislative and legal institutions at both the federal and regional levels to smaller, local and regional NGOs such as the Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North (RAIPON) and the Yupik Eskimo Society of Chukotka (YESC). I will explore multi-

institutional cooperation, paying particular attention to Canada's influence on Yupiget as it pertains to Indigenous political development, and provide further comment to the wider debate regarding Arctic governance and cooperation.

In order to examine Yupiget political development, I will use an historical institutionalist approach, a widely accepted theoretical framework for the study of institutional change and stasis. Through an historical analysis of Indigenous institution building from the beginning of the Soviet Union though the post-Soviet transitional period to the contemporary Russian Federation, I will show how competing institutional structures have influenced the political, economic, and social development of Yupiget from the late Soviet period through to the present.

Rationale

This research is timely and significant to Yupiget, and all Inuit, because massive global development pressures from external and internal sources are rapidly changing their Arctic homelands. This thesis will contribute to a western academic understanding of the challenges faced by Indigenous peoples of Siberia and the Russian Far East such as the Evenki (Fondahl, 1998), and the Chukchi (Gray, 2004). The research will be useful for Arctic policy-makers and researchers alike as they attempt to understand the complexities of Inuit society and Indigenous politics in the circumpolar north. Findings from this research are relevant to a Canadian context because Yupiget are simultaneously members of the Russian nation-state and the circumpolar Inuit nation[2], of which a considerable population reside in Canada. Furthermore, ICC Canada, in partnership with the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and the former Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND) has played a leadership role in collecting financial resources to provide humanitarian and development aid to Yupiget and

[2] 'Nation' is used here not to mean a 'nation-state', rather a people with a shared territory, community, culture and history. See Alfred and Corntassel (2005: 608) for an Indigenous perspective of 'nation'.

other Indigenous peoples from Siberia and the Far East following the dissolution of the Soviet Union (Slipchenko and Hannigan, 2010).

Issues related to Yupiget political development also exemplify one of the challenges shared across the circumpolar north and the world: self-determination for Indigenous peoples. With Canada's very recent decision to fully support and sign onto the United Nations' Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), the Canadian government is re-imagining its relationship with Canada's Indigenous peoples a full decade into UNDRIP's implementation. Significantly lower social and economic indicators[3] amongst Indigenous peoples in Canada and the entire Arctic underscore an urgent need to considerably raise their living standards. Moreover, significant resource development pressure from both industry and the federal government has perpetuated unequal relationships and strained Indigenous relations with the Crown, signaling a need to look beyond the historical and modern treaty process, towards forming new relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. By drawing on a key example of cooperative Arctic governance, I aim to broadly highlight the ways both state and non-state actors influence governance and policy direction in the Arctic.

Studies of Arctic governance have recently been conducted throughout the Canadian Arctic, many of which focus specifically on Canadian Inuit (Abele and Rodon, 2007, 2009; Shadian, 2006, 2007, 2010, 2013; Wilson and Smith, 2011; Wilson, 2007). As there is no evidence suggesting this type of research has been conducted in Chukotka, there is a clear opportunity to identify some key areas of future inquiry and ways in which this research can benefit not only northern researchers and policy-makers, but the people who live in Arctic regions. By examining Yupiget political development as a case study, further areas of study will

[3] For an example, see Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (2014) "Social Determinants of Inuit Health in Canada" and Larson and Fondahl (2014) "Arctic Human Development Report II."

be identified that may be mutually beneficial to Indigenous peoples and their respective states alike.

Case Study: Yupiget

Yupiget are one of the smallest of the "small-numbered peoples"[4] of the North, Siberia, and the Far East. Their population consists of approximately 1700 people (Rohr, 2014), settled mainly along the coast of the Chukchi Peninsula in the villages of New Chaplino, Uelkal, Uelen, Cape Schmidt, Sireniki, Provideniya, Lorino, and in the capital of Chukotka, Anadyr (Ainana, Zelensky and Bychkov, 2001). As a result of Soviet policies of collectivization and resettlement, along with fluctuating in/out-migrations of Russian settlers, Yupiget now largely reside outside of their ancestral territories in mixed Russian, Chukchi and Yupik settlements (Kertulla, 2000; Krupnik and Chlenov, 2007; Thompson, 2008). The Soviet era policy of collectivization removed Yupiget control over their traditional economic activities by relocating villages to support state farming industries and in order to better administer the region (Pelaudiex, 2012).

[4] This unique term will be explained in greater detail on p. 20.

Fig. 1 Chukotka is the shaded region in the Northeast corner of the Russian Federation. Adapted from Wikipedia.org. Available at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chukotka_Autonomous_Okrug#/media/File:Chukotka_in_Russia.svg

Yupiget continue to rely on sea mammal hunting as the foundation of their economic and subsistence activity (Borodin et al, 2002, 2012). Their traditional social, political and economic systems are centered on the hunting/gathering way of life and have persisted throughout the Soviet, transitional and the post-Soviet periods, albeit not without struggle and loss (Krupnik and Chlenov, 2013). As an Indigenous minority residing within the autonomous district of another Indigenous minority (the Chukchi), Yupiget face a constant struggle to preserve and reclaim their culture, language, and traditional livelihood while balancing the pressures of modernization and industrial development (Borodin et al., 2002; Sillanpää, 2005).

Traditional divisions of Yupiget include northern and southern territorial groups, divided into tribes and further divided into clans. These traditional divisions are no longer intact today because of early Soviet period resettlements, although some tribes remain together in certain

national villages[5] in Chukotka (Schindler, 1996). The Soviet period completely changed how Yupiget conducted their economic activities and trade relationships (Abryutina, 2007). Soviet industrial development policies were largely unconcerned with the effects of development on Yupiget (Sillanpää, 2005). After the Soviet Union's dissolution, they were left extremely isolated, without many supplies and goods provided by the state, and were economically dependent almost solely on sea mammal hunting (Abryuntina, 2007). There were also shifts in the balance of power between federal and regional authorities in Russia, signaling changes in decision-making and the enforcement of legislation from the center to the regions throughout the 1990s (Gray, 2005) and more recently back to the center (Sharafutdinova, 2013; Staalesen, 2014).

In 1990, just prior to the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Chukotka successfully seceded from Magadan Republic (Gray, 2005; Thompson, 2008) perhaps leading the way for more regional autonomy within the new Okrug. As authority became more decentralized in the Soviet Union a small window of opportunity arose for the promotion of Indigenous rights and Indigenous participation at the regional and federal levels of government. Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev's policies of *glasnost* (openness) and *perestroika* (restructuring) were perceived as promoting regional autonomy (Roeder, 1991; Semenova, 2007). The 1990s were a time of increasing awareness of Indigenous rights (Pika, 1999). During this time, Yupiget became politically active, both at home and abroad. The federal government enacted laws meant to protect and empower Indigenous minorities (Ainana, Zelensky and Bychkov, 2001; Diatchkova, 2010; Gray, 2001; Krupkik and Vakhtin, 2002; Pelaudiex, 2012; Schindler, 1992; Sillanpää, 2005). However, the regional government's statutes were rarely in line with federal legislation, resulting in conflicting interpretations of statutes and difficulties with the implementation of the

[5] A settlement based on ethnicity.

law (Gray, 2005). The legal status of Yupiget has never been determined in Chukotka (Sillanpää, 2005). Because of their small population and geographical location, Yupiget are administratively subordinated to the Chukchi, the larger Indigenous group to which a *de jure* type of formal political autonomy had, at least in name, been granted with the formation of the Chukotka Autonomous Okrug in the 1930s.

Yupiget are far more geographically distant from Moscow than any other Indigenous peoples of the USSR and its successor, the Russian Federation. This isolation[6], not only from the federal administration but also from the administration in Chukotka's capital Anadyr, greatly affects the quality of infrastructure and services provided by the state to Yupiget (Gray, 2005). The main form of transportation is air travel as there are few roads connecting villages except for in the winter when ice roads on frozen rivers are utilized for ground travel (Ibid). Because Yupiget villages are located in high Arctic, near the Bering Strait, the ocean shipping season is short and often unreliable. Most of the transportation infrastructure provided by the state is from the Soviet period, and supports industrial development such as oil and gas extraction and mining operations (Krupnik and Vakhtin, 2002). However, former Governor Roman Abramovich (2001-08) invested in the major centers in Chukotka, building and repairing roads, hospitals and schools (Thompson, 2008).

In the 1990s, the basic support provided by the state collapsed with the dissolution of the Soviet Union, and a period of massive out-migration ensued, effectively removing over half the (settler) population (Gray, 2001; 2005; Thompson, 2002). Communications were unstable and worked intermittently, and services were limited by reduced access to villages and former settlements (Hurst, 2011). The lack of services created a state of emergency for Yupiget. In the late 1990s, Red Cross Canada and ICC Canada met with YESC to distribute humanitarian aid in

[6] See Figure 2.

the Provideniya region (Ainana, Zelensky and Bychkov, 2001; Wilson, 2007).

Yupiget constitute the majority ethnicity in only two settlements: New Chaplino and Sireniki (Robert-Lamblin, 1993). The current state of infrastructure in Yupik villages today is unclear. As noted above, Abramovich's modernization projects were concentrated in the urban centers, and mainly in Anadyr. That is not to say the villages received nothing, just that it is under-reported. It is, however, likely that services such as power generation, roads and transportation, as well as other government provided services are still more determined by the needs of the resource extraction industry and the major centers than the needs of ordinary citizens in remote communities.

The consolidation and resettlement of Yupik villages played a key role in determining the rights of Yupiget as an Indigenous minority in the Russian Federation and the prospects for meaningful representation in local political institutions. Also, the formation of and interruptions in the operation of local NGOs provide key insights into the future political development of Yupiget. Lastly, competing federal and regional law-making regimes are complicating the ability of Yupiget to exercise control over their domestic affairs, while their involvement with the ICC and Arctic Council allow them to participate in broader Arctic governance and international cooperation. Their involvement with, and the assistance of, the international community provides the only support for their autonomy and internationally recognized inherent Indigenous rights. A thorough examination of the seemingly competing institutional arrangements of the ICC and the Russian Federation will provide insight as to why Yupiget are increasingly politically isolated at home and abroad.

Conceptual Clarity

Before proceeding to the methods chapter, it is necessary to try to define some of the

concepts that are used in this study. The purpose of this section is to highlight the terminology used in this research by presenting them in the wider academic context to determine working definitions that can be used to analyze this case study. This section also establishes the assumptive basis by which the research question will be answered. For example, it is assumed that Yupiget collectively want to achieve some degree of political autonomy in order to "preserve their culture, language and traditional way of life" (Ainana, 2001).

Autonomy

Autonomy is etymologically founded in the Greek words *autos* – self, and *nomos* – rule of law (Bruce and Gilio-Whitaker. 2014; Loukacheva, 2005). It broadly translates to "ruling oneself." Academics, nation-states, and international law interpret autonomy in slightly different ways. In order to establish a working definition of "political autonomy," academic, legal, and Russian interpretations will be given consideration and connections drawn between them.

At its broadest, with reference to Indigenous peoples, political autonomy is "the right to be different and to be left alone; to preserve, protect and promote values which are beyond the legitimate reach of the rest of society" (Hannum, 1990: 4). Scholars have refined political autonomy into three, somewhat distinct categories: *personal autonomy* – granted to all members of a minority regardless of whether or not they belong to a specific territorial administrative unit; *territorial autonomy* - institutionalized division of powers between the autonomous territory and the central authorities; *functional autonomy* - the devolution of specific powers pertaining to culture, education, religion or media to Indigenous or minority organizations (Åkermark, 2013; Musafiri, 2012). Musafiri (2012) notes that acquiring adequate resources is a critical prerequisite to the 'effective functioning' of all three forms of autonomy. A specific commonality between these forms of autonomy is the establishment of regional or local institutions to connect political

activity with the members of the autonomous group or organization (Ibid). Åkermark (2013) adds that the window of opportunity for the 'successful introduction of an autonomous solution' is most likely to occur during a period of crisis or political upheaval.

Other scholars distinguish between *non-territorial* and *territorial* autonomy in a very broad manner, explicating notions such as "cultural autonomy," "personal autonomy," "exterritorial autonomy," "corporate autonomy" and "segmental autonomy," often using the term *self-government* interchangeably with autonomy (Osipov, 2010). Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, two distinct, but related, processes to achieving regional or territorial autonomy arose: the negotiated bilateral treaty process between the federal and regional governments; and, the *de facto* process whereby the central authorities had defaulted on their responsibilities to the regions (Stoner-Weiss, 1999).

The federal law *On National-Cultural Autonomy* [No. 74-FL of June 17, 1996, as amended on June 29, 2004] that protects the cultural development of Russia's many national minorities was an early legal protection for Indigenous minorities in the Russian Federation. However the weak federal government lacked the capacity to enforce and implement it in the regions. The state's inability to implement legislation in the regions is an example of 'the weakness of *de facto* autonomy. National cultural autonomy does not necessarily equate to political autonomy, and de facto autonomy does not exactly ensure territorial autonomy. As protections, however, they are both symbolic of the historical development of Russia's Indigenous minorities. Additionally, national cultural autonomy constitutes a two dimensional definition: "the first refers to a general principle by which individuals use various institutional formats to collectively pursue their rights and interests related to their ethnic origin, language, and culture" such as legislation. The second meaning refers to "a specific form of ethnicity-based organization" such as an ethnic-based NGO (Osipov, 2010: 36).

The federal law *On National-Cultural Autonomy* [No. 74-FL of June 17, 1996, as amended on June 29, 2004] chapter 1, article 1, offers this definition:

> The national-cultural autonomy in the Russian Federation is the form of the national-cultural self-determination which is the social association of citizens of the Russian Federation who consider themselves to belong to certain ethnic communities on the basis of their voluntary self-organization with the aim of the independent solution of the issues related to preservation of their identity, development of language, education, and national culture.

National-cultural autonomy, as opposed to a territorial autonomous arrangement, is the preferred instrument for resolving minority rights by Russian authorities because there are almost always other minorities residing within the autonomous territories of a "titular[7]" minority (Bowering, 2012). Osipov (2010), however, notes that national cultural autonomy is more symbolic than instrumental in its application. While there are consistent principles embedded within the law, there is too much disjuncture between it and other federal and regional legislation to implement it fully (Ibid).

The failure to implement such legislation has important implications for those groups seeking a degree of autonomy. First, while *non-territorial* autonomy is defined in Russian law, it might be as important to understand what it *does*, in addition to what it *is* (Åkermark, 2013). Autonomous arrangements institutionalize relationships between the central authorities and the minority, and place new requirements and expectations upon them both (Ibid). Additionally, there are legal implications, both domestically and internationally, from failing to implement

[7] "Titular" nationalities are those that were granted a territory in the Soviet period (Prina, 2014). In this case, Chukchi are the "titular" minority granted territorial autonomy via the Chukchi Autonomous Okrug. Smaller Indigenous groups within Chukotka, such as Yupiget, are not granted territorial rights and privileges. Yupiget are granted cultural autonomy in that language, tradition and cultural identity are/can be protected by law.

laws that are developed around the "rights" discourse. While autonomy is ill defined in terms of international legal discourse, there are some points of discussion relevant to this study.

In international law, autonomy is a function of the rights of participation and self-determination (Xanthaki, 2004). Through this state-centric view, autonomy is permitted to Indigenous peoples through the development of various non-binding international agreements such as the 1991 Nuuk Conclusions and Recommendations on Indigenous Autonomy and Self-Government and further in the 2007 UNDRIP. Loukacheva (2005: 14) demonstrates how the Nuuk Conclusions outline three important components of Indigenous autonomy: Article 2 states "the inherent and fundamental right to autonomy and self-government," while Article 4 adds that "self-government, self-administration and self-management of Indigenous peoples constitute elements of political autonomy," and further specifies that "the realization of this right should not pose a threat to the territorial integrity of the State."

UNDRIP (2007: 4-5) goes even further in codifying autonomy as an Indigenous right. Article 4 states: "Indigenous peoples, in exercising their right to self-determination, have the right to autonomy or self-government in matters relating to their internal and local affairs, as well as ways and means for financing their autonomous functions." UNDRIP (2007: 20) equates Indigenous political autonomy with *internal* self-determination and outlines the following characteristics of an autonomous arrangement:

- "A strong voluntary will of the population to achieve autonomy;
- Existence of particular geographical, demographic or historical factors;
- Cultural, linguistic, ethnic distinctiveness;
- Creation of a legislative body elected by local residents in a democratic way and capable to enact its own legislation; as well as the establishment of an executive body;
- Provisions of conditions for economic sustainability and a financial base versus fiscal

dependency on central/federal authorities and pragmatic expectations of future financial independence and liability for managing its own affairs; and,

- Autonomy starts with "self," the desire and ability of all residents of the autonomous entity to be a part of existing or building structures and institutions, making them more amenable to peoples' aspirations and needs."

Significant factors include a cultural aspect, the ability to self-identify and to be accepted by the group to which one identifies, an historical aspect, the capacity to act, and a governance and institution-building regime, all of which are characteristic of the process of *self-determination*.

Self-Determination

If autonomy is an endgame or a result, then self-determination is the process by which autonomy is realized (Bruce and Gilio-Whitaker, 2014). The very notion of Indigenous self-determination is founded on the principle of "equal freedom from rule," which is not sufficiently protected by former colonial powers inside settler states (Volmert, 2010: 53). Humphrey [1984] describes self-determination as "the proposition that every People should freely determine its own political status and freely pursue its economic, social, and cultural development" (in Hannum, 1990: 27). Russian Indigenous leaders have extended such definitions to include:

> Freedom from political and economic domination by others; the right to their own governments and laws; free and agreed-upon political and legal relations with the government of their country; control over economic developments and their cultural, linguistic, and spiritual life; the right to participate in the international community; and the right to own and govern their own territories and lands (Rethmann, 2001: 2).

Thus, there are a variety of outcomes of self-determination including rights protections, cultural, economic, and/or political autonomy, and even independent statehood. Halperin, Scheffer, and

Small (1992: 47) describe self-determination as "entitling its people to choose its political allegiance, to influence the political order in which it lives, and to preserve its cultural, ethnic, historical, or territorial identity." The aforementioned definitions construct an *internal/external* self-determination dichotomy regarding self-determination: internal self-determination amounts to collective political autonomy, while external self-determination can equate to political independence.

Anaya (1996) offers a framework more appropriate for an institutionalist perspective in his seminal work *Indigenous Peoples in International Law*. To account for the "multiple human associational patterns in today's world," Anaya distinguishes between *constitutive* and *ongoing* self-determination (Anaya, 1996: 81). Constitutive self-determination refers to the establishment, merger and/or changes to the scope of authority of an institution. Self-determination requires that these processes are guided by the will of the people - those subordinate to the institution. Ongoing self-determination refers to the maintenance and upkeep of the current institutional order and requires that the people are free to live and develop as they choose. Anaya's (1996) framework closely mirrors the theory of historical institutionalism that is explained more thoroughly in the following chapter.

Self-determination is "universal in its scope," requiring collective rights and "particular in its articulation," requiring elements of localized, territorial, and cultural control over specific resources (Muehlebach. 2003: 261). Murphy (2008: 200) describes how the *relational* model of self-determination adds an important element to the notion of ongoing self-determination: "Autonomous institutions of self-government may be the most obvious route to Indigenous empowerment, but Indigenous representatives may also need an effective voice in local, regional, and national institutions that have the capacity to influence their individual and collective futures." A relational model allows for "multiple points of access to political power

and decision-making" (Ibid). While "institutions of self-government" may or may not be the right delivery mechanism for Indigenous political autonomy, increased Indigenous participation in the governing institutions of the state can enhance the constitutive component of self-determination.

Indigeneity

The term "Indigenous peoples" is used throughout this thesis to refer to First Nations, Aboriginal peoples, Native peoples, Indian peoples, Tribal peoples, etc. and any other commonly used moniker to refer to Indigenous peoples around the circumpolar north. There are two distinct definitions of "Indigenous" that distinguish between Indigenous peoples in Russia and the rest of the world. One particularly eloquent definition maintains:

> Indigenous communities, peoples and nations are those which, having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing on those territories, or parts of them. They form at present non-dominant sectors of society and are determined to preserve, develop and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories, and their ethnic identity, as the basis of their continued existence as peoples, in accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions and legal system… On an individual basis, an indigenous person is one who belongs to these indigenous populations through self-identification as indigenous (group consciousness) and is recognized and accepted by these populations as one of its members (acceptance by the group) (UN Indigenous Study in Hannum, 1990: 89).

The key elements of this definition include a common history, traditional use of a defined territory and the ability to transmit knowledge of/from the territory to future generations,

minority status, self-identification and acceptance by other members.

In contrast, and due in part to perceived and/or real differences in its colonial history, the Russian definition differs in scope and context. The Russian concept of "Indigenous" was formalized in 1993 with the drafting of the first Constitution of the Russian Federation (Stammler-Gosman, 2009). Indigenous small-numbered peoples (*korennye malochislennye narody*) of the Russian Federation are defined in Russian law as peoples residing within the ancestral territories of a traditional settlement, preserving a traditional way of life and maintaining a traditional economic system and activities, consisting of fewer than 50,000 individuals, and identifying as independent ethnic communities (Donahoe et al., 2008; Stammler-Gossmann, 2009). The Russian definition allows for a variety of interpretations of concepts such as "traditional economic system" and "traditional way of life"[8] and sets limits to the population of an Indigenous group. This may have serious implications on any discussion of Indigenous rights as they pertain to Russian citizens on Russian soil.

Philosophical Underpinnings of the Argument

Because there is no clear way to garner the current perspectives of Yupiget, and their voices are largely missing from this thesis, some assumptions will be made in order to keep this thesis focused and functional. Beginning with the universality of rights in the international discourse, it is reasonable to assume that Yupiget would like to exercise their collective rights to autonomy. It is also reasonable to assume that they are satisfied to be both Russian citizens, and members of the circumpolar Inuit community, given their participation in ICC. The development of a number of organizations in the 1990s that Yupiget and other Russian Indigenous peoples use to engage in issues pertinent to their lives illustrates the amount of discontent with the old regime

[8] The concept of "traditional" is still undefined in legal terms.

and the status quo. While the contemporary political climate in Russia is less favourable to resolving the challenges of exercising Indigenous rights, the existence of Indigenous activism inside and outside the Russian Federation demonstrates the commitment of Russian Indigenous peoples to their own political development.

The data contained in this thesis are analyzed through a social constructivist paradigm. Additionally, this thesis is written using a phenomenological understanding of human interaction. To clarify, human experience dictates our understanding of the world. For example, in the dominant Canadian culture, we understand governance as a function of government - it is what the government does. However, in certain Indigenous cultures, government was non-existent, but there was governance. Therefore, as previously stated with reference to Murphy's (2008) notion of *relational* self-determination, self-government may not be the most appropriate vehicle for political autonomy. UNDRIP Article 3 identifies "self-government, self-administration and self-management" as the constitutive elements of political autonomy (UN General Assembly, 2007). If a people has never before had to structure a "self-government" and the settler state builds the model (i.e. band council), it is inappropriate to label this arrangement "political autonomy," especially when an Indigenous perspective is under-valued or not valued at all by the dominant culture. The last assumption is that one individual, organization or institution does not represent the views of every member of the group. Where it is possible to find dissenting viewpoints, they will be presented. In this thesis, I aim to develop a rather broad analysis of Yupiget political development using a generalizable conception of political autonomy.

Overview of Chapters

In this chapter, I described the rationale, research question and case study under

examination. I also described the epistemological assumptions in my approach to the research for this thesis. I ended the chapter by defining some of the key terminology including "self-determination" and "political autonomy." In Chapter 2, I will begin by outlining the theoretical framework of historical institutionalism and how it will be used to guide my inquiry and frame my argument. Next I will explain the data and methods used to collect and analyze data in order to complete this thesis. I will also explain some of the challenges presented while planning this thesis research and how they were resolved. In the following three chapters, I will highlight the institutional development of Indigenous peoples in the Russian Federation and, more specifically, Yupiget over three distinct time periods. This temporal break down is used to illustrate the waxing and waning of state influence over Yupiget institutional development. Chapter 3 examines the Soviet period where Yupiget institutions were replaced by state institutions. Chapter 4 explores the transitional period where Soviet institutions, in some ways, immediately evaporated and a range of new institutional possibilities thrived in the vacuum left by the removal of state control. Chapter 5 looks at the contemporary period, where the centralizing force of the state regained influence over the regions and sought more control over the emerging institutions of Russian civil society. Each chapter is divided into thematic sections consisting of: political developments at the federal and local levels, including civil society and Indigenous activism in the latter two chapters; and, international cooperation and particularly the effect of Canada's bilateral relationship with the Russian Federation in the Arctic on Yupiget political development. In Chapter 6, I will use the tools of historical institutionalism to explain the historical evolution and current state of Yupiget political autonomy and self-determination. In the concluding chapter, I will summarize my argument and also highlight gaps in our knowledge, the limitations of the study, and outline some next steps in terms of future research concerned with Yupiget political autonomy.

Chapter 2: Theory and Methods

Theory is used to connect research to present knowledge, permit its critical evaluation and help a researcher decide on the most relevant research methods. It also allows the researcher to move past basic descriptions of particular phenomena, and to generalize, and place limits on such generalizations, about their research. In this chapter, I will begin by describing historical institutionalism, a theoretical framework used in this case to explain and understand the development and subsequent stasis of Yupiget political autonomy. In part one, I will explain how historical institutionalism will be used, its arguments and assumptions, strengths and weaknesses, and finally its efficacy in relation to other types of institutional theory. In part two, I will describe how the data used in this thesis were collected and share some of the challenges that occurred during the data collection process, including ethical concerns, recruiting participants, and the effect of global politics on research opportunities.

Historical Institutionalism

Institutional theory has a long history in the discipline of political science. It initially grew out of an approach used by organizational theorists in the mid-19th century, and prior to the behaviouralist revolution, it focused narrowly on the study of laws and constitutionalism. In the 1980s, neo-institutionalists sought out answers to political phenomena that were poorly explained by behaviouralist theory that dominated political science in the 1950s and 1960s. Institutionalists understand political change and, more so, stability as a result of institutionalized practices, not just the rational, self-interested behaviour of political actors. They also have a broader definition of what constitutes an institution than their predecessors of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Three distinct varieties of institutionalism stemmed from this development: rational choice, sociological and historical. While sharing a basic premise, these streams of

institutionalism are responses to multiple perspectives of individuals and institutions.

Institutionalism enhances our understanding of political action by describing the relationship between institutions and the behaviour of actors. Rational choice institutionalism assumes the primacy of individuals in relation to institutions and asks where institutions come from, whereas historical institutionalists and sociological institutionalists, to a degree, assume the primacy of institutions and examine how they affect individuals' behaviour (Thelen, 1999). Both the historical and sociological variants of institutionalism reject the functionalist assumption found in rational choice institutionalism that institutions exist to serve a specific purpose. Particularly with reference to Indigenous political development, Poelzer (1996: 7) urges the rejection of functionalist assumptions because they are "ahistorical" and assume that institutions develop in response to *a priori* "needs" rather than "their own historically conditioned logic of political development." Rational choice scholars take preferences for granted, looking specifically to a moment in time as the context in which individuals make interest-maximizing decisions, while historical institutionalists are concerned with how the ideas, roles, and interests create preferences that advance over time (Sanders, 2008).

Historical institutionalism is a suitable theoretical framework and applicable to this research for two reasons. First, there is evidence that the structural and ideological institutions established within the Soviet Union and the Russian Federation have and continue to directly affect the contemporary political organization of Yupiget (Gray, 2001; Krupnik and Vakhtin, 2002; Thompson, 2008). As demonstrated in Thelen's (1999: 369) work "institutions emerge from and are embedded in concrete temporal processes." Second, institutional norms established by state authorities during the Soviet and post-Soviet periods have impacted Russia's Indigenous peoples and continue to do so today (Diatchkova 2001; Koivurova, 2010; Riekkinen, 2011). Furthermore, increasing international cooperation near the end of the 20th century increased the

visibility of Yupiget and other Indigenous peoples' challenges to global audiences and a range of institutions have been established to help resolve them.

Historical institutionalism developed, in part, to explain variation in cases (Steinmo, 2014). Institutionalists are concerned with the entire range of state and societal institutions that influence the interests of political actors, and the configuration of power relations between them (Thelen & Steinmo, 1992). In particular, historical institutionalists are interested in the construction, maintenance and adaptation of institutions (Sanders, 2008). From a broad historical institutionalist perspective, institutions include the "formal and informal procedures, routines, norms and conventions embedded in the organizational structure of the polity or political economy" (Hall & Taylor, 1996: 6-7). Suddaby, Foster and Mills (2014: 111) offer a more nuanced definition: "the socio-historical process by which habituated actions and meanings become reified as objective social structures."

Steinmo (2008: 159) offers an articulate, though rather vague definition: an institution is "rules." Whether formal or informal, rules are a necessary but insufficient factor in explaining the collective behaviour of political actors. Peters, Pierre & King (2005: 1286) note a dualist interpretation of 'institution' as "refer[ring] alternatively to deliberately created institutions charged with the implementation of public policy, and the formal rules structuring relations between the state and interest groups." The dualist interpretation is useful in distinguishing between the institutions of the Russian state, such as different branches of government, and the rules that dictate interactions between interest groups and the institutions of the state such as legislation and convention. Within these definitions is a space to explore how informal rules, such as norms, values, and beliefs, interact with formal rules such as legislative procedures, over time to influence the behaviour of political actors within the institutions of the state, and how the over-reaching, inflexible institutional structure of Russia's political system prevents Yupiget

from realizing political autonomy.

Historical institutionalism emphasizes power asymmetries among political actors, and examines connections between institutions and other variables such as socio-economic change, ideological flows, and the interests and strategies of political actors, thus locating institutions within a larger context. It also tends to be inspired by "big" and "real world" questions (Shu-Yun Ma, 2007). Keohane [1989] suggests "institutions define limits and set choices on actor behavior in both formal and informal ways," and within economic, political, and social settings (Higgot, 2008: 611). Rather than exploring political actors' interests in terms of "maximization" or "rule following," historical institutionalists are more likely to explain "human motivation in terms of goals – which have a more public, less self-interested dimension – and in collective action, whether among executive officials, legislators, or social groups" (Sanders, 2008: 42). Historical institutionalists suggest that collective institutional preferences are formed by the level of investment in present and past designs, specifically when they are the cause of "increasing returns" and "positive externalities" (Fioretos, 2011: 384). Individuals may act in ways contrary to their own self-interest, because the rules dictate a particular course of action. While historical institutionalists do not reject the effect of individual preference on political outcomes, they seek to explain political outcomes by examining the ways institutions regulate the behaviour of individual actors (Hall and Taylor, 1996).

Within the scope of this thesis research, historical institutionalism will help to provide insight as to how relationships between institutions are formed and maintained, and how the rules "shape who participates in a given decision and, simultaneously, their strategic behavior" (Steinmo, 2008: 159). In fact, institutions are inherently resistant to reform because they dictate the very rules and mechanisms by which redesign is possible (Hall and Taylor, 1996). The definitions and underlying assumptions associated with historical institutionalism form the

theoretical basis of this proposed research: Yupiget political development is directly affected by the formal and informal rules by which the state and civil society in Russia are allowed to operate. Such rules not only dictate Yupiget level of participation in domestic political organizations, but also their participation in international political organizations too.

Two of the key concepts in historical institutionalism are the "critical juncture" (Capoccia & Keleman, 2007; Steinmo, 2008; Thelen, 1999) and the resulting "path dependency" (Fioretos, 2011; Peters, Pierre & King, 2005; Steinmo, 2008; Thelen, 1999). A critical juncture is an abrupt change in the institutional context or rules that opens up a different path. When an institution is at a critical juncture, it embarks down a path where it becomes increasingly more difficult to return to the previous path. An example of a critical juncture is the establishment of the Soviet Union, or perhaps more recently, the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Both of these events changed the development path of the Yupiget, in the process exposing them to different political systems and different institutional contexts. The assumptions regarding critical junctures and path dependency, respectively, are as such:

> The first involves arguments about crucial founding moments of institutional formation that send countries along broadly different developmental paths; the second suggests that institutions continue to evolve in response to changing environmental conditions and ongoing political maneuvering but in ways that are constrained by past trajectories (Thelen, 1999: 387).

Institutional stability is explained by periods of "punctuated equilibrium" whereby a critical juncture disturbs the normal functioning of an institution or set of institutions, setting the institution along a different path and making the return to the previous path or status quo much more difficult. The causal logic supporting the premise is that choices made during a critical juncture will reject alternative options leading to the establishment of "institutions that generate

self-reinforcing path-dependent processes" (Cappocia & Keleman, 2007: 341).

Problems in aligning federal and regional legislation and the dispersal of power throughout state and non-state institutions can be addressed through careful consideration of both critical junctures and path dependency and their interdependencies. Historical institutionalism is well equipped to support this research by explaining the institutional evolution of the Russian Far East and examining the effects of critical junctures and the resulting path dependency on Yupiget.

The strength of historical institutionalism with regards to this research is its emphasis on a temporal aspect. While the rational and sociological institutional approaches pay less attention to the significance of time, and more to the concept of human agency, historical institutionalism is concerned with longevity. That is not to say that historical institutionalists disregard the notion of human agency within institutional formation and structure. Rather, they assert that different institutionalist approaches make different assumptions regarding the nature of human agency (Fioretos, 2005; Steinmo, 2008). Campbell (2012) argues that the "nature of governance" is not only defined by its demand or societal function, but by the legacy of past policy decisions. The temporal aspect of historical institutionalism will add depth in explaining and situating future findings, shedding light on how and why certain Soviet and Russian institutions have maintained specific trajectories for long periods of time, and how the formation of new institutions such as Indigenous advocacy and self-governments[9] (local government) are restrained by both the ever-evolving structure of the state and Russian political culture.

Criticisms of historical institutionalism condemn its narrow view of the causes of change outside of periods of stability and periods of quick change (Peters, Pierre & King, 2005). In

[9] The term 'self-government' in Russia describes local administrations. It is roughly equivalent to a Canadian municipal government. Perhaps the closest analog to the Canadian conception of First Nation self-governments in Russia is the "Suktul" for Yukaghirs in Sakha Republic (See Derlicki, 2010).

addition, critics cite its limited explanatory power and inability to predict potential outcomes of specific change as downfalls (Ibid). Béland (2009) identifies three explanatory gaps in historical institutionalism with regards to policy-making: first, it says very little about the agenda-setting and how certain issues become part of the policy process; second, it is better at explaining policy in terms of constraints and opportunities rather than how certain policy choices manifest themselves within the institutional structure; and third, policy choices are affected by more than past legacies but by the strategies used to convey a political message regarding policy alternatives. Peters, Pierre and King (2005) agree with the first gap that historical institutionalism may well describe the persistence of a certain path, but is less successful at explaining how the path was originally selected. Analyses designed to explain such persistence have a tendency to overemphasize the rigidity of institutions (Hall, 2009).

Despite these suggested shortcomings, historical institutionalism remains the most appropriate theoretical framework for this research because of its focus on the dynamic nature of political autonomy and how it manifests over time. There have been no previous attempts to apply this theory to this particular case study, or in the study of Indigenous self-determination more generally. Such studies tend to focus on normative questions that justify granting Indigenous peoples autonomy or self-determination rather than explaining how political autonomy and self-determination occur and are maintained.

Research Methods

This study is based on a variety of qualitative methods including in-depth interviews and document and narrative analyses. Key informant interviews are the principal method of primary data collection. Interviews were formatted as semi-structured, utilizing both primary and secondary questions in order to allow for flexibility and a two-way exchange while staying

focused on the topic (Dunn, 2010). A secondary analysis, or data mining technique, is used to add context and depth to the key informant interviews and will be explained in more detail in the following paragraphs. Data were organized into two concept maps[10] to guide the analysis and to provide a visual aid with which to establish connections between the institutions and actors that are the subject of this inquiry.

Data Collection

Secondary data sources accessed for this study include books, technical reports, scholarly journal articles, relevant online newspaper articles, and websites. In just about every case, the language of publication was English. Where Russian language materials were selected, the author, who has an elementary understanding of Russian language, conducted the translations. Data were selected subjectively by their relevance to Yupiget, and cover a wide array of topics including ethnographies, political, social and economic development, law and legislation. Information was also collected regarding Chukotka, particularly society and culture in Chukotka before examining the Indigenous rights movement in Russia and its effect on Indigenous groups within Chukotka and Russia more broadly. Next, data on transnational Inuit political organization with relevance to Yupiget was collected in order to understand the dual identity maintained by Yupiget and its effect on their political development– they are simultaneously Russian citizens and kin to Inuit from across the circumpolar north. Online newspapers from the arctic regions are used to account for the historical record and present the "facts" as portrayed by their respective authors.

There is very little scholarly research in political science regarding the political development of Yupiget and so disciplines such as anthropology, ethnography, and geography

[10] See Appendices 1 and 2.

were instrumental in formulating the author's understanding of the political development of Yupiget, and also all Indigenous peoples of Russia. The data generated from the documentary analysis were used to create a timeline of events. This timeline was utilized in later chapters to create a narrative and then guide the task of producing an historical analysis.

The challenges of collecting data range from the obvious, such as language barriers with, and access to, Russian language materials, to the more complex, such as domestic and international developments that complicated the research process. The original proposal for this thesis included a trip to Chukotka to conduct interviews with Yupiget community members and local government leaders. Shortly after the annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation in 2014, Chukotka was designated a strategic military zone by Russian authorities, and travel to Chukotka became difficult to arrange. As western economic sanctions against Russian individuals and businesses started taking effect, the chances of going to Chukotka, and the likelihood of collecting the data required for the original research proposal, decreased. Under the advice of Igor Krupnik, a renowned Russian researcher with decades of experience researching in Chukotka, and with the guidance of my thesis supervisor, the thesis was first refocused to gain insight from the perspectives of the international Inuit community. Inuit from Canada and Alaska played a considerable role in providing humanitarian assistance and joint scientific research exchanges with Yupiget and other indigenous Russians. While they could not provide a first-hand account of life as a Russian Yupik, they would be able to provide an account of Inuit institution building while working closely with their Russian kin.

While I began to try organizing interviews with members of ICC Canada and ICC Alaska, the Russian authorities started passing laws to put pressure on Russian non-governmental organizations with foreign funding and connections. Amendments in 2014 to what

is colloquially known as the *Foreign Agents Law*[11] will be described further, but for now, the significance to this research is that it is plausibly a contributing factor to why communications with both ICC Canada and ICC Alaska stopped. Both organizations were interested in taking part in the research, and I did attempt to build a relationship with these organizations. However, without reason, communications ceased. I am assuming that the tightening of the *Foreign Agents Law* made it more difficult for ICC to fulfill its mandate, and participating in this research would only make it more difficult. Therefore, under the advice of my supervisor, I made the decision to conduct interviews with Canadian bureaucrats and technical specialists that were, or are currently involved in bilateral or multilateral cooperation with Indigenous peoples and organizations in northern Russia and, more specifically, Chukotka in the 1990s and 2000s.

This thesis sustained another major modification and again was refocused to provide an historical analysis of the institutional constraints and opportunities that have influenced Yupiget self-determination. Therefore, a significant part of the data collection focused on Yupiget interactions with international organizations and Canadian international assistance to Chukotka and Russia and includes the perspectives of Canadian government officials who worked in Chukotka during the period of humanitarian crisis following the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The addition of sections on Canada's bilateral engagement with the Soviet Union and Russian Federation offers contextual data about Yupiget and other Indigenous peoples of the Russian Far East.

Ethical Considerations

As with all research involving humans, certain ethical considerations are taken into account throughout the research design, and during the data collection and analysis stages of the

[11] Russian Federation Federal Law No. 121, July 20, 2012.

research process. This research has been conducted following the guidelines of TCPS 2 - *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans*, upon completion of the TCPS 2 Course on Research Ethics. More importantly, this research complies with the Association of Canadian Universities for Northern Studies (2003) *Ethical Principles for the Conduct of Research in the North*. Prior to initiating contact with interview participants, this research underwent an ethics review by the University of Northern British Columbia's Research Ethics Board. It is important to approach potential ethical dilemmas from every stage of the research process including the planning, data collection, analysis and presentation (Dowling, 2010).

Another consideration regarding the planned fieldwork in Chukotka was that a trip to Chukotka is very costly. Moreover, while there was a window of time where travel to Chukotka was a possibility, there was a high likelihood that data collected would not represent the true perspective of participants, but instead mimic the official state perspective, especially in light of the restrictions placed on individuals representing NGOs and Indigenous organizations. Therefore, the data collected for this project did not include recent first-hand accounts of Yupiget.

Interviews

A direct interview of key witnesses is the only way to learn about certain events or phenomena (Johnson & Joslyn, 1995). According to Kirby and McKenna (1989: 66-68), there are four "essential components" of an interview:

> The formation and clarity of questions, egalitarian relationship between the interviewer and the participant, identification of your research approach to the research participant at first contact, and the interview is an instrument of data collection, but also the sharing of ideas

and philosophy and experiences and symbolic expressions.

Each of these four components guided the development of the interview questions and the general conduct of the interviews. Key informant interviews are a popular data collection method among political scientists who "study political behavior inside and outside political institutions" (Vromen, 2010: 158). The interviews produced rich, firsthand knowledge that encompasses a wide range of perspectives.

Interviews were conducted in person in Ottawa, Canada, in October 2015, with current and former federal civil servants who were active in the Government of Canada's scientific exchange programs to Russia from the late Soviet period until the 2000s. There were five participants interviewed in total. Participants were selected purposefully by the following criteria: past work in Chukotka and/or Russia; current work with Russia/Arctic Council; availability for an interview; and, snowball sampling, where one participant suggested another potential interviewee. Interviews were recorded with a portable audio recording device with the written permission and prior and informed consent of the participants. I then transcribed the audio recordings in order to produce an electronic word document for subsequent thematic coding and data analysis. The interview transcripts were then sent back to the interviewees to review for accuracy and allow for redactions or additions to the data. Field notes, including interview notes as well as post-interview reflections, were taken to supplement the recorded interviews. Consistent documentation while collecting data in the field acted as a safeguard against technological failure (Dunn, 2010).

The interviews provided a very precise and rich dataset. Two of the five participants heavily edited the transcribed interview by request and at their own discretion. While, in some cases, it would be counter-productive to allow for such editing, this research required participants to remember events from up to two-decades prior and their editing provided a very

complete dataset that reliance on direct and quick recall would not have produced. Even though the sample size is small, the data collected is significant to this research because it provides a firsthand account of cooperation on institution building and political development in the Russian Far East. Although their importance cannot be overstated, key informant interviews are just one part of the overall dataset.

Because conducting interviews in Chukotka was not feasible, there is a gap in the knowledge generated by this research. Dr. Lennard Sillanpåå, political scientist and author of *Awakening Siberia* (2005) suggested that I "data mine"[12] his interviews with Yupiget from his book. While the interviews were conducted for another purpose, they do provide more recent perspectives and the interview participants include individuals who were originally targeted for this research. Data mining is in no way attempting to replace what key informant interviews would have produced, but is a resource available when other opportunities fail to materialize. The interviews from *Awakening Siberia* will help to fill in gaps and confirm other information during the analysis of the results.

Documentary Analysis

In addition, I have undertaken a documentary analysis to complement the interviews as a source data for this research. According to Waitt (2010), the first and arguably most important step in the textual analysis is the selection of materials for analysis. The document analysis included books, both paper and electronically available scholarly journals, a range of newspapers from the Arctic regions, technical reports from governments and NGOs, legislation from both national and sub-national governments, NGO documentation, and other related legal and non-legal documents. Documents were used in part to assemble a "written record" of the progression

[12] Not in the quantitative sense, but in order to consider his data from an historical institutionalist perspective.

of Yupiget political development. By utilizing the written record, "researchers may observe political phenomena that are geographically, physically and temporally distant from them" (Johnson & Joslyn, 1995: 255-256).

Narrative research considers multiple sources of information to illustrate a more comprehensive depiction of events. White (1999: 36) suggests that the "best historical research draws from a range of material, including public reports, interviews, firsthand accounts by participants – anything that contributes to understanding of what actually happened." A variety of documents was collected from multiple disciplines and contributed a range of different perspectives on this research. Grey literature collected included reports and other publications from research institutes such as Chatham House, Freedom House, Kellogg Institute; reports and other publications from Canadian government agencies such as the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, the Senate of Canada, and Russian government agencies such as the Ministry of Justice, and the former USSR/Russian Federation State Committee for the North; reports and other publications from intergovernmental organizations including the Nordic Council of Ministers, Arctic Council, United Nations and publications from NGOs such as Inuit Circumpolar Council, Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East, International Working Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA), and Arctic Network for the Support of the Indigenous Peoples of the Russian Arctic. Scholarly literature collected includes peer-reviewed journals and books from a range of academic disciplines. Newspapers and news media collected include local and regional online newspapers such as *Nunatsiaq Online*, *Alaska Dispatch*, *Barents Observer* and *Arctic-Info*; Russian language online newspapers *Vestnik Kavkaza* and *Krainy Sever*; and Russian English language publications including *Russia Today*, *Ria Novosti*/*Sputnik*, *Moscow Times*, and *Siberian Times*. The research also considered legislation such as the Russian

Federation Constitution (1993) and Constitution of the Chukotka Autonomous Okrug (1997).

Most of the documents collected for the document analysis were chosen because they offered a perspective on Yupiget, Russian Indigenous peoples, Russian law, and/or Russian society. Many of the documents contributing to the narrative were chosen for their broad content and not by some rigid inclusion criteria developed at the outset. Having flexible criteria for document selection allowed me to adopt a wider perspective and encouraged a steep progression in my own understanding of the political development of Yupiget.

Conclusions

This thesis will use historical institutionalism to frame an explanation of the current status of Yupiget political autonomy. By highlighting critical junctures and the resulting path dependencies, I aim to provide a broad analysis of Yupiget political, economic and cultural development from the Soviet period through to the present day. A documentary analysis is presented over the next several chapters to trace the process of institutional development of Yupiget and highlight key events through the Soviet, Soviet transition, and contemporary Russian Federation periods. In each period, I will examine domestic political developments and international cooperation as common and interconnected themes in Yupiget institutional development in order to show how the institutional context changed over time and how this has affected Yupiget ability to self-determine. Evidence from the in-person interviews and data mined interviews will be referenced throughout to give perspective and add context to the documentary analysis.

Chapter 3: The Subjugation of Yupiget Political Institutions 1923-1985

The establishment of Soviet rule in Chukotka initiated a series of institutional changes to the political, economic and social development of Yupiget. Large-scale resettlements, sweeping economic reforms, and policies aimed towards social engineering removed Yupiget control over every aspect of their lives and secured their total dependence on the state. However, the Soviet Union was also involved from the beginning in the creation of the international cooperation regime in the Arctic. As Soviet officials sought out help in resolving some of the challenges of the USSR's Indigenous peoples, some of those controls were relinquished. The introduction of Yupiget to their Inuit kin from around the circumpolar north resulted in a flood of information and cultural revival practices that changed Yupiget dependency on the state. Sweeping institutional changes allowed Inuit organizations from outside the Soviet Union to contribute to building new institutions aimed at realizing Yupiget political autonomy and self-determination. The result was the appearance of two opposing paths to the political development of Yupiget: one historically repressive to Yupiget institutional development, and the other initiating a rather supportive path.

Political Developments in the Soviet Union

Before the arrival of the Bolsheviks, Yupiget were generally unaffected by the increasing reach of the Russian Empire as it swept across Siberia and into the Russian Far East (Sablin, 2012). They were not forced to pay *yasak* – a tribute of furs to the Tsar, nor were they converted to Christianity like many other Indigenous peoples of the Russian north (Newell, 2004). Due to its extremely isolated geography, the last reaches of the Eurasian continent largely escaped subordination to external rule until the arrival of the Soviets (Forsythe, 1992).

Soviet authority was established Chukotka in 1923 (Abryutina, 2007). Sablin (2012: 221)

argues that the relationship between Soviet authorities and Indigenous peoples in Chukotka over the first few decades of the 20th century became "asymmetric, involuntary and non-alternative, and that it was this change that embodied the subjugation of the region." The "Committee of the North[13]" (*Goskomsever*) was established in 1924 to help integrate the USSR's Indigenous peoples into Soviet society and grant "equal rights" for all citizens (Nielsen, 2007). *Goskomsever's* formation effectively disbanded the Russian Empire's Indigenous councils and abolished the Empire's official position entitled 'Regulations on Indigenous Peoples' (Vakhtin, 1998). *Goskomsever* was the main branch of the Soviet government tasked with advancing the cultural and economic development of the peoples of the North and creating legislation to protect their "unique" way of life while promoting equality among all citizens of the USSR (Pika, 1999).

Lenin's policy of *korenizatsiya* (indigenization) sought to elevate Indigenous peoples to power positions within local administrations and branches of the Communist Party (Gray, 2005). *Korenizatsiya* was supposed to increase class-consciousness, eventually leading to the decline of ethnic identity, by emphasizing the equal rights to participation by each "nationality." While attempts were made from the outset to promote forms of legal protection of Indigenous peoples' land and culture[14], rights to land and resources were eventually nationalized, thus preferential access was denied to all nationalities (Fondahl and Poelzer, 2003).

The legacy of the early integration of Yupiget into the Soviet Union can be characterized by a series of village relocations. The first relocation occurred in 1926 when ten families were moved hundreds of kilometers from the village of Provideniya to Wrangell Island in the Chukchi

[13] The Committee for the Assistance of the Peoples of the Northern Outlying Districts became State Committee on the Social and Economic Development of the Northern Regions in the 1990s, which is known by the acronym *Goskomsever*. *Goskomsever* will be used in this thesis to describe the single Russian State department responsible for Indigenous affairs until 2001.
[14] See Vakhtin (1998) for a description of Soviet legal acts pertaining to Indigenous peoples.

Sea. *Goskomsever*'s first *kultbaza*[15] was established on St Lawrence Bay in the Chukchi Peninsula in 1928 led to the creation of a joint sea-hunting enterprise between Chukchi and Yupiget hunters with the purchase of ten motorboats on credit from the state (Forsythe, 1992). In the 1930s, five more families were encouraged to relocate to Ratmanov (Big Diomede) Island in the middle of the Bering Strait. The relocations were in part an effort to inhabit remote stretches of the Arctic in order to support the USSR's territorial claims. Additionally, collective farms were established in Ungaziq (Old Chaplino) to manage Indigenous resources and protect traditional customs (Callaway and Pilyasov, 1993). State paternalism towards Russia's Indigenous minorities increased as Russian surnames were assigned to Yupiget, and a writing system established, first in Roman characters, then in 1937, in Cyrillic (Stern, 2013).

In the 1940s, the Soviet policy of *ukreplenie* (consolidation) became "increasingly aggressive" as Yupiget residents of smaller villages were forced to relocate to larger settlements to support the establishment of *kovkhozy* (collective farms) in Chukotka (Gray, 2001) and make way for the Soviet military industrial complex of the Russian Far East (Krupnik and Chlenov, 2007). The relationship between Yupiget and non-Indigenous settlers developed from the beginning as two cultures in contrast. Speaking to the influence of newcomers on Yupiget culture, a former Yupik radio host recalled:

> Russians began to appear here *en masse* in the 1940s. People were friendlier at that time. Bad attitudes started to emerge later; many of them do not regard Indigenous residents as humans. There is a widespread opinion among many newcomers that the Indigenous population do [sic] not need any rights. Many authorities figure that too much is being done for Indigenous people (quoted in Sillanpää, 2005: 564).

[15] 'Culture Base' – a social and cultural institution tasked with advancing the principles of the Communist Party to nearby Indigenous settlements and rural areas. For more information, see Forsythe, 1992: 245.

In 1948, over 200 residents of Ratmanov Island were transferred to the village of Naukan (Robert-Lamblin, 1993). As the 1940s came to an end, the remaining villages of Chukotka were modernized, or had established Soviet administrative centers and local branches of the Communist Party. Soviet rule restricted Yupiget traditional networks and interaction with their neighbours. Compounded by growing Cold War tensions, Yupiget found themselves increasingly isolated from their relatives in nearby Alaska, and contact with them was eventually severed (Stern, 2013). The social engineering of the early Soviet era was replaced by a drastic increase in resource development and an expansion of the Soviet industrial military complex (Schindler, 1994).

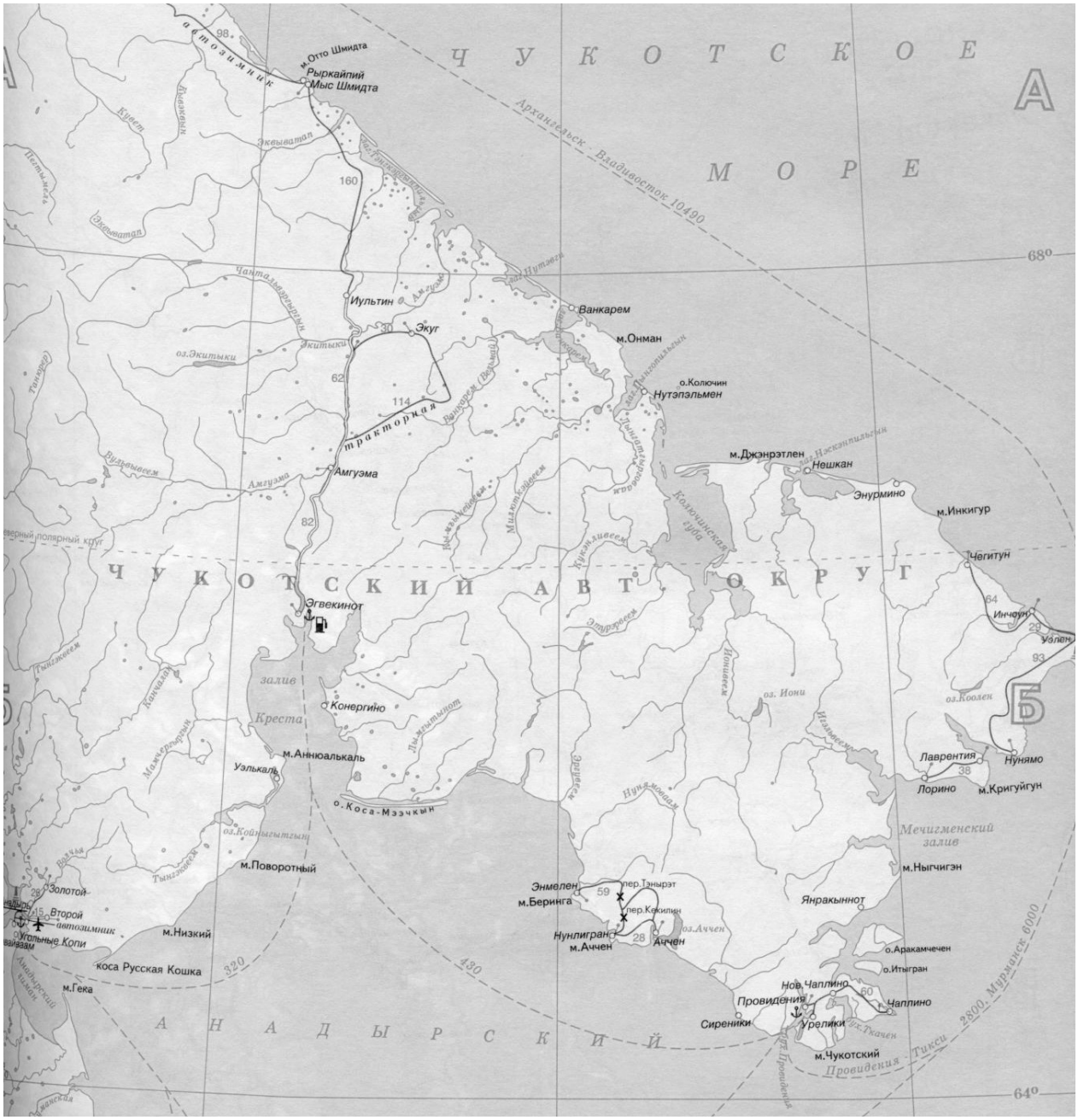


Fig. 2 Chukchi Peninsula – Shows relocated villages in Russian language. Adapted from *Karta Chukotskogo Avtonomnogo Okruga*. Available at http://rus-map.ru/230467.html

The 1950s ushered in a new era of large-scale industrial development (Sillanpåå, 2005). Chukotka was administered as an "autonomous *okrug*" of the larger Magadan Oblast (Thompson, 2008). In order to support the rapid industrial development of the North, resettlements continued through the 1950s. The village of Naukan was forcibly closed and the

population dispersed between Nunyamo, Pinakul and Lavrentiya. Nunyamo and Pinakul later also closed, and the population was dispersed even further (Robert-Lamblin, 1993). Additionally, Ungazik (Chaplino) was closed and its population was relocated to New Chaplino, which was closer to the administrative center in Provideniya, but further from productive Yupiget hunting grounds (Ibid). The 1950s can be characterized by what Kertulla (2002) calls the "great transformation:" the extraction of natural resource wealth and the Soviet "enlightenment" of Indigenous peoples. The result was the creation of large, permanent settler populations in new mixed Chukchi, Yupik and Russian communities (Thompson, 2002).

By the end of the 1950s the highly centralized state-school system was fully implemented with rigid, centralized control and very little allowance for teaching Indigenous languages (Krupnik and Chlenov, 2002). The early Soviet policy of *korenizatsiya* imposed on Chukotka's Indigenous peoples to conquer 'backwardness' instead resulted in the institutionalization of ethnic identity in local political organization (Kertulla, 2000). It also resulted in the development of an Indigenous *intelligentsia*[16] comprised of well-educated individuals who were promoted to coveted positions within the Communist Party (Haruchi, 2002).

As the economic modernization project of the Soviet authorities forged ahead, the 1960s ushered in the era known as the "mastery of the North" (*severnoe osvoenie*) (Thomson, 2008). This era was characterized by the rapid surge of timber and mineral extraction and a large influx of non-Indigenous settlers to meet increased labour force demands (Ibid). The authorities in Moscow had absolute power in terms of deciding on the location and the size of industrial development projects in the Far East, and large waves of Soviet citizens migrated to fill the need

[16] The use of the term 'Indigenous *intelligentsia*' is used by scholars such as Gray (2005), Haryuchi (2002), Rethman (2001) and others to describe the Indigenous individuals who received advanced education and were indoctrinated in Communist and Marxist ideology in the USSR before taking up leadership roles in their respective fields.

for labour (King, 1998). Non-Indigenous Russians were attracted to Chukotka by the higher wages, longer vacations and earlier pensions offered to professionals who chose to apply their trade in Chukotka (Thompson, 2008). The combined effects of extensive relocations and rapid industrial development on Russia's Indigenous peoples included the loss of culture, language and traditional knowledge, and the relentless environmental degradation of their traditional lands.

During the early Soviet period, a series of particular policies influenced the political and economic development of Yupiget and other Indigenous and ethnic minorities in the Soviet Union. The policy of *korenizatsiya* accomplished two main goals. First, it created separate republics and autonomous areas for some national minorities[17] (including Indigenous minorities) within the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic (RSFSR) granting a *de jure* foundation for political autonomy and self-determination for some of the larger minorities, although it was really never exercised in practice (Kertulla, 2000). Second, it was used by the Communist Party to encourage the "upward mobility of non-Russian, ethnically marginalized people" (Rethman, 2001: 414). Soviet authorities believed *korenizatsiya* to be the policy lever that would elevate Indigenous peoples from their "backwards" and "primitive" socio-economic state into the Soviet proletariat and eventually into leadership positions within the Communist Party. In practice, however, it created social divisions between those who received a formal post-secondary education and became managers in *kolkhozy* or held leadership positions in local administrative bodies or the within Communist party, and those who were labourers (Gray, 2005). One of my interviewees described an early Soviet policy towards the overall development of Indigenous culture:

In that region, there was kind of a division of labour. Some people got government, some

[17] National minorities include Indigenous peoples and peoples not considered Indigenous by the Russian definition such as Tatars, Karelians, Yakuts etc. For further explanation, see Prina, 2016.

> got the Communist Party, others would get legislative powers…so there was this idea of - the old divide and conquer - so that no ethnic group would control all the levers of power (Interview, October 2015).

By using the "divide and conquer" tactic, Soviet authorities showed evidence of taking Indigenous issues seriously, while edging towards assimilation by indoctrinating the Indigenous *intelligentsia* in socialist principles. One of the outcomes of the policy of *korenizatsiya*, therefore, was the institutionalization of ethnic identity, rather than the assimilation of Indigenous minorities.

The policy of *ukreplenie* completely restructured Indigenous peoples' political, economic and social forms of organization. *Ukreplenie* socialized Indigenous economic activity, which erased the previous subsistence system and transformed kin-based economic organization into state-owned collective farms, quite often sustained by government subsidies in the Russian north (Diatchkova, 2001). However, it took a long time for policies in Moscow to develop across the Russian Far East. For example, it was not until 1972 that Soviet authorities restricted Yupiget whaling to a collectivized commercial activity, thereby expanding the breadth of state paternalism to every aspect of Yupiget social, economic, and political life (Stern, 2013).

Furthermore, between the 1920s and the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the USSR established hundreds of legal acts that directly or indirectly affected Indigenous peoples; however, their ineffectiveness was, in part, due to the belief that state policy alone is sufficient to resolve challenges faced by Russia's Indigenous minorities (Pika, 1999). As the USSR neared its demise, new legal solutions for the challenges faced by Indigenous peoples were codified. There were guaranteed rights for land use and traditional economic activity, language rights and cultural protection, and new laws were introduced on local self-government (Kryazhkov, 2013). There was, however, no single legislative Act (such as Canada's *Indian Act of 1876*) to aggregate

Soviet state policy towards Indigenous peoples (Poelzer, 1996). The legacies of *korenizatisiya* and *ukreplenie* epitomized the relationship between Indigenous peoples and the Soviet state throughout the Soviet period.

International Cooperation and the Soviet Union

The establishment of the current international legal regime occurred with the full participation of the Soviet Union (Hazard, 1950). As a founding member of the United Nations, the USSR participated in early discussions around the 1948 *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR). Prina (2016: 59-60) offers two main arguments with regard to the Soviet Union and the establishment of an international legal regime: the first is that there are no "distinct and mutually exclusive trajectories" between "the West" and the USSR's international development; and, the second is that domestic factors, including "historical and institutional legacies" and the "prevailing attitudes to such norms" affect the application of international norms domestically. As the inheritor of international treaties signed by the Soviet Union, the Russian Federation has continued to view and apply international legal norms in the same manner as its predecessor.

In the late 1960s, Indigenous peoples across the circumpolar north, particularly Inuit, began to articulate their domestic grievances to an international audience. In January 1969, the *International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination* (CERD) was adopted by the United Nations. It was the first convention of its kind, and was particularly important for Inuit. The Convention states that participants should "recognize the right of Indigenous peoples to own, develop, control and use their lands, territories and resources and, where these lands and territories traditionally controlled or inhabited by them were taken from them or are being exploited without their free and informed consent, measures should be taken for the restitution of these lands and territories" (Pavlov, 2005: 41). Within a year, Denmark,

Canada, the United States and the USSR all agreed to participate in a permanent secretariat concerned with Inuit issues (Stern, 2013). It was however, just the beginning of the era of international Indigenous political organization.

In November 1973, the first Arctic Peoples' Conference was held in Copenhagen, Denmark. The conference gathered Indigenous peoples from the around the circumpolar north to discuss the shared political, economic and social challenges faced by Indigenous peoples and Inuit. The conference provided the vision for what would become the Inuit Circumpolar Conference[18] (Shadian, 2007). The first Inuit Circumpolar Conference was held in June 1977, in Barrow, Alaska and was hosted by Mayor Eben Hopson. Regarding the purpose of the event, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK), the national Inuit organization in Canada, released the following statement:

> The single most important issue facing all Inuit, regardless of where they live, is the preservation of a unique culture, identity and way of life before they are destroyed by large-scale industrial development and the intrusions of southern society. Growing political awareness among Inuit has made them realize they must speak out with a strong united voice to protect their national and trans-national interests. To that end, delegates in Barrow will discuss the forming of an ongoing internationally representative organization to promote and develop programs that may be setup by this conference (ITK, 2015 [1977]).

Yupiget were the only Inuit not present, likely because institutional constraints in the Soviet Union prevented their participation. Still, the ICC provided an institutional home for all Inuit, and gained formal recognition by the UN in 1983 when it was granted NGO status in the UN Economic and Social Council (Abele and Rodon, 2007; Wilson, 2007).

At the third Inuit Circumpolar Conference in Iqaluit, Canada in 1983, three important

[18] Inuit Circumpolar Council was formerly known as the Inuit Circumpolar Conference.

developments occurred that pertained to Yupiget of the Soviet Union. The first was a resolution to restrict the use of Arctic spaces to non-military purposes, which was passed by delegates, who also advocated unsuccessfully for a nuclear-free Arctic. The second was the cancelling of a Russian Inuit cultural performance by Soviet Ambassador Yuri Yepelev, who misunderstood the funding arrangements as an American initiative, when in fact Canada as its host, financed the entire conference. And the third was the largely symbolic creation of two seats for Yupiget for whenever Soviet authorities would permit their participation (Inuit Circumpolar Conference, 1984). Delegates from the conference also termed the Soviet Union's refusal to provide information on Alaskan (Central) Yupiit relatives as a "human rights violation" (Ibid).

The ICC's beginnings were largely connected to preserving Inuit culture. Key elements of Inuit culture such as language and storytelling are embedded in Arctic landscapes and the environment. In 1985, the ICC established its own Environmental Commission to develop a unique Inuit Arctic conservation strategy. The result was the establishment of the world's first 'Indigenous' and 'regional' conservation approach that outlined the path towards sustainable resource development with full recognition of local subsistence and cultural needs (Nuttall, 1998). However, Soviet authorities did not recognize Inuit and Indigenous rights in the same way as other countries with a resident Inuit population. Although Inuit land claims and self-government agreements were in the process of being negotiated and finalized across the circumpolar north, Yupiget were not even permitted to participate in the activities of the ICC.

Canada's bilateral relationship with the Russian Federation began in the late Soviet period, and accelerated with the formation of the Canada-USSR Arctic Scientific Exchange Program in 1984, which was the culmination of almost two decades worth of relationship building between the two countries. One participant described it as a "unique partnership" in which then Soviet Committee of the North (*Goskomsever*) worked with Canadian Department of

Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND) in tandem with relevant NGOs –the Association of Indigenous Minorities in Russia (RAIPON) and ICC Canada - to develop a training program with exchanges and workshops.

One interviewee noted that Canada's early engagement with Russian Yupiget occurred simultaneously with the establishment of the ICC. In the early 1980s, the former Canadian Minster of DIAND, David Crombie, encouraged international engagement among Indigenous peoples, and particularly among Inuit. Uncertainties about working with NGOs on behalf of the Russian government were partially quelled by the involvement of DIAND, a Canadian government department.

Conclusions

The establishment of the Soviet Union brought sweeping institutional change across the Russian Far East. Starting with the formation of *Goskomsever*, a series of policies were introduced to modernize Russian Indigenous peoples in order to become model Soviet citizens. These policies were extremely colonial, and transferred political, economic and social control from Indigenous peoples to the local branch of Communist Party, whose directives came from Central Party authorities in Moscow. Early on in the Soviet period, such policies were aimed towards progressive protections for Indigenous minorities as well as the ease of administration of local Soviets. However, conquering localized challenges concerning the development of Indigenous peoples eventually yielded to focus on the statewide challenges of economic growth and the Soviet government's commitments to central planning. Furthermore, the early social engineering of the Communist Party gave way to efforts to transform and modernize the Soviet economy. The centralizing forces of the Soviet Union ensured the complete subordination of Yupiget and other Indigenous peoples. In this institutional context, any attempt to return to previous political, economic and social systems was unlikely.

While the Soviet authorities were advancing state dependency of Indigenous peoples, they were also working collaboratively to establish the institutions of the international cooperation regime in the Arctic. In fact, during the late-Soviet period, the USSR was an instrumental partner in facilitating Inuit internationalism. *Goskomsever* worked closely with DIAND to solve some of the key challenges faced by Inuit across the circumpolar north. However, the Soviet Union's desire to be included in the international institution-building regime ran counter to its domestic isolationist policies. Internationally, the Soviet Union wanted to be seen as an involved partner, while at home, authorities limited Yupiget opportunities to engage with their circumpolar counterparts, presumably in an effort to limit their ability to advocate for self-determination and political autonomy.

The next chapter will follow institutional changes in the late-Soviet period through the post-Soviet transition where the domestic political institutions in the Soviet Union experienced rapid change culminating with the dissolution of the USSR. A flood of international organizations rushed into the nascent Russian Federation providing humanitarian aid and political advocacy with very little political interference. A volatile mix of such institutions appearing in Chukotka created a small window of opportunity for Yupiget to revive and re-establish lost political, economic and social practices.

Chapter 4: Opportunity to Re-establish Yupiget Political Autonomy 1985-2000

Rapid institutional changes swept across the USSR beginning in the mid-1980s, and continued through the development of the Russian Federation. New opportunities for the political, economic and social advancement of Russia's Indigenous peoples resulted partially from the devolution of authority from the center to the regions. Simultaneously, Yupiget received support for their internationally shared objective of protecting their Arctic homelands from the negative effects of resource development and the cultural loss such development caused. The dissolution of the Soviet Union and the establishment of the Arctic cooperation regime altered the forces of institutional repression characteristic of the Soviet period and began a series of institutional changes that were far more supportive of Indigenous self-determination. Gorbachev's policies of *glasnost* and *perestroika* triggered a cascade of effects including the decentralization of authority, new legal protections, increased international engagement and the development of a burgeoning civil society which combined to provide new opportunities for Yupiget to seek political autonomy throughout the late Soviet and early post-Soviet periods.

Political Developments in the Transitional USSR/Russian Federation

New opportunities for Yupiget political and legal development began in the late-Soviet period through the relaxing of centralized control in the era of *glasnost* and *perestroika* and rapidly expanded through the post-Soviet transition period. Pika and Prokhorov (1989) published a paper in 1988 in the Communist Party's official journal titled "The Big Problems of the Small Ethnic Groups." It highlighted the extent of the socio-economic disparity of the USSR's northern Indigenous peoples, in stark opposition to the popular notion that Indigenous peoples had made significant progress towards becoming model Soviet socialist citizens (Fondahl and Poelzer, 1997). Indeed, due in part to *glasnost* and *perestroika* new opportunities arose to discuss such

things openly and create institutions to support the cultural revival and political autonomy of Indigenous peoples across an increasingly weakened Soviet Union. New legal protections were introduced to begin to resolve the challenges identified in "The Big Problems of the Small Ethnic Peoples." In April 1990, the USSR enacted legislation titled, *On the unhindered development of citizens of the USSR who live outside their ethnic areas, or have no such areas, within the territory of the USSR* which allowed for political associations based on nationality or ethnic identity and provided a framework for the creation of a regional Inuit organization (Slezkine, 1994). In fact, with the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, unprecedented opportunities arose for the rapid institutional development of Indigenous peoples in the new Russian Federation.

The 1992 *Russian Federation Treaty* was a series of different treaties that gave different powers to different types of constituent entities such as national republics, autonomous districts (*Okrug*) and cities of federal significance. Theoretically, the treaty formalized equality between each of Russia's federal constituent units, enhanced the role of regional governments and established the role of regional governor (Krupnik & Vakhtin, 2002). In practice, the treaty, a stark example of a culture of asymmetrical federalism, defined the division of powers between the federal and regional governments, including provinces, territories, regions and autonomous areas of Russia.

As the forces of decentralization swept across Russia, proponents of Indigenous self-government began to explore new possibilities. Two important challenges are noted by Poelzer (1996: 145) with regard to the "devolution" of power and authority in the Russian Federation as it pertains to the prospect of Indigenous self-government were: a crisis of "economic self-sufficiency" – Indigenous economic activity had previously been heavily subsidized by the state and became uncompetitive after the end of the Soviet period; and, "a crisis of authority" –

authority was devolved to regional governments "without the corresponding institutionalization of political power." The result was that local governments acquired all of the responsibility to provide local services and programs, but lacked the authority and resources to enforce or support local programming. Regional legislation was often in conflict with federal legislation or presidential edicts. It was unclear which level of government, in practice, maintained ultimate authority (Wilson, 2000). Contributing to the "crisis of authority," a presidential decree was announced to protect Indigenous peoples' use of their traditional lands and territories, with no legislation to enforce it.

In April 1992, Presidential Edict 397 declared the intention to delineate "Territories of Traditional Nature Use" (TTNUs) as the "inalienable property" of Indigenous peoples, free from industrial development and specially designated for the use of traditional economic activities (Fondahl & Poelzer, 2003). Additionally, the declaration intended to "provide for the lifetime ownership with hereditary succession or lease of pastures for hunting, fishing and other grounds by Indigenous communes and families, without charge" (Kryazhkov, 2013). Furthermore, the Edict compelled Russian regional governments to cooperate with Indigenous organizations to ensure implementation (Kirillin, 2002). The post-Soviet federal legal framework relative to Russia's Indigenous peoples was indeed very progressive and showed great promise in helping to alleviate the socio-economic challenges faced by Indigenous peoples of the Russian Far East.

In December 1993, Russian President Boris Yeltsin signed into law the Constitution of the Russian Federation. Due to the growing awareness of the socio-economic challenges facing Russia's Indigenous minorities, as well as its international obligations, the federal government added legal protections for Indigenous peoples into the Constitution of the Russian Federation. Article 69 "guarantees the rights of the numerically-small Indigenous peoples in accordance with the universal principles and norms of international law and the international treaties of the

Russian Federation" (Pavlov, 2005: 38). Accordingly, the following year Chukotka initiated the "10 year program of Chukotka Indigenous peoples to 2004" to improve housing, health services, culture and education (Diatchkova, 2001). Both the federal and regional governments recognized the challenges facing Indigenous peoples, though no coordinated effort was made to help alleviate the effects of their isolation and lack of capacity to act politically, economically or socially. By the end of April 1999, a new federal law entitled *On Guarantees of the Rights of Small-Numbered Indigenous Peoples* [FL-No. 82] was enacted to "consolidat[e] the legal basis of the status of Indigenous peoples" in the Russian Federation (Kryazhkov, 2013: 144). However, there were problems implementing the law across Russia's regions.

Upon the dissolution of the Soviet Union, democratic, capitalist institutions swiftly replaced Soviet, communist institutions. A lack of capacity, a range of competing interests and corruption within the regional administration challenged the successful implementation of federal legislation in Chukotka. The speed at which the transition occurred significantly affected the Kremlin's ability to govern and operate programs and services outside of Moscow, especially in remote, northern regions like Chukotka. The immediate effect on Chukotka was a massive outmigration of the settler population. Many working age residents left Chukotka, and typically only pensioners and Indigenous peoples remained (Thompson, 2008). Rapid socio-economic changes occurred throughout the newly established Russian Federation.

Political Developments in Chukotka

Between 1991 and 1993, structural changes to the regional governance regime by President Boris Yeltsin saw the former head of the national and regional Soviet, a Chukchi named Vladimir Etylin, Chair of the Chukotka Duma, who presided over Chukotka's secession from Magadan in 1990, replaced by an ethnic Russian named Aleksandr Nazarov, who became

Chair of the Executive Committee in Chukotka. The two operated in a power sharing capacity (*dvoevlastie*) until the "violent dissolution" of the Supreme Soviet, resulting in Nazarov's election as Governor of Chukotka (Thompson, 2008). A presidential edict removed the *dvoevlastie* style leadership and encouraged democratic elections to legitimize the authority of a single Governor. However, in the first such instance, questionable circumstances surrounded whether Aleksandr Nazarov had legitimately gained the endorsement of the Presidium of the local Association of Small-Numbered Indigenous Peoples in Anadyr to become the first elected Governor of Chukotka in 1996 (Gray, 2005).

With Nazarov's governorship, the level of Indigenous representation in *Okrug* level governance declined and Indigenous activism was suppressed (Ibid). In a way, he went against the tide of openness that existed at the national level. In some respects, this was indicative of the divisions between the federal and regional governments that existed during the 1990s and the inability of the federal government to control far away regions and their governments. Regions became individual fiefdoms of their governors (Wilson, 2000). Nazarov's governorship was characterized by his tactical use of "harassment," "intimidation" and rule by "authoritarian decree" (Rethman, 2004). By the mid-1990s, this was evident in two events that significantly affected Yupiget. *Krainii Sever* (the Far North), the official newspaper in Chukotka included a supplemental independent Indigenous newspaper with the Chukchi name *Murgin Nutenut* (Our Homeland). The Indigenous publication was staffed by ten Indigenous journalists and included sections in Yupik and Even languages (Diatchkova, 2010). Nazarov began a series of actions including moving the physical space in which the editorial staff worked, decreasing its budget, and charging for the use of *Krainii Sever's* computers and printing press. These actions culminated with the decision to cease operations altogether in October 1995 (Gray, 2004). With all the Indigenous journalists fired, *Murgin Nutenut* became a one-page pull out in *Krainii Sever*

and failed to represent the voices of the Indigenous peoples it once served (Diatchkova, 2010).

The other event was directly related to the involvement of Yupiget with their Alaskan counterparts. During 1997 and 1998, Vladimir Etylin described the taste of harvested sea mammals and fish as "peculiar" (Ainana, Zelensky and Bychkov, 2001: 188). Members of YESC along with their Alaskan counterparts sent a letter to Nazarov to request permission to proceed with a scientific inquiry to investigate the reason for the tainted meat. Nazarov responded five months later that testing was too expensive, and any proposed projects must be cleared with the Russian Academy of Sciences because "scientific investigations must meet certain standards" (Ibid).

Nazarov's ineffective leadership, presumed greed and unaccountability culminated in crisis. According to the Federal Living Cost and Prices Prognosis Centre, Anadyr was the most expensive city in which to live in Russia (Krupnik and Vakhtin, 2002). The socio-economic situation in the region became so dire that the monthly subsistence wage[19] in Anadyr increased from 388 000 to 580 000 rubles from April to June in 1995 (Ibid). In December 1996, it was reported that food prices increased 122% in the first five months of 1996, and the region's schools, like many of those in Russia's regions, lacked basic materials such as paper and books (George, 1996). During the run up to the regional election in 2000, Nazarov ceded his governorship to Kremlin-endorsed candidate Roman Abramovich, and opted instead for a seat at the Council of the Federation, the upper chamber of the Russian parliament in Moscow, in part because he faced multiple charges of corruption and tax fraud, but also because it was very unlikely that he would win re-election (Gray, 2005). The grim situation faced by residents of Chukotka was broadcast to their circumpolar neighbours, and Inuit from Canada and Alaska organized donations of food, equipment and money to help their Russian kin through a severe

[19] The cost of 19 staple foods in Anadyr.

humanitarian crisis.

Civil Society and Indigenous Activism in the Russian Far East

Krupnik and Vakhtin (2002: 7) characterize the late 1980s and early 1990s as a period of "post-Socialist transition." Gray (2005: 180-181) notes that the basic communication and transportation infrastructure was in a state of dissolution and describes the political climate in Chukotka as caught between "open interaction and exchange" and "xenophobia and hostility towards outsiders." Indigenous rights were restricted to local administration and matters of self-government (Gray, 2001). Yupiget intelligentsia, who were previously social activists within the Soviet Union, naturally became social activists within the context of the Russian Federation (Gray, 2007). From the onset of the 1990s, the emergence of the Indigenous rights movement was supported at the *Okrug* level; however, a wave of opposition to regionalism swept across Russia within the decade (Pelaudeix, 2012). The advent of Indigenous activism in the form of Indigenous NGOs in Chukotka can be traced back to Gorbachev's policy of *glasnost*. A direct outcome of the rapid change in norms during the final stages of Soviet authority, *glasnost* resulted in the formation of a variety of NGOs in Chukotka and across the Soviet Union.

The first local Indigenous NGO in Chukotka was the Naukan Native Cooperative (NNC). It was established in Lavrentiya in 1987, and comprised of both Chukchi and Yupik hunters. Its purpose was to supply residents with traditional foods such as walrus, seal and other marine mammals and was expected to revive traditional subsistence practices lost over the decades of Soviet rule (Hurst, 2011). The NNC also partnered with Alaskan organizations to initiate a wildlife management strategy of shared resources in the Bering Sea.

In January 1990, the Association of Indigenous Peoples of Chukotka and Kolyma was established in Anadyr to represent Indigenous peoples' interests in Chukotka. A larger, national

organization was established in March 1990 at the first Congress of the Association of Numerically Small Peoples of the North in Moscow. The Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North (RAIPON) is a pan-Russian Indigenous organization and a Permanent Participant in the Arctic Council. Its purpose is the cultural preservation of the Russian Federation's 41 Indigenous groups and 35 regional associations. According to the first President, V.M. Sangi, RAIPON was established because "in order for northern peoples to realize their full rights, they must have "real" autonomy guaranteed by law" (Schindler, 1992: 62). Sangi called for the immediate ratification of International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention 169 by the Soviet government, and the strict monitoring of adherence to its principles (Vakhtin, 1998).

In August 1990, the "Yupik" Eskimo Society of Chukotka (YESC) was established, with some controversy, within the Association of Indigenous Peoples of Chukotka and Kolyma to unite all Russian Inuit and preserve their language, culture and way of life (Ainana, 2001). The controversy arose due to the exclusivity of such a small Indigenous organization operating in Chukotka without including the other Indigenous groups. According to activist, and later ICC Russia Executive Director Tatiana Achirgina-Arsiak (1992), Yupiget sought protection in the form of a non-profit NGO because they are one of the smallest Indigenous minorities in the Russian Federation, and they are and always have been against the assimilationist policies of the (former) USSR.

The second Congress of RAIPON was held in Moscow in 1993, and Eremei Aipen, a Khant, replaced Vladimir Sangi as President (Schindler, 1996). In the same year, RAIPON officially registered with the Russian government as a public political movement. The Congress formally adopted the acronym "RAIPON" (in English) and included the phrase 'numerically-small peoples' in the Russian translation –Association of the Indigenous Numerically-small

Numbered Peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East of the Russian Federation.[20]

As the mid-1990s approached, the peak of Indigenous activism in Russia had passed, except in Chukotka, where YESC in Lavrentiya and the NNC in Provideniya continued to work with organizations in Canada and Alaska to resolve some of the challenges facing Yupiget and other Indigenous peoples in Chukotka (Krupnik and Vakhtin, 2002). The deterioration of the regional economy and environment encouraged the establishment of the Chukotka Sea Hunter Union, comprised of Yupik and Chukchi sea mammal hunters (Sillanpää, 2005).

In April of 1999, a discussion occurred at the YESC office in Anadyr regarding participation in an Indigenous NGO called Revival of Chukotka (*Vozrozhdeniye Chukotki*) (Ibid). The idea was supported, in part, from the momentum of the Indigenous rights movement, and its purpose was to promote active participation in local, regional and federal elections by fielding candidates and campaigning for their election to office. While the registered organization Revival of Chukotka[21] is now defunct, records show it officially operated from November 17, 1998 to December 23, 2002 (sbis.ru, 2017)

In September 1999, the Arbitration Court of the Chukotka Autonomous *Okrug* sent a notice to YESC detailing a court ordered liquidation of its assets for failing to respond to notification to re-register the NGO with Russian authorities (Ainana, Zelensky & Bychkov, 2001). Being a member of the ICC, YESC was encouraged to attend the next ICC Executive Council meeting. YESC did not have the funding to travel, so the Alaska North Slope Borough provided financial assistance for their trip to the ICC Executive Council in Washington, D.C in November 1999. YESC delegates garnered support from a range of individuals and

[20] According to RAIPON's website, http://raipon.info/ the official Russian title is: Associatsia Korrenikh Malochislenikh Narodov Severa, Sibiri, and Dalnego Vostoka Rossiskoi Federatsii.
[21] *Возрождение Чукотки.*

organizations, including Saami[22] representatives who shared similar challenges such as members across multiple nation-states. The delegates also encouraged the Sakha Republic's president, Mikhail Nikolaev, to discuss YESC's operations with then governor of Chukotka, Aleksandr Nazarov (Ibid). During the ICC Executive Council, ICC passed a resolution stating: Chukotkan authorities "repeatedly and systematically harass institutions established by Yupik Eskimos," and that "the Governor of Chukotka refuses to allow foreign and domestic scientists, foreign Indigenous peoples and others to visit Chukotka without his special permission" and that he is "manipulating and undermining the democratic process for the forthcoming local and national elections" (George, 1999). Later that month, YESC officials began efforts to re-establish the organization as a constituent member of RAIPON.

International Cooperation in the Transitional USSR/Russian Federation

In June 1986, in response to increasing Arctic cooperation between Canada and the USSR, Canada's Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs David Crombie successfully persuaded the Soviet authorities to include Russian Inuit in ICC activities starting in 1988 (Slipchenko & Hannigan, 2010). By July, Yupiget drummers and dancers travelled to Greenland in the first pan-Inuit cultural exchange allowed by Soviet authorities (Stern, 2013). Finally, all circumpolar Inuit were able to meet, collaborate and share ideas in an international forum. In June 1988, Alaskan Yupiit travelled from Nome to Provideniya to meet with their kin and renew relationships broken since the onset of the Cold War (Hurst, 2011; Stern, 2013). In September, a Yupiget delegation visited Nome. In 1989, the USSR and the US negotiated a visa-free travel regime for Yupiget and Yupiit. They eventually permitted American and Russian scientists to collaborate on a whale observation program (Hurst, 2011; Schweitzer and Gray, 2000). As the 1980s came to an end,

[22] Saami are another Indigenous group whose territory spans across multiple nation-states – Russia, Finland, Sweden and Norway.

Inuit transnational activism gained momentum, and at the same time, Indigenous rights were increasingly recognized around the world.

In 1989, the UN's International Labour Organization Convention 169: Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention Concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries (ILO Convention 169) was adopted. The Convention demands included the right to self-governance and preferential access to land. Soviet authorities perceived these demands as a direct contradiction of domestic policy that offered state-funded medical access, free education and transportation to the USSR's Indigenous peoples (Murashko, 2002). As far back as 1990, the Congress of Numerically Small Peoples of the North (predecessor to RAIPON) called for the ratification ILO Convention 169 (Fondahl and Poelzer, 2003). The Convention remains important to Indigenous peoples around the world, including Inuit, when advocating for further policy and environmental protection standards.

In stark opposition to the actions of the regional administration in Chukotka, the Russian Federation signed onto the Council of Europe's (CoE)[23] *Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities* (FCPNM) on February 28, 1996, which "strengthened the guarantees of the legal status of Indigenous peoples of the North" (Kryazhkov, 2013). As a feature of the Constitution of the Russian Federation, the FCPNM aligned Russian law with international law within the widely accepted international standards of human rights (Ibid). Still, Russia has not yet ratified the FCPNM. Prina (2016) explains that it is in part due to challenges with the "legal transplantation" of legal norms from the "West" into Russia's domestic legal traditions, and the fact that pressure to ratify the FCPNM from the CoE is not applied equally among member states. For example, the CoE has never obliged France to align its domestic laws

[23] The Council of Europe (CoE) is an international organization mandated to promote human rights, democracy and the rule of law in Europe. Russia is signatory to the CoE. See http://www.coe.int/en/.

with the treaty.

In 1993, Inuvialuit from Canada's Northwest Territories sent a delegation to Chukotka at the request of Chukotka Autonomous Okrug's Chairman, Vladimir Etylin. The visit was arranged through the 1992 Canada-Russia Agreement on Cooperation in the Arctic and the North, a continuation of the Canada-USSR Arctic Scientific Exchange Program (1984-1989). In January 1993, a memorandum of understanding (MOU) was signed in Provideniya by Roger Gruben, Chairman of the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation (IRC), and the Chairman of the Duma of the Chukotka Autonomous *Okrug* Vladimir Etylin and endorsed by the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) and the Canadian Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND). The purpose of the MOU was to assess possible and ongoing commercial business ventures and opportunities between Yupiget and Inuvialuit, and to promote ongoing cultural and educational exchanges between both regions (Slipchenko & Hannigan, 2010).

Canadian researchers visited Iultinsk *Raion* in northwestern Chukotka in April 1999 to study the impact on Indigenous people of accelerated socio-economic change brought about by dissolution of USSR and the proceeding economic and political reforms (Ibid). These visits signaled the beginning of a series of exchanges that brought Yupiget into an array of international forums. It also marked the first international agreements signed between two subnational governments (Chukotka and GNWT) in Canada and Russia and preceded a robust series of exchanges between Russian and Canadian Inuit and other Indigenous peoples. These exchanges were in part made possible by utilizing the technical expertise and guidance of ICC Canada.

In March 1994, the ICC Executive Council was held in Anchorage, Alaska. The ICC resolved to play an active role within the UN to ensure Indigenous participation in the UN

Permanent Forum on Indigenous Peoples. In doing so, it secured the participation of Indigenous peoples in the formation of the UN's Permanent Forum (Nuttall, 1998). The ICC was instrumental in promoting the recognition of the fundamental right of self-determination and the protection of land rights into a declaration at the ninth session of the Working Group on Indigenous Peoples' in Geneva two years earlier (Ibid).

The first meeting of the Program Steering Committee of ICC Canada and RAIPON occurred at Kuujjuaq, Quebec, on February 26, 1995. The agenda included a special discussion concerning financial assistance for Russia's ICC Executive to attend meetings in Canada (Slipchenko and Hannigan, 2010). YESC gained membership into the ICC in 1992 (Pelaudeix, 2012). Chukotka's Inuit organizations, YESC and ICC Russia, had representatives at the table with Minsters and Ministerial representatives from each of the Arctic's eight sovereign states.

In December 1996, ICC Canada and DIAND officials arrived in Moscow with $1.9 million to help *Goskomsever* establish policies and conduct institution building exercises in the Russian Far East (Ibid). A three year project titled, "Institution Building for Northern Russian Indigenous Peoples' Project" (INRIPP), funded by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and coordinated by ICC Canada was initiated in 1996. The purpose of the project was to enhance the partnership between RAIPON and *Goskomsever* to improve the economic situation facing northern Indigenous peoples and support RAIPON's efforts to represent Indigenous peoples at the national and international levels (ICC, 2014).

Growing awareness of issues related to the socio-economic and overall wellbeing of Inuit, particularly in Russia, led to increased scientific cooperation between Arctic states. In July 1998, during the eighth Inuit Circumpolar Conference General Assembly in Nuuk, Greenland, a resolution passed to survey living conditions in the Arctic (Anderson, Kruse & Poppel, 2001). In addition to scientific exchanges between Yupiit and Yupiget, a visa-free travel regime was

negotiated for Yupiit to visit relatives who had long been separated by the Iron Curtain. These visits enhanced the awareness of Yupiget about their level of development in comparison to their Inuit kin in other parts of the circumpolar north (Sillanpää, 2005).

As previously mentioned, a severe humanitarian crisis in Chukotka affected Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples alike. In 1998, a Canadian newspaper interviewed a Yupiget surgeon who described the rapid decrease in the health and welfare of her people (Bourgeois, 1998). With marginal participation in a declining industrial development complex, subsistence hunting resumed as the primary occupation of many of Chukotka's Indigenous peoples (Sillanpåå, 2005). In February 1999, YESC met with the Canadian Red Cross and ICC Canada to receive and distribute humanitarian aid to the villages in the Provideniya region. The following month representatives of YESC travelled to Nome, Alaska to participate in a meeting between the Pacific Walrus Commission and Nanooq Polar Bear Commission to initiate a joint project to study traditional knowledge about polar bear and aboriginal walrus hunting in Chukotka (Ainana, Zelensky & Bychkov, 2001). Such projects provided both the scientific data needed to manage shared resources among Inuit and maintain cultural practices and knowledge in danger of disappearing.

Canada's Bilateral Relationship with the Russian Federation

Recalling personal experiences in this long-standing bilateral relationship, one of my interviewees clearly articulated four main challenges associated with political development of Indigenous peoples in Chukotka as: an extremely poor state of the local economy; difficulty with "empowerment;" competition between Indigenous groups;[24] and, the Russian government's suspicious attitude towards the perceived or real influence of foreign governments and

[24] This could not be confirmed by this research.

organizations. Indeed, these challenges are similar among Indigenous groups across Russia, but tend to differ according to the amount of natural resource production that occurs in the region where Indigenous groups are located. In Chukotka, there are few developed resources[25] for reasons such as an extreme climate, a severe lack of or dilapidated infrastructure, low population density and a lack of geographic proximity to larger and more populated cities. There is even less resource development on the Yupiget traditional lands[26] on the Chukchi Peninsula.

As part of Canada's role within the former Canada-Russia Agreement on Scientific Exchange, Canada relayed some of its expertise in managing conflicts between Indigenous peoples and the resource development industry:

> In part, the impetus for harmonization in the northern context was driven on how to manage Indigenous concerns, rights claims, and interventions regarding resources and industrial development, particularly their adverse effects on traditional lands and subsistence activities. Within this context, Russian Indigenous peoples expressed a great interest in learning more about land claims, inherent right to self-government, approval of resource development projects, revenue sharing, co-management, compensation, etc. (Interview, October 2015).

This interviewee later described how Canada framed its approach using corporate social responsibility as a way to reduce or mitigate conflicts between industry and Indigenous groups. Despite legislative protection for Indigenous rights, in the case of a conflict between industrial

[25] Kinross Gold Corp. is a successful Canadian enterprise with two operating gold mines in the Bilibinsky District of Chukotka. Multiple interviewees explained that Kinross as a success story in Canada-Russia cooperation and believe that Kinross is a model of social corporate responsibility in their hiring and operating procedures in terms of local and Indigenous labour and benefit sharing. Because Russian Yupiget are largely uninvolved in Kinross' operations, I did not pursue this particular line of inquiry. However, in the broader context of Indigenous peoples and industrial development, the Kinross story could exemplify a more successful path to conflict resolution between Indigenous peoples and industrial development.

[26] 'Traditional lands' refers to territories where Russian Yupiget currently and/or historically practice subsistence activities. There are no territories currently protected by law for Yupiget use.

and traditional land use, there are serious doubts regarding whether or not there is the political will or capacity to enforce such legislation to the detriment of company interests. Such conflict is exacerbated by the fact that the Russian government has a controlling interest in many of the largest resource development companies active in the Russian Far East. Thus, the perception is that Indigenous peoples' interests are equal to the company's interests. Where their rights are infringed upon with regard to the law, the state's interest (ergo the company's interest) supersedes any minority group's interests. This interviewee added that the Russian Federation will always emphasize the recognition of traditional lands and traditional use, until Indigenous use conflicts with potential industrial use, then protection evaporates and rights are no longer protected.

With regard to empowerment, a key challenge is the different understandings of property rights:

> This is not an idea that is natural for the Soviet or Russian environment – the empowerment of local native populations. And then of course the recognition of property rights. It started [with] that very recognition of property rights. Well the thing I've seen over the years in terms of native populations is how do they claim property over the land? You have it in Canada and Alaska. I think it started in Yakutia where the first legislation (was it grazing rights for herders?) in a country where property rights [are] a sensitive subject. The idea that people [who] raise reindeer have a certain right to bring those reindeer over the land - it gives them a certain right over the use of the land. So that was an issue, but empowerment and property rights, as you are going through the issues – can they stand up to the regional and central powers (Interview, October 2015)?

With little participation in resource development, and experiencing only the negative effects of development, Yupiget were caught in an economic conundrum exacerbated by the complex

connections between the four main challenges outlined earlier: a meager local economy, the empowerment of Indigenous peoples, competition between Indigenous groups, and resistance towards either real or perceived foreign authority. By the mid-2000s the reluctance to have a foreign authority meddling in Russia's strategic interests gained political traction and eventually legislative protection.

Conclusions

Glasnost and *perestroika* significantly altered the domestic political landscape in the USSR. *Glasnost* provided the impetus to freely exchange ideas and criticisms of the political and social order of the RSFSR. *Perestroika* guided the redesign of Soviet federalism. In the late-1980s, the Soviet government was largely supportive of resolving the socio-economic challenges faced by Indigenous peoples in the RSFSR.

Through the transitional period new laws were created to protect Indigenous peoples' rights to land and resources and to their traditional ways. Finally, Indigenous rights were included in the Constitution of the Russian Federation. However, the federal government lost its historically rigid control over the regions. Economic collapse across the emerging Russian Federation was especially damaging for Indigenous and marginalized peoples. Changes to the governorship of Chukotka removed the Indigenous representation from the local Duma, leaving Nazarov in and forcing Etylin out. While the federal government was progressive on Indigenous rights and activism, the regional government was less favourable to the idea of self-determination for Chukotka's Indigenous peoples. Due in part to the openness of the federal authorities and in response to the socio-economic crisis in Chukotka, a variety of Indigenous NGOs, ranging from local hunter's associations to regional and national Indigenous NGOs were established to bring Indigenous peoples' concerns to all levels of government.

Such drastic institutional change also welcomed the arrival of international NGOs to

meet a wide range of challenges including the provision of humanitarian aid, and the sharing of best practices of similar activist organizations. Yupiget were reintroduced to their Yupiit relatives and to the wider Inuit family across the circumpolar North. Over the course of the Soviet to post-Soviet transition, the RSFSR and Russian Federation became party to a number of international organizations such as the Arctic Council, and Russian Indigenous peoples were invited to participate in a number of international initiatives. The transformation from communism toward a democratic government allowed government agencies and NGOs in Alaska and Canada to work closely with the Russian government and Indigenous NGOs to resolve some of the challenges faced by Indigenous peoples and Chukotkans alike.

The Canadian government played a meaningful role in the development of Indigenous political organizations and activism, largely through the expertise of Canadian Inuit organizations such as ITK and ICC. The next chapter will follow the political development of Yupiget from the beginning of the 2000s to the present. Starting with the establishment of a new legal framework for Indigenous peoples in the Russian Federation, I will highlight changes in regional and federal governments and their effect on Indigenous activism and the bilateral relationship between Canada and the Russian Federation.

Chapter 5: The (Re)Subjugation of Nascent Yupiget Institutions 2000-2015

While the late-Soviet and early post-Soviet periods witnessed a revival of Yupiget political and cultural agency, the last decade and a half has marked a return to the repression of Yupiget political, economic and social institutions. A recentralization of authority after the election of Vladimir Putin allowed the federal government to regain control over the regional "fiefdoms" created through the political and economic turmoil of the 1990s. In turn, the political activities of Indigenous NGOs drew increasing suspicion of foreign influence by the federal authorities. Legislation was introduced to control the nascent civil society and Indigenous activism established throughout the late-Soviet and transitional periods. Federal legislation, enacted to protect Indigenous rights, was slowly dismantled with amendments over the late 2000s. International cooperation continued to occur, although participation in multilateral institutions replaced the bilateral cooperation that directly affected Yupiget civil society. A new federal law set limits on the amount of foreign assistance an NGO could receive, and eventually forced NGOs to choose between loyalty to the Russian state or their foreign funders. As power became increasingly recentralized in the Russian Federation, the tightening of legislation on civil society and a change in the relationship with the "West" slowed the rapid institutional development that occurred in the Soviet transitional period.

Political Developments in the Contemporary Russian Federation

The new millennium began with two very important events that still affect Russia's Indigenous peoples today. The first was a governmental decree passed on March 24, 2000 entitled *On the Unified Enumeration of Small Nations of the Russian Federation* [No. 255]. This decree established an official list of Russia's 40 "Indigenous peoples." The second, and much more high profile, event was the election of Vladimir Putin as the second President of the

Russian Federation on May 7, 2000. Putin's ascent to the highest echelons of power in the Russian Federation would mark the beginning of a series of changes to Russian foreign and domestic policies that significantly altered the relationship between Indigenous peoples and the Russian state.

The initial signs were good. Shortly after his election, Putin signed into law two very important pieces of legislation that RAIPON officials helped to draft. In 2000 Putin signed the federal law *On the General Principles for the Organization of Obshchiny of the Native Lesser-Numbered Peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East of the Russian Federation* [FL-No. 104] and the following year *On the Territories of Traditional Nature Use by the Indigenous Numerically Small Peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East of the Russian Federation* [FL-No. 49] (Zadorin, 2012a, 2012b). With the addition of the 1999 federal law *On Guarantees of the Rights of Small-Numbered Indigenous Peoples* [FL-No. 82], the federal legislative framework for Indigenous rights in the Russian Federation was established (Zadorin, 2012a).

In 2004, however, a series of amendments to the Russian Constitution began to strip away some of the protections for Indigenous peoples established by the three previously mentioned federal statutes (Kryazhkov, 2013). Additionally, an amendment to the Land Code removed the "right to preferential, free and non-competitive access to the land widely used by Indigenous peoples to continue their traditional economic activities" (Riekkinen, 2011: 110). The repeal of the federal law *On the Basics of the State Regulation of Socio-Economic Development of the North of Russian Federation*[27] in 2004 is considered by at least one observer as a "denial by the state of the special policy considering the specifics of Northern regions and Indigenous peoples" (Kryazhkov, 2013: 146). Additionally, in July of 2005, legislation was enacted to create

[27] On the Basics of the State Regulation of Socio-Economic Development of the North of Russian Federation [*Ob Osnovac gosudarstvennogo regulirovania sotsial'no- ekonomicheskogoo razvitia Severa Rossiskoi Federatsii]*.

the Public Chamber,[28] an important institutional development that strengthened the central authorities' influence over civil society.

In 2006, the Russian Federation adopted the federal law *On Introducing Amendments Into Certain Legislative Acts of the Russian Federation*, a statute that is colloquially known as the *Foreign Agents Law* (Crotty and Hall, 2013). The *Foreign Agents Law* allowed state officials unrestricted access to all NGO activity, and forced NGOs accepting foreign funding to register with the state and report all financial and political activity (Crotty, Hall and Ljubownikow, 2014). The result, in part, contributed to a distinctly "Russian" conception of civil society.

Two government policy position papers were released in February 2009 to introduce federal policies on the Russian Arctic landscape, and on Indigenous peoples: *Basics of the State Policy of the Russian Federation in the Arctic for the Period until 2020 and Beyond* and *The Concept for the Sustainable Development of the Small Indigenous Peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East of the Russian Federation*. These policy papers outlined the Russian Federation's strategies and goals related to sustainable development of Indigenous peoples and the Arctic (Riekkinen, 2011). Also in 2009, with changes to *On Guarantees of the Rights of Indigenous Numerically-Small Peoples of the Russian Federation*, two provisions were excluded: "the joint regulation of the legal regime of ownership, use and disposal of lands and the lands of traditional nature of historical and cultural places of residence [of Indigenous peoples]"; and, "the representation of [Indigenous peoples] in the legislative (representative) bodies of Subjects (Regions) of the Russian Federation and the representative bodies of local self-government (municipal bodies)" (Zadorin, 2012b). In March, the Russian High Court ruled

[28] The Public (Civic) Chamber is comprised of "prominent citizens of Russia, representatives of national, regional and interregional NGOs…Its purpose is to help citizens interact with government officials and local authorities in order to take into account the needs and interests of citizens, to protect their rights and freedoms in the process of shaping and implementing state policies, and to exercise public control over the activities of executive authorities" (Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation, 2017).

that "traditional lifestyle" should not include the incorporation of modern technologies such as motorboats, guns and snowmobiles for Indigenous subsistence activities, (Zadorin, 2012a) adding further and specific disadvantage to Indigenous peoples. As the first decade of Putin's rule came to an end, the federal government's legal protection for Indigenous peoples had been slowly stripped away to ensure unconstrained access for the type of natural resource extraction necessary to grow the Russian economy.

The end of the 2000s was marked by changes in leadership in the federal government. The 2007-2008 federal election cycle produced a switch between Russia's Prime Minister and head of government Dmitri Medvedev, and Russia's President and head of state Vladimir Putin, in line with the Russian Federation's Constitution. After Putin's first two terms, he was constitutionally required to spend a term out of the presidency so he endorsed his then Prime Minister Dmitiri Medvedev as United Russia's candidate for President. Putin, in return, was appointed Prime Minister by president Medvedev. The literal switch between roles and leaders became known as a ruling "tandemocracy" (*tandemokratiya*) where Russia could stay the course of Putin's reform strategies through his leadership of the United Russia Party (Hale and Colton, 2009).

The Public Chamber hosted a roundtable in September 2011 on the legislative development of the rights of Indigenous peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East. They found that Russian legislation concerning Indigenous rights was regressing and federal government legislation (e.g. tax code, water code, land code) was often in conflict with legislative initiatives supported by the Federation Council (Yarovoy, Sergunin and Heininen 2013). In April 2012, the Federation Council reported that an audit had revealed that federal money sent to the regions as required by the 2009 *Concept for the Sustainable Development* was spent inefficiently and resulted in no benefits to Indigenous peoples. Moreover, legislation to

amend the tax code, water code and land code was never adopted (Ibid). While jurisdictional disagreements between federal and regional legislators persisted, Vladimir Putin easily won the 2012 presidential election, regardless of accusations of widespread vote rigging and fraud (Russia Today, 2012). His return to the presidency signaled an immediate increase in the rate of centralization of authority in the Russian Federation.

In 2012, the Russian government approved the allocation of federal budget subsidies to the sum of 240 million rubles to support the economic and social development of Indigenous peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East (Arctic Info, 2012). Contrarily, federal legislators approved further legislation that required NGOs with "political activities" and "foreign funding" to register as "foreign agents" and submit quarterly reports of their financial activities to the authorities (Crotty, Hall and Ljubownikow, 2014). By March 2013, the Moscow Times reported that federal authorities were being urged to modify the state policy on Indigenous peoples by law makers, cabinet ministers and representatives of 40 ethnic minorities from the Russian North, Far East and Siberia (Kravtsova, 2013). While an official at the Ministry of Regional Development decried the difficulty in trying to get the Finance Ministry to increase funding, he also heralded that a 3-year growth in the Indigenous population of 6% indicated efficiency in Moscow's policies towards its Indigenous peoples (Ibid).

In December of 2013, the State Duma adopted a bill amending the *Federal Act On Specially Protected Conservation Areas*, which stripped Indigenous peoples' TTNUs of any effective legislative protection by removing them from the designation of "Specially Protected Conservations Areas," a status they held until then (IWGIA, 2014). Furthermore, Russia's Constitutional Court ruled that the *Foreign Agents Law* did not contradict the Russian constitution and that labeling NGOs as "foreign agents" is aimed at "important public interests" (International Centre for Not-for-profit Law, 2016). These developments signaled an increase of

the federal government's power and authority over the lives of Russia's Indigenous peoples.

Throughout 2014 and 2015, developments regarding the *Foreign Agents Law* and the war in Ukraine contributed to the restriction of movement of both people and ideas across Russia. The Ukrainian province of Crimea was "reunified"[29] with Russia following the results of a hurried and controversial referendum. The "annexation"[30] of Crimea caused a great deal of international turmoil and harmed already tense relations between Russia and the West. Ensuing sanctions imposed by the United States, Canada and the European Union increased tensions and further widened the gap. Organizations across Russia were systematically labeled "foreign agents" including a human rights organization in Murmansk, and the Nenets' organization *Yasavey Manzara* (Pettersen, 2014; 2015).

By December 2015, the first application of the *Foreign Agents Law* in Chukotka occurred when the Chukotka Association of Traditional Sea Mammal Hunters (ChAZTO) was asked to voluntarily register as an "organization performing the function of foreign agents" with the Ministry of Justice (IWGIA, 2014). IWGIA (2014) reported that the "Deputy Head of the Administration of Justice for Magadan Region and Chukotka Autonomous District, the chief of the division on NGO affairs and an expert from the same department" summoned Head of Administration for ChAZTO Eduard Zdor to a meeting where they pleaded with Zdor to voluntarily register ChAZTO as a foreign agent. He declined, claiming his organization received foreign funding for scientific research and their activities were not of a political nature. He was cautioned that he would be subject to torment and random checks by authorities and would be forced to comply in the end because ChAZTO was the only local organization that could be identified as a foreign agent (Ibid). Mikkelsen (2015) noted that representatives from ChAZTO

[29] According to Russian perspectives.
[30] According to Western perspectives.

were vocal critics of planned oil and gas development near Wrangell Island and that the participation of an Indigenous peoples' organization on an international environmental initiative being considered "political activity" is evidence of increasing state pressure.

Political Developments in Chukotka

Chukotka's governor Aleksandr Nazarov was investigated in October 2000 before the regional elections for illegally selling fishing quotas, conducting illegal real estate dealings and evading tax and customs payments on oil delivered to Chukotka under a government program intended to ensure sufficient winter supplies in the region (Uzelac, 2000). One of Russia's powerful oligarchs with close ties to the Kremlin, Roman Abramovich, ran against Nazarov in the gubernatorial election. Abramovich was elected Governor of Chukotka in December 2000, and Vladimir Etylin, a Chukchi, and former Head of Administration for Chukotka, replaced Abramovich as Chukotka's representative in the federal Duma (Gray, 2001). Abramovich was more supportive of Indigenous peoples in Chukotka, and his election win brought hope that conditions would improve for Chukchi and Yupiget alike (Nunatsiaq News, March 9, 2001).

In Chukotka, Abramovich faced pressure to increase the services and infrastructure ignored for so long by the Nazarov administration. Russian authorities suggested liquidating 382 of 1400 settlements, but Abramovich, with his cadre of bright, young professionals from Moscow, initiated a voluntary resettlement program open to all long-term residents of Chukotka. The program ultimately failed and was suspended two years later, mainly because the young and economically active part of the population left while only pensioners and Indigenous peoples remained (Thompson, 2002). The sudden shift in the demographic makeup of the population changed the political, economic and social landscape in Chukotka, highlighting the need for new solutions.

Also in 2002, Abramovich established the "Indigenous Representatives Council" within the Chukotka Duma in accordance with Article 1 of the federal law *On Guarantees of the Rights of Small-Numbered Indigenous Peoples* (Diatchkova, 2010). The Council consisted of two Indigenous representatives in the Chukotka Duma, but largely failed to resolve the key challenges faced by Indigenous peoples in Chukotka (Ibid). Abramovich introduced policies that led to increased outmigration of Chukotka's non-Indigenous population, and modernized much of the dilapidated infrastructure in and around Anadyr. He was more supportive of foreign exchanges and cooperation and more sympathetic to the collective problems of Chukotka's Indigenous peoples, who largely favoured Abramovich's governorship and the international attention it garnered.

In 2005, a roundtable was held in Anadyr on "The Indigenous Movement: Issues and Tasks" It revealed that many Indigenous peoples in Chukotka were unaware of their legally enshrined rights, and how the weakening of those rights would affect subsistence lifestyles. It was agreed that a major challenge in Chukotka was the absence of information and the need for greater dissemination efforts regarding federal and regional legislation on Indigenous rights (Diatchkova, 2010.) For example, many hunters were unaware of, or did not care about, Russian laws that should influence their traditional and subsistence practices (Ibid).

In 2008, Roman Abramovich announced that he would resign as the Governor of Chukotka, but was reelected to his seat as Chukotka's representative in the State Duma. President Medvedev appointed then Deputy Governor Roman Kopin to replace Abramovich in the interim, and later to the permanent job; a move supported by local legislators (Wilson and Kormos, 2015). Yupiget have benefited from Kopin's efforts to secure periodic targeted funding to purchase marine hunting supplies and equipment so desperately needed for survival on the Chukchi Peninsula.

Yupiget survival is intricately tied to their ability to subsistence hunt for large sea-mammals. Inuit hunting and whaling, however, is largely subsidized by the state. In 2011, a scientific committee at the International Whaling Commission (IWC) declared that the Eastern Gray whale was indeed in a healthy state (Borodin et al., 2012). A four-year federal program to support Chukchi and Yupiget whaling delivered fuel, equipment and a new Russian satellite navigation system (RIA Novosti, 2011). A report by the Barents Observer suggested that the federal government subsidies for Chukotka are a seven to eight times higher than in Russia's poorest regions (Staalesen, 2011). While a healthy whale population and the means to harvest were certainly good news for Yupiget, the region's socio-economic situation was still in decline. In July 2012, the IWC renewed subsistence whaling quotas for Iñupiat in Alaska and for Chukchi and Yupiget in Chukotka (Stern, 2013).

While federal authorities were increasingly retreating from protecting Indigenous minorities, the administration in Chukotka increased its efforts to better the socio-economic position of its Indigenous peoples. In February 2013, nearly 72 million rubles were allocated to the development of sea mammal hunting in Chukotka, with 64.7 million rubles to be paid to hunters as subsidies (Arctic Info, February 18, 2013). In return, hunters were tasked with providing monthly reports on the use of resources and quarterly reports on the achievement of efficiency targets on the use of those subsidies (Ibid). Chukotka Governor Roman Kopin met with Putin in Moscow to appeal to the Kremlin to make adjustments to the air travel subsidies program and allow the regions to "determine and expand its parameters" (Arctic Info, March 12, 2013).

Civil Society and Indigenous Activism in the Contemporary Russian Federation

In February 2000, YESC organized a "Yupik Assembly" in Provideniya where a new

Constitution was ratified. YESC officially applied for membership within RAIPON (Ainana, 2001; Ainana, Zelensky & Bychkov, 2001). Because RAIPON was an officially registered NGO, YESC was granted NGO status under the Russian Constitution one year later. At the fourth Congress of RAIPON in 2006, representatives discussed land property rights for Indigenous peoples, participation in regional executive and legislative agencies and the legal status of small nations (Diatchkova, 2001). A *Charter for Indigenous Peoples of the North* was also discussed and adopted (Laletin, 2012). From the mid-2000s on RAIPON refocused its efforts towards opposing government attempts to amend and weaken the existing Indigenous legislation framework, and attempting to address government's failure to implement the Charter's provisions (Rohr, 2014).

On November 1, 2012, the federal Ministry of Justice, due to alleged non-compliance with Article 42 of the federal law *On Public Organizations*, suspended RAIPON's activities, mirroring the fate of YESC a decade prior. They cited RAIPON's failure to register each of its regional constituent offices as "legal entities" as the reason for the suspension (George, 2012b). Two weeks later, at the meeting of the Senior Arctic Officials (SAOs) of the Arctic Council in Harparanda, Sweden, participating SAOs and Permanent Participants released a joint statement:

> The Senior Arctic Officials and the Permanent Participants of the Arctic Council express concern about the absence of RAIPON from the work of the Arctic Council as a result of the decision taken by the Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation to suspend the activities of RAIPON until April 2013 and as an interim measure request the Senior Arctic Official of the Russian Federation in close cooperation with RAIPON and the Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation to facilitate, as appropriate, the fulfillment of RAIPON's important role as a Permanent Participant in the Arctic Council (Ibid).

In March of 2013, the federal Ministry of Justice approved amendments to RAIPON's statutes,

allowing it to officially resume its operations (Staalesen, 2013). The news came just in time for RAIPON's seventh Congress in Salekhard, Yamal-Nenets Autonomous *Okrug* throughout the last week of March. During the Congress, the Barents Observer reported "irregularities" in the voting system that elected United Russia Deputy Grigoriy Ledkov as President of RAIPON (Nilsen, 2013). Choosing a member of the governing United Russia party with its strong connections to President Putin as its leader effectively silenced the RAIPON's Indigenous voice. The loss of allies in the State Duma was amplified by Roman Abramovich's resignation as a Deputy and Speaker of the regional legislature (Siberian Times, 2013).

Immediately, RAIPON's tone changed. One interviewee described the shift in attitude from RAIPON's leadership post-election:

> Honestly, I've never seen a political leader so unengaged. You could just tell he was mimicking the lines of what he was told to say. There was no contribution as to items he wanted Canada to engage on with Indigenous peoples. It was almost "anything the Ministry [of Regional Development] is suggesting is good for us." When you see him wake up, it was only about his trips to Arctic Council or Yellowknife. That was the engagement of him coming here. There was no dynamism at all (Interview, Ottawa, October 2015).

Other interviewees echoed concerns about the unengaged leadership of RAIPON since the 2012 elections and our discussions raised two great questions about the future of this organization: "Does RAIPON compete with ICC (Russia) for resources?" and "What effect does this have on Indigenous peoples' level of engagement at home and abroad?" Another interviewee further explained that as federal government deputies are indirectly appointed into leadership positions in Indigenous organizations such as RAIPON, the progressive work accomplished through the bilateral relationship is undone, and Indigenous issues take a back seat to industrial interests.

Canada and Russia are home to a large number of Indigenous peoples, each with their own histories, languages and claims to the land and resources. In Russia, this challenge has been met with exceptionally strong leadership, one of RAIPON's key assets until quite recently. Interviewees identified the leadership of brothers Pavel and Rodion Sulyandziga and Sergei Kharyuchi as the driving force behind Indigenous activism within the Russian Federation. As Indigenous leaders and activists, they secured political support in terms of offices and membership in committees and arms-length government organizations such as the Public Chamber. Furthermore, they had a good reputation within a number of international organizations. When the political support from the Russian authorities decreased, so did RAIPON's effectiveness. One interviewee explained that RAIPON's success and effectiveness in international institutions is dependent on its leadership. Another interviewee described RAIPON's relationship with the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs as amicable because RAIPON was perceived as successful and engaging at the United Nations:

> RAIPON was the teacher's pet, so to speak, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs because it allowed Russia to sort of show off at the United Nations that they were looking after their [Indigenous] populations. Look we have with us here a representative of [Indigenous peoples]. So the relationship with the Foreign Ministry was great. There was no issue there in that sense…RAIPON represents the native populations of Russia and it has a good relationship with Foreign Affairs (Interview, October 2015).

RAIPON's leadership, however, clashed with the Minister of Regional Development, an executive department that this interviewee referred to as "unmanageable."[31] The result was a

[31] The initial workload at the Ministry of Regional Development was too broad and far-reaching at its establishment in 2004. It was responsible for social and economic development of the federal subjects and municipalities of Russia, the Far East and Arctic, and Indigenous peoples and minorities. It was abolished in 2014 by Presidential decree and its responsibilities divided up among other Ministries.

very complicated relationship with federal authorities.

While some of the interviewees described RAIPON's future as bleak, there is some hope, given the important role that youth are playing in this organization. But such optimism is cautious at best. One interviewee noted:

> I think one of the agents of change within RAIPON are [sic] the youth. For example, the youth delegation at the Arctic Council has been fantastic. They're an up and coming… A lot of older guys had their foot in collectivization, had a stake in it, somehow co-opted. But some very dynamic people came out of it. They were very strong and capable at the RAIPON meetings and congresses, a real investment for the future. Moreover, their engagement on Indigenous issues over the past few years effectively built their capacity to make the transition to drive RAIPON's agenda in the coming decades. However, given the recent political changes, and with it, the demise of RAIPON, youth engagement has been derailed for the foreseeable future. This is a tragic loss in sustaining RAIPON's capacity to continue to champion the cause of Indigenous peoples of the Russian north, domestically and internationally (Interview, October, 2015).

There is significant evidence to question whether RAIPON will remain effective in the future as an organization dedicated to the development of Russia's Indigenous minorities. Its challenges are similar to many of the regional and local Indigenous NGOs in Russia. One of its more complex challenges is whether it can truly represent all of Russia's Indigenous groups. From the suspicious results of its last election, to its decreased engagement in how it conducts its business at the international level, RAIPON may no longer represent the interests of Russia's Indigenous peoples and, more specifically, Yupiget.

International Cooperation in the Contemporary Russian Federation

Article 15 (4) of the Russian Constitution broadly describes how to reconcile Russian law with its international commitments:

> [T]he generally recognized principles and norms of international law and the international treaties of the Russian Federation shall be a component part of its legal system. If an international treaty of the Russian Federation establishes other rules than those provided by the law, the rules of the international treaty shall apply (Constitution of the Russian Federation, 2017 [1993]).

Therefore, international legal frameworks are not only accepted by the Russian Federation, but are also woven into its judiciary and domestic legal frameworks. Increasingly over the last decade, the Russian Federation has referenced the application[32] (or misapplication) international treaties in its foreign policy statements. Additionally, the international legal regime is increasingly taking non-governmental structures and institutions under its jurisdiction (Marochkin, 2009). While Russia's domestic laws are unsupportive of NGOs concerned with Indigenous and environmental issues, Russia is still engaged with its neighbours on such issues as they relate to the Arctic. An example of this trend can be found in the inner workings of the Arctic Council.

The Arctic Council is an important forum for the cooperation and mutual benefit of the eight Arctic Nations: the United States, Canada, Denmark (Greenland), Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Finland and the Russian Federation. The work of the Arctic Council includes transnational binding agreements such as the Agreement on Cooperation on Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue in the Arctic (2011) and the Agreement on Cooperation on Marine

[32] For example, the justification for the US wars in Iraq and Afghanistan is purported by the Russian Federation as illegal in terms of International law. The Russian Federation's excursions into Ukraine and annexation/reunification with Crimea are purported by the US and its NATO allies as in terms of international law.

Oil Pollution Preparedness and Response in the Arctic (2013). Much of the Arctic Council's work is centered on environmental stewardship and sustainable development projects between Arctic states in a variety of areas such as climate and environment, oceans, biodiversity, Arctic peoples etc. Because such agreements have a distinct effect on the political, economic and social development of Indigenous peoples, the Arctic Council allows six representative Indigenous organizations to sit at the decision-making table as Permanent Participants and offer comment and advice to policy-makers during the process.

The last decade of the 20th century found Chukotka isolated, politically and economically, from Moscow, as much of the human capital built up during the Soviet period left Chukotka. At this time, however, Chukotka's Indigenous peoples, particularly Yupiget, became more involved with Indigenous peoples and Inuit throughout the circumpolar north, thereby opening up a new support network for Indigenous activists. In June 2000, the "Canadian Inuit Initiative" was launched to raise $150,000 for Chukotka's Inuit from ICC Canada (ICC, 2000). The purpose was to help Yupiget to survive the immediate effects of the humanitarian crisis in Chukotka, and also to provide socio-economic development initiatives that benefitted both Canadian and Russian Indigenous peoples. In July 2000, the INRIPP II project, a continuation of the project initiated in 1996, began with funding from CIDA and coordination and technical support provided by ICC Canada.

In February 2001, the ICC presented a cheque for $21,000 to the Alaska North Slope Borough to help Yupiget buy fuel and equipment for subsistence hunting activities (ICC, 2001). Later that year, Yupiit and Yupiget gathered in Nome, Alaska to establish closer relations between the two regions (Nunatsiaq News, June 29, 2001). Against the backdrop of an increasingly difficult relationship between Indigenous activists and the Russian state, bilateral and multilateral relations persisted. On August 15, 2002, the international Inuit community met

in Kuujjuaq, Quebec for the ninth ICC General Assembly. Outgoing ICC President Aqqaluq Lynge lamented the poor showing from Russia (12 of 35 expected delegates) because of communication issues between Moscow and Washington. He was quoted in the Nunatsiaq News saying, "I'm sure that if we had an effective office in Chukotka itself, those problems that we ran into would have been avoided." (Wilkin, 2002). Article 21 of the Kuujjuaq Declaration pledged to intensify support for Yupiget and other Indigenous peoples in the Russian Far East (Kuujjuaq Declaration, 2002).

The 10th General Assembly of the ICC was held in July 2006 in Utqiaġvik, Alaska. Article 9 of the Utqiaġvik Declaration urged the ICC's Executive Council to develop initiatives to promote further cooperation between Russia and the ICC in order to develop opportunities for Yupiget (ICC, 2006). However, while the regime of international cooperation between Russia and its Arctic Council counterparts continued to develop and grow, the tightening of domestic laws regarding Russia's Indigenous peoples continued to limit opportunities for Yupiget political development in Chukotka.

In Chukotka, local journalist and Yupik activist Tatiana Achirgina was elected President of ICC Russia in 2009, thereby securing a Russian seat on ICC's Executive Council. In 2010, ICC General Assembly was held in Nuuk Greenland, and was attended by Achirgina. One outcome of the conference was the framework for a circumpolar Inuit health strategy (Nunatsiaq News, 2010). Additionally, Article 49 of the Nuuk Declaration called for further support of ICC Russia's Chukotka office (Arctic Council, 2011). Also in 2012, a delegation from ICC Alaska, Canada and Greenland visited ICC Russia in Anadyr (George, 2012a). The visit was in part to host an ICC Executive Council meeting, and for the formal signing of a MOU between the Government of Chukotka and the Association of Indigenous Peoples of Chukotka (Drum, 2012).

Canada's Bilateral Relationship with the Russian Federation

The deep economic recession in Russia during the 1990s changed the operational context of Canada-Russia cooperation. Originally, cooperation was rooted in reciprocity; each side pays. When that changed and the Russian Federation could no longer provide financial support, the context changed. Additionally, each side had a different approach to involvement of Indigenous organizations in the project. In Canada, the federal government focused on capacity building, land claims, the impacts of colonization, resource development, self-government and Indigenous peoples' rights, despite the potential for conflict with the Russian government's objectives. Russia's approach amounted to providing limited funding through the regional authorities for Indigenous leaders and government officials to travel to international gatherings.

By the early to mid-2000s, the evolving domestic political situations in both Canada and the Russian Federation led to changes in their overall relationship. The creation of the federal district system in 2000[33] and subsequent demise of *Goskomsever* illustrated the return of the power *vertikal*, allowing the federal government to increase its influence on the regions and "bring the presidential authority to the local level" (Wheeler, 2011). In Canada, there was a shift in foreign policy goals in the Arctic[34]. The Canadian International Development Agency[35] (CIDA) shifted its emphasis within their ongoing international projects from poverty reduction to increasing trade and investment. There was a new focus on Indigenous-to-Indigenous community engagement with support from the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT). One interviewee described the shift as follows:

[33] On May 18, 2000, Vladimir Putin established seven Federal Districts, each comprised of several Federal Subjects (republics, provinces, districts) in order to provide federal oversight of the implementation of the Russian Constitution and federal legislation.
[34] Noted in Canadian foreign policy documents "Northern Dimension of Canada's Foreign Policy" (2005) and "Exercising Sovereignty and Promoting Canada's Northern Strategy Abroad" (2010).
[35] CIDA was eventually merged into the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) in 2013.

> CIDA withdrew from technical assistance…leaving the work in the Russian north incomplete. The other thing was increasing centralized government engagement in regional economic development and wanting to control international engagement in the Russian north, including greater scrutiny of the nature and breadth of our projects. We ended up with a new approach to engagement: much more formal and divided into two-year cycles with extensive vetting of our projects (Interview, October 2015).

At the same time, Russia began to utilize a "regional development" approach; although between Russia and Canada there were differences in opinion over what constitutes regional development. Another interviewee explained:

> There is to be some federal money spent in the regions so you can develop the regions. I had a big dispute with one of my colleagues who had been in the Far East and had told me there had been some development in the region. But no, basically, they would send somebody from Moscow and they would collect the resources and that's it. The "Ministry of Gold," as they used to call it, opens a mine. They take what they want and they close the mine. There's no regional development understanding (Interview, October, 2015).

The difference in approach likely disproportionately affected Yupiget and other Indigenous peoples, and contributed to the ongoing social and economic challenges in Chukotka. The context changed again during the 2014 Ukrainian crisis. One interviewee recalled:

> We are now faced with a situation whereby existing projects with Russia in the Arctic have been held hostage and become collateral damage in sustaining circumpolar cooperation as a consequence of Russia's response to the West's criticisms of its actions in Ukraine. For example [another interviewee] may have pointed you to recent Russian reaction over a project we supported last year, now viewing the Nenets organization as "foreign agents" and cut off funding. Everybody's skittish now, understandingly [sic], they don't want to

> exacerbate the situation of Indigenous peoples and are cautious about their levels of engagement (Interview, October, 2015).

Institutional changes in Russia occurred simultaneously with those in Canada. The Russian Ministry of Regional Development closed in 2004, and its responsibility for the Arctic and Indigenous peoples was downloaded to other Ministerial portfolios. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, in constant competition under the increasingly centralized control of the Kremlin, fought for control over international engagement within the void left by *Goskomsever*.

Strategic changes to DIAND also took them out of the business of providing assistance to Russian Indigenous peoples. One prominent Russian political leader even voiced his concern with the decision to move DIAND in a new direction. An interviewee commented:

> At the political level, as a result of a government expenditure review, the [scientific exchange] program was shut down. A message went out that DIAND was no longer in business. Nikolaev, the former governor of the Sakha Republic and former parliamentary Speaker met with our Deputy Minister, expressing his concern about this decision, given the prominent role Aboriginal Affairs had been playing in the Russian north…However, [the scientific exchange program] continued to be challenged by the government expenditure review exercise, including internal department reviews questioning how our international engagement was consistent with our domestic policy and objectives (Interview, October, 2015).

The Canadian government's objectives with regards to Russia in the Arctic had changed from that of bilateral cooperation and developmental aid, to protecting Arctic sovereignty and security, in part due to Russia's actions in Ukraine. Bilateral exchanges between Canada and

Russia ceased to exist. Canada is no longer engaged with Russia[36] outside of multilateral engagement through international forums such as the Arctic Council and the United Nations.

One of the successes of the scientific exchange program was its focus on regional development through region-to-region engagement. A hallmark of this engagement was the implementation of INRIPP phases I (1996-2000) and II (2000-2005). According to one of my interviewees, INRIPP I and II "exposed the Russians to opportunities in Canada to learn about co-management, small business development and a range of opportunities to transfer these best practices to Russia." INRIPP included a humanitarian mission to Chukotka where ICC Canada worked with its counterpart in Chukotka to provide much needed humanitarian assistance to Russian Yupiget and other Indigenous peoples of Chukotka (Wilson, 2007). However, by the time the Canada-Russia Northern Development Partnership Program (NORDEP) project came to fruition, the context in which the work would be carried out had changed in both countries.

It is important to note that international cooperation has had extremely positive outcomes for Russian Yupiget, not only in terms of cultural preservation, but also in terms of access to wage labour, experience with resource management and developing civil society. Recalling the effect of international cooperation in Chukotka a Yupik activist recalled:

> We began to take an active role in the activities of various international organizations functioning in the Arctic. A lot of organizations have emerged here; their activities are aimed at the revival of national cultures (quoted in Sillanpåå, 2005: 571).

A member of the presidium of the Association of Indigenous Minorities[37] echoed these sentiments:

> [Yupiget] have even been admitted to an international non-governmental organization, the

[36] At the time of the interviews, Canada had no bilateral engagement with Russia.
[37] RAIPON's institutional predecessor.

> ICC. While local authorities may not pay any real attention to the statements of the ICC, it does exert some influence in that a small minority people like [Yupiget] has membership in an international organization that represents four countries (quoted in Sillanpää, 2005: 571).

The combined outcome of international cooperation on Russian Yupiget was the replacement of state subsidization with a series of one-off projects and aid packages from multiple sources across the Arctic. Such projects and assistance helped Yupiget cope with the challenges caused by the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Such assistance, however, is now threatened by implementation of the *Foreign Agents Law*. Looking ahead, it is unclear if such activities are sustainable, given the context in which Russia and Canada changed the focus of their priorities in the Arctic. Furthermore, ICC's mandate to provide assistance and further support to ICC Russia is no longer discussed in publications such as ICC Canada's annual reports and ICC executive declarations.

One of the hallmarks of Canadian influence on RAIPON was the Russian Indigenous Training Centre. One interviewee described it as "one of RAIPON's major achievements," and characterized its value: "They used that framework and model to build capacity, sharing best practices thematically, whether it was education, health. It was really cool. They took charge. They did it effectively. And all that – it's gone." Another interviewee lamented: "The longer the communication between Russia and Canada is severed, the harder it will be to resume where it left off." With such a long history of cooperation throughout the Cold War and Russia's post-Soviet transformation, it is difficult to speculate on the future of bilateral cooperation between our countries on Indigenous and Arctic issues. One participant explained:

> So future cooperation would be of a completely different nature than we used to have. We could use the "Indigenous card" – the ICC and the Inuit are together – but now they've

> killed those institutions that [were] built and all those players are completely [replaced] by the Ledkovs[38] of this world who are in the Duma. How will Russia face Canada on the issue of Indigenous peoples? It's going to be really difficult. It's going to be a completely different relationship. And I can't even imagine, especially at a bilateral level, how it could look without Indigenous people involved and engaged (Interview, October 2015).

Given the bleak prospects for bilateral relations to resume, another interviewee stated: "So from a circumpolar perspective, the only game left in town is the Arctic Council framework, albeit with state appointed and controlled Indigenous representatives from the Russian North." Political and legal developments for Yupiget are interwoven in the connections between civil society, the state, and particularly in this case, at the level of international cooperation among countries of the circumpolar north.

Conclusions

The election of Vladimir Putin marked a change in the federal government's policy towards Indigenous peoples. Initially, the federal government appeared favourably inclined to resolving Indigenous peoples' challenges as evidenced by the introduction of the three federal laws regarding Indigenous rights in 1999, 2000 and 2001. However, the recentralization of power and authority in Moscow led the federal government to switch its position regarding Indigenous rights to prioritize large resource extraction activities over Indigenous peoples' challenges. Furthermore, the federal government began to crack down on organized opposition in the governmental and non-governmental sectors. Increasingly, the Abramovich administration in Chukotka, counter to the direction of the federal government, advanced regional policies on Indigenous peoples, including electoral representation and international cooperation – policies

[38] Grigory Ledkov's election as RAIPON's president occurred under irregular circumstances, and has changed the dynamic of RAIPON's international engagement.

the Nazarov administration worked directly against.

The Russian Federation's substantial control over civil society began with a piece of legislation now known as the *Foreign Agents Law*. It created suspicion among the general population about the day-to-day operations and financing arrangements of domestic NGOs, making international cooperation on Indigenous issues very difficult. Local and national NGOs received more and more scrutiny as the *Foreign Agents Law* became more and more restrictive. By Putin's third term, local, national and international NGOs became ineffective at pursuing their respective agendas, whether political or not. Indigenous activism and civil society had largely subsided.

Canada's relationship with the Russian Federation underwent changes on both sides as well. The bilateral exchanges with the Russian Federation that had largely sustained joint projects such as INRIPP I and II ended when the Ukrainian crisis froze relations completely. My interviewees lamented the abruptness of the change and its impact on Indigenous peoples from both Canada and Russia as almost tragic because all of the progress they made was for naught. The result is the reversing of the forces of institutional change favourable to advancing Yupiget political autonomy and self-determination. The next chapter will use historical institutionalism to explain the changes in institutional forces throughout each period and their effect on Yupiget political autonomy.

Chapter 6: An Historical Institutionalist Perspective on Yupiget Political Autonomy

Institutions include a variety of formal and informal procedures, processes, norms and conventions and are embedded in the organizational and power structures of society. They involve both purposefully created institutions tasked with providing and/or promoting a number of public policy initiatives, and the formal rules structuring relations between such institutions and society. In the preceding chapters, I described a variety of institutional developments during the Soviet and post-Soviet periods, from the local to international levels and within both government and civil society. In this chapter, I will further examine these institutional arrangements using the theoretical framework described in Chapter Two.

In this chapter, I will employ the tools of historical institutionalism to explain why Yupiget lag behind other Inuit in acquiring political autonomy and self-determination. The basis of my argument is that the institutional norms established by state authorities throughout the Soviet period continue to impact Yupiget today in the Russian Federation. Because the construction, maintenance and adaptation of institutions occur over time, the preceding chapters highlighted the "concrete temporal processes" that established the opposing forces of institutional development in the Russian Federation (Thelen, 1999). This chapter will identify three critical junctures and explicate the resulting path dependencies in order to explain how opposing forces have affected Yupiget political, economic and social development in the Russian Federation.

Critical junctures and path dependencies, as articulated by Thelen (1999), include two main elements. The first is that a critical juncture occurs when a choice is made during the formation of an institution that sets it down a different developmental path. The second is that institutions continue to evolve due to a number of external and internal factors, though such evolution is constrained by previous institutional choices. Critical junctures include key events,

crises, key decisions and/or ideas whose result then limits the range of alternative processes or trajectories thereafter. The Russian Federation has gone through a period of rapid institutional development and uncertainty in the post-Soviet period. Building new institutions to accompany new political realities in Russia has proven problematic. In fact, much of Russia's new political and civil institutions closely resemble their Soviet predecessors, although it is unclear if this is by design or the result of doing what is familiar. However, the Russian Federation is actively involved in international institutional development and is a key actor in the institutional design of the Arctic cooperation regime, even though international priorities are often at odds with the Russian Federation's domestic priorities. Yupiget institutional development demonstrates the plight of an Indigenous minority caught in the intersection of these two paths.

The Subjugation of Yupiget Political Institutions 1923-1985

The establishment of Soviet rule in Chukotka is perhaps a rather obvious but extremely significant critical juncture for Yupiget political development. Soviet policies towards Indigenous peoples had a substantial impact on the future prospects for Yupiget to exercise self-determination and political autonomy. Almost every aspect of Yupik life was transformed and their complete subordination to the state occurred rapidly. New institutions tasked with governance and law-making swept across Chukotka in order for the Soviet authorities to build a model socialist society. *Goskomsever* was established to ensure central oversight and blanket enforcement of all policies related to the northern Indigenous peoples. Clan and tribal associations and religious practices were replaced with Marxist-Leninist principles of universal association while names and language shifted from Yupik to Russian. The Soviet authorities controlled education and little space was provided for teaching Yupik to school-aged children. Sporadically placed, small Indigenous communities were replaced with large, permanent

settlements. Small villages and ethnic enclaves were amalgamated to larger communities consisting of local Indigenous peoples and Russian settlers migrated from other parts of the Soviet Union, resulting in the complete de-territorialization[39] of Yupiget.

The closing of Yupiget villages, and resettling the Yupiget population, effectively reduced claims to land used by Yupiget prior to the Soviet period. By combining the residents of separate, national villages with Russian settlers, no single group could claim historical ownership of the land and its resources. Furthermore, such policies removed them from their traditional hunting grounds and the associated hunting practices that had sustained Yupiget life prior to Soviet rule. Linguistic, spiritual, and other cultural practices were discouraged in these new, mixed settlements which supported the creation of a heterogeneous society of modern, Russian speaking citizens of the USSR. Additionally, large, collective economic practices replaced the small sea-hunting parties that sustained Yupiget for centuries. *Ukreplenie* removed Yupik control over their economic activity. Yupik hunters, who defined themselves by their relationship with the sea, became employees on state farms as labourers and brigade leaders in the early days (Kertulla, 2000) and were edged out of leadership positions by an influx of Russian settlers. As the new settlements were too far away from productive hunting grounds, Yupiget were forced to depend on state farms for employment, and the state labour and welfare systems for housing and goods in their new villages.

The intensity and scale of Soviet institutional changes ensured that Yupiget would likely never return to their pre-Soviet existence. It also cemented the asymmetrical relationship between Yupiget and the state that ensured their continued dependency. The progression of Soviet institution building in Chukotka was rapid and calculated. Three particular policies were

[39] De-territorialization is a term from Geography that aptly describes the situation faced by Yupiget. See Harris (2004) for an example of de-territorialization of Indigenous peoples in British Columbia, Canada.

introduced that made it extremely difficult for Yupiget to return to the same political, economic and social conditions that existed prior to the establishment of the Soviet Union. Institutional developments such as the *kultbaza, korenizatsiya* and the establishment of an Indigenous *intelligentsia* were the Communist Party's solution to ethnic inequality and advancing Marxist-Leninist principles among Indigenous peoples (Gray, 2005). At first, certain cultural practices including traditional songs, attire and dances were encouraged to promote the idea that the Soviet Union was a successful multicultural society. However, cultural promotion was superseded by industrial development, and many cultural practices tied to place were lost to the environmental degradation associated with industrialization (Diatchkova, 2010). The speed and totality of the Soviet Union's institutional development in the Russian Far East ensured a lasting equilibrium and that no clear path existed for the return to pre-Soviet institutions. The institutional pathway created by this critical juncture remains a significant barrier to Yupiget gaining self-determination and political autonomy in the Russian Federation.

The Soviet period demonstrates a clear mix of institutional arrangements. The Soviet Union's governing institutions quickly dominated and Marxist-Leninist ideology became an institution unto itself. However, the USSR's ambitions to remain a powerful global superpower in the post-war era brought it to the arena of international engagement. As a partner[40] in establishing the Arctic international cooperation regime, Soviet authorities agreed, at least in principle, to abide by certain international standards in the development of Indigenous peoples. Global institutional developments such as the UDHR and CERD occurred with the USSR's full participation (Hazard, 1950). Their participation in Arctic international cooperation allowed forces opposed to the institutional domination of Yupiget to incubate. However, it was the policy of *glasnost* that led to the development of the second critical juncture in this thesis –the

[40] One could argue the USSR was a leader in establishing Arctic Cooperation. See Gorbachev's Murmansk Speech.

dissolution of the Soviet Union that allowed for Yupiget admission into the ICC.

Opportunity to Re-establish Yupiget Political Autonomy 1985-2000

Although the Soviet Union's participation in global governance through its membership in the UN permitted a series of institutional developments counter to the isolating and repressive institutional design of the USSR, it was not until the coming to power of Mikhail Gorbachev in the mid-1980s that domestic situation started to change. His policies of *glasnost* and *perestroika* added to the changing institutional landscape and represent the beginning of a second critical juncture in the institutional development of the Soviet Union and, later the Russian Federation. For Indigenous peoples, such as Yupiget, this juncture would open up a different path of development that not only involved liberalization and the emergence of civil society on a domestic level, but also significant developments in terms of their international engagement. As central power weakened across the Soviet Union, institutional uncertainty swept across the regions. These two developments combined to offer a window of unprecedented institutional change in Chukotka with large-scale and lasting effects on Yupiget. Additionally, the relaxing of Soviet central controls, and the support that went with it, exposed a major institutional challenge: the high degree of state-dependency by Yupiget and the incredibly low socio-economic status of Yupiget despite said dependency.

The weakening of the Communist Party and its governing authority led to the eventual dissolution of the Soviet Union. The establishment of the Russian Federation offered an opportunity to reimagine the institutional design of the former RSFSR. Chukotka's secession from Magadan changed the institutional structure of the regional and local governments in Chukotka. New legal frameworks were established by a presidential decree and legislation directed at helping Indigenous peoples to reclaim their culture, traditional lands and ways of

living (Kryazhkov, 2013). Protections for Indigenous peoples were written into the Constitution of the Russian Federation in 1993 and the regional administration in Chukotka initiated a 10-year plan aimed at improving the socio-economic status of Indigenous peoples (Diatchkova, 2010). Furthermore the federal law *On Guarantees of the Rights of Small-Numbered Indigenous Peoples* codified the Russian Federation's responsibility towards its Indigenous peoples. While federal authorities appeared to be supporting internal self-determination for Indigenous peoples, the regional authorities took full advantage of their power and influence to establish a range of informal institutional developments in the vacuum left by the USSR's dissolution.

Counter to the growing forces of institutional opportunity, the power of the regional governors went largely unchecked by the central authorities. Changes to the regional governing structure introduced by Yeltsin ended the *dvoevlastie* style of leadership in Chukotka. The regional fiefdoms[41] created in the post-Soviet period illustrated the emergence of informal institution building. Defiant of federal laws, then governor Aleksandr Nazarov was suspicious of the increased international cooperation that led to a number of exchanges between Inuit of the circumpolar north. As noted in Chapter 4, he interfered with the development of international and bilateral Indigenous scientific cooperation and communication in Chukotka. As Indigenous and particularly Inuit (Yupiget) organizations appeared in Chukotka, the governor's attitude towards cooperation became increasingly antagonistic. His successor, Roman Abramovich, was supportive of Inuit cooperation and exchange, including circumpolar organizations like the ICC. The burgeoning Indigenous civil society was able to grow quite quickly, largely due to the international connections made during the transitional period from the Soviet Union to the Russian Federation.

Russia's increasing openness to international cooperation during the Yeltsin era allowed

[41] See Wilson, 2000.

for the creation of a range of new civil society institutions regionally and nationally. Enhanced international engagement such as the establishment of the Arctic Council led to a series of cooperative arrangements between Russian government agencies and their counterparts in Alaska and Canada whose influence forever changed Yupiget perspective. Regional and national Indigenous organizations such as RAIPON and its constituent members formed to defend and strengthen the status of Russia's Indigenous peoples. Local Indigenous organizations such as YESC, ICC, NNC and ChAZTO were established to support a range of institutional developments consistent with Yupiget political autonomy. Institution building programs were initiated through bilateral cooperation between Canada and Russia to develop capacity for self-determination and advance the institutions of self-government. Indeed, the reconnection with Yupik relatives in Alaska and the introduction of Yupiget to their broader Inuit kin across the circumpolar north set Yupiget down another development path that cannot entirely be undone. The ability of Yupiget to form representative political institutions and local NGOs, their admission into the ICC, and their reunification with Yupik from across the Bering Strait are direct outcomes of the institutional changes that began under Gorbachev and developed further during the first decade of the post-Soviet. Despite the recent return to repressive governance and centralization of power in the Russian Federation, Yupiget still participate in Arctic governance at the international level through the Arctic Council and their local constituent organizations are still operational. In fact, the Arctic Council remains the only forum where cooperation between Russia and Canada currently exists. Exposure to challenges faced by Inuit in other countries and involvement in political decision-making through international cooperation ended Yupiget isolation and introduced them to the wider Inuit struggle for self-determination and political autonomy.

(Re) Subjugation of Nascent Yupiget Political Institutions 2000-2015

Through the turn of the millennium, the path of political opportunity continued temporarily with the addition of the latter two major framework laws on Indigenous rights: *On the General Principles for the Organization of Obshchiny of the Native Lesser-Numbered Peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East of the Russian Federation* (2000) and *On the Territories of Traditional Nature Use by the Indigenous Numerically Small Peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East of the Russian Federation* (2001). With the federal framework for Indigenous legislation complete, the term "indigeneity" needed to be defined. An official list of 40 Indigenous peoples was established by governmental decree. Yupiget were among the official Indigenous peoples of the Russian Federation whose rights were specified and protected by the Constitution of the Russian Federation.

However, these were the final major federal institutional developments[42] to promote and allow for self-determination and political autonomy for Yupiget. As Putin's first term as President ended in 2004, a series of reforms and amendments were enacted to give the central authorities more control over resource development and civil society. Immediately into Putin's second term, amendments were introduced into the Indigenous federal legal framework to reconcile differences with other federal legislation such as the water and land codes. As Indigenous protections were stripped away, new institutional roadblocks were introduced to prevent civil disobedience. The creation of the Public Chamber and the introduction of the *Foreign Agents Law* were the hallmarks of the demise of grassroots civil society and of international cooperation and involvement in the socio-economic and political development of the Russian north (Crotty, Hall and Ljubownikow, 2014). These reforms essentially reversed the

[42] There may be clauses in, and amendments to, other legislation that affect Yupiget self-determination and political autonomy either directly or indirectly.

progress made towards political autonomy for Yupiget. Furthermore, they signaled a return to the repressive nature of Soviet period policies towards Indigenous peoples in Russia.

At the regional level, the governor of Chukotka, Roman Abramovich, appeared more progressive towards the plight of Chukotka's Indigenous peoples than his predecessor. Abramovich was responsible for much of the development of infrastructure in Chukotka and his modernization efforts were particularly noticeable in the capital, Anadyr. He also initiated the "Indigenous Representatives Council" in the regional Duma (Diatchkova, 2010). Abramovich was supportive of the cross-cultural exchanges initiated through the Canada-Russia agreement. While the federal government became a force against autonomy, the regional government began to support some autonomy for Indigenous peoples. However, the strength of the federal government grew immensely over the 2000s and into the following decade, and the waning influence of the regional governments became noticeable.

As the federal legal framework became more unsympathetic towards Indigenous rights and protections, civil society and international cooperation, Abramovich's successor, Roman Kopin, tried with some success to acquire federal funding to develop sea-mammal hunting and air travel subsidies in Chukotka. Whereas the regional government seems to support basic Yupiget institutional development, it is bound by the federal legal framework when it comes to establishing and growing Indigenous civil society. Through the 2000s, Indigenous civil society was influenced heavily by Yupiget participation in international cooperation through the Arctic Council and the ICC.

International cooperation throughout the 2000s was focused on two main challenges in Chukotka: humanitarian aid and capacity building. Each successive ICC Executive Council meeting called for increased support for Yupiget and noted the alarming downward trend in their socio-economic status compared to other Inuit. Bilateral relations between Alaska and Russia,

and Canada and Russia, continued to involve Yupiget in a range of capacity building initiatives. Hundreds of thousands of dollars were spent in Chukotka to promote Yupiget political autonomy and self-determination and to create business networks across North America. However, international tensions and disputes with Russia outside the Arctic started to change the context in which participation in international cooperation occurred. Longstanding institutional cooperation between Canada and Russia was hindered by changes to and, in some instances, the wholesale removal of institutions that had underpinned previous efforts at cooperation. Additionally, the mandates of organizations working together in the Arctic changed as well. Canada opted out of developmental assistance and redoubled their efforts on international trade and economic development. The Russian government increased its scope and control of regional development initiatives and became increasingly suspicious of foreign investment and cooperation. The result was a weakening of the institutions established through the international cooperation regime and a strengthening of the Kremlin's influence on the relationships built among circumpolar neighbours.

Civil society and Indigenous activism was at its peak at the turn of the millennium. Yupiget were politically active in two local NGOs: YESC and ICC Russia. Furthermore, they participated in NNC and ChAZTO to maintain traditional economic and subsistence activities. They were established members of RAIPON and participated in a number of local and national initiatives aimed at political autonomy and self-determination. However, as the central authorities regained their influence, they sought more control over Indigenous NGOs. RAIPON was shut down for a year and the Kremlin's candidate became its President during a widely suspect election process. Local NGOs with international connections were coerced into registering as "foreign agents" in accordance with changes to the *Foreign Agents Law*. It appears that the Russian Federation is swiftly returning to a period of subjugation of Yupiget institutional

development, with the Russian government resisting the notion of Yupiget political autonomy and self-determination as a construct of western influence.

Conclusion

This thesis is certainly not the first research to comment on the resiliency of Soviet period institutions in the Russian Federation. In his work on local government reform, Young (2000) notes that during regime changes in Russia through the Imperial and Soviet periods, there were no new institutional designs and power structures to replace the old ones. Young and Wilson (2007) document the Soviet influence on local government reforms in the Russian Federation. Furthermore, the general arguments contained in this thesis are consistent with the work of distinguished Russian political scientist, Vladimir Gelman (2004), who demonstrated the volatility of informal institutions in filling the void left during the Soviet transition period. This thesis follows in the same tradition, but with the added dimension of charting efforts by Indigenous peoples in Russia to engage in international cooperation.

Yupiget political autonomy is intricately tied to two counter forces of institutional development: institutions as agents of political repression and institutions as agents of political development. The three critical junctures identified in this thesis are the establishment of Soviet rule in Chukotka, the relaxing of state controls initiated by Gorbachev's policies of *glasnost* and *perestroika* and the ensuing dissolution of the Soviet Union, and the recentralization of power in the Russian Federation under Putin. All of these institutional changes influenced Yupiget ability to fight for self-determination in different ways. In some cases, institutional changes resulted in positive developments, and in other cases, the impact was largely negative.

The introduction of Yupiget to the international cooperative governing regime in the Arctic had a positive influence on Yupiget political development. While currently this does little to resolve the domestic challenges faced by Yupiget, it brought together the international Inuit

community. No longer are Yupiget isolated from their circumpolar neighbours. They participate in a variety of international forums because of this relationship and are even allowed restricted visa-free travel to Alaska. While the forces of institutional development within Chukotka are currently rather benign, the influence on Yupiget maintained by Inuit internationalism has lasting consequences. Even through a rapid period of institutional change, Yupiget political autonomy remains elusive because of the lasting effect of the Soviet period policies towards Indigenous peoples, and the return of the power *vertikal*. It appears the more the current authorities in Russia evoke Soviet era nostalgia amongst the Russian population, the more repressive their policies are towards Indigenous peoples.

Political, economic and social institutions related to Indigenous peoples established within the Soviet Union largely persevered throughout the lifespan of the USSR and subsequently affect Yupiget contemporary political organization in the Russian Federation. Interrupted by a short, transitional period in which a variety of new institutional arrangements were introduced into the emerging Russian Federation, many of the institutional legacies of the Soviet Union persisted or were introduced as reforms following the tumultuous economic uncertainty of the 1990s. However, Yupiget were extremely proactive in building institutions to promote Inuit culture, rights and political autonomy, guided by their introduction to the ICC, and in concert with its constituent organizations throughout the Arctic. As the broader path of institutional development in the Russian Federation begins to resemble that of the Soviet period, Yupiget institutions continue to operate, albeit in a much more hostile context than the one in which they were created.

Chapter 7: Conclusions

In this thesis, I argue the structural and ideological institutions established within the former Soviet Union and Russian Federation have directly affected the political organization of Yupiget. Additionally, institutional norms established by state authorities throughout the Soviet Union and the Russian Federation continue to impact Russia's Indigenous peoples, including Yupiget. Yet powerful globalizing forces near the end of the 20th century have increased the visibility of Yupiget in the circumpolar north and helped communicate their challenges to global audiences. A variety of institutions were established at the local, regional, federal and international levels to help resolve these challenges. However, Yupiget political organization and sources of its support are currently stagnant. Any available domestic support and resources cannot be used to promote self-determination and political autonomy, while any outside support is perceived as foreign interference and Yupiget efforts to achieve greater political, economic and social control perceived as anti-Russian. Yupiget political institutions are caught in a difficult conundrum. The Soviet influence altered any direct path towards autonomy, while the influence of, and participation in, institutions of international cooperation continue to support Yupiget inherent rights to self-determination. Furthermore, the Russian Federation has tightened the legal framework by which civil society and NGOs can operate, limiting opportunities to collect and share resources with organizations operating outside of Russia.

Historical institutionalism is an appropriate and useful framework with which to explain why Yupiget do not possess the same opportunities to exercise political autonomy as their Inuit counterparts across the circumpolar north. Critical junctures and their subsequent path dependencies suitably illustrate why Yupiget cannot return to their pre-Soviet levels of self-determination and political autonomy by highlighting the difficulties in deviating from their current path trajectory in the Russian Federation. An examination of the intersection of two

ostensibly contrasting paths of political development suggests that even though there is little chance of Yupiget gaining political autonomy in the current domestic political climate, there are still forces that support their autonomy and further their pursuit for self-determination. While their political development is currently impeded, changes in the domestic political situation in Russia and/or Chukotka could lead to a redoubling of efforts of the international community to support Yupiget political autonomy.

One of the most obvious limitations to this study is its lack of a current and direct Yupiget perspective. From the outset of the research design, interviews in Chukotka were intended to be the main form of primary data collection. However, due to stark changes in the diplomatic relationship between Russia and Canada over the course of this research, travel to Chukotka and interviews with Yupiget were deemed to be unsuccessful at best, and dangerous at worst. One of the contingency plans was to arrange interviews with Yupiit in Alaska and members of the ICC executives in Canada and Alaska. Again, external developments, in this case the introduction of legislative limits on civil society within Russia, affected my ability to recruit ICC participants because my own concern for the potential of a negative effect on Yupiget. Rather than potentially exacerbate a negative situation, I decided to collect data one more step removed from Yupiget. My interview participants were extremely candid and their input provided rich contextual data about the situation of Indigenous peoples in the Russian Far East and the relationships developed between Russia and Canada and Inuit/Yupiget. However, their experience with Yupiget was limited. Thus, there is a large gap in what we know about how Yupiget presently experience their political, economic and social development. Therefore, I rely heavily on the data provided by journalists and other scholars.

Another limitation is the lack of representation of Russian-language materials. I collected a variety of Soviet and post-Soviet period Russian language articles, stories and other published

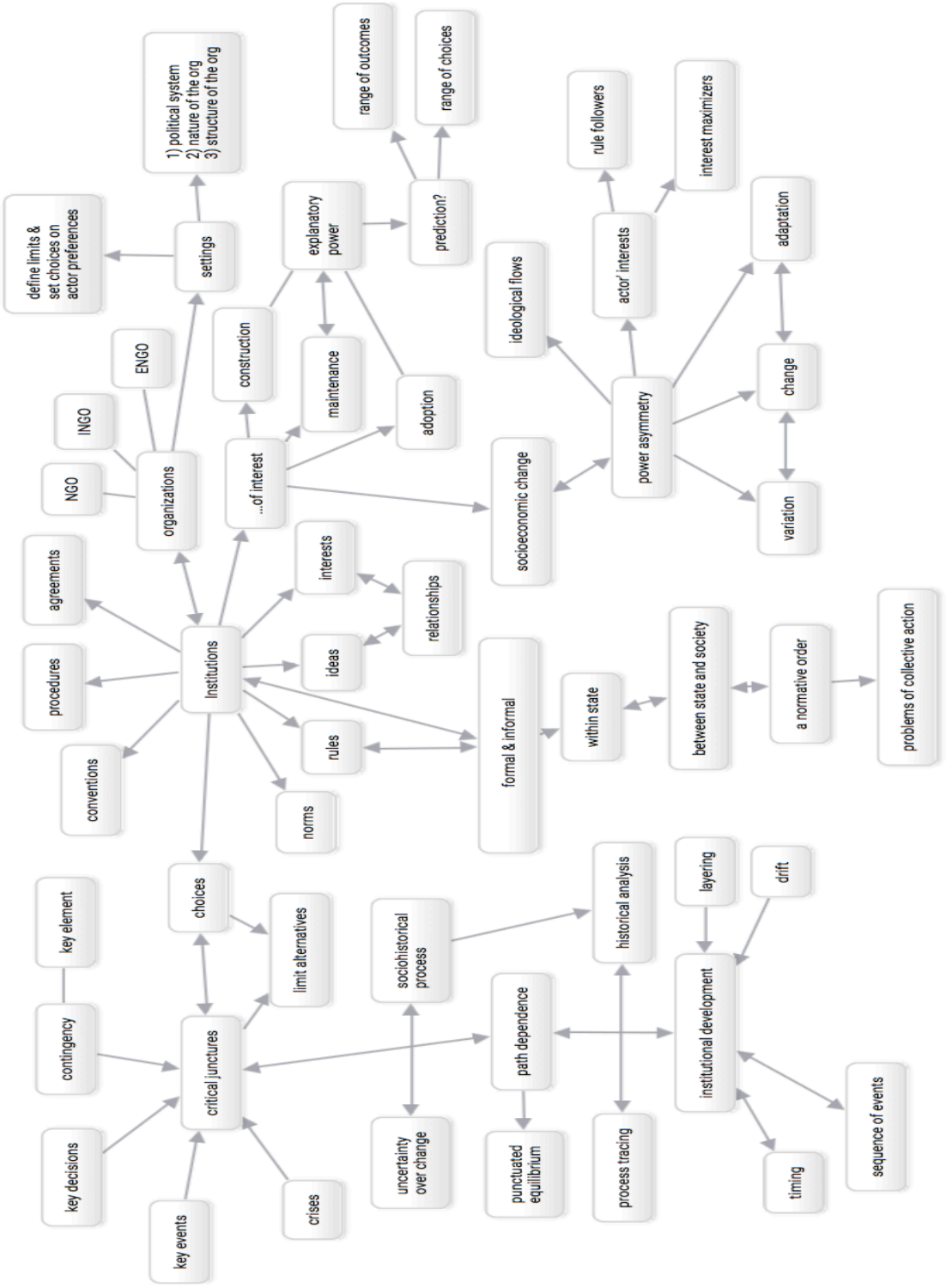
materials, but my ability to interpret and understand Russian language is extremely limited. The lack of Russian language materials from this thesis represents a literature bias that is unavoidable yet problematic nonetheless. I certainly avoided problems in appraising the quality of evidence presented in Soviet period publications in the former USSR. However, those materials could have contributed to the overall validity of this thesis. The lack of Russian and Yupiget perspectives in this thesis contribute to a very "western" understanding of Yupiget political autonomy and self-determination. While it would have been beneficial to attempt to account for a number of different perspectives, my own understanding of the phenomena and case study under investigation would still heavily influence the final product. My only recourse towards these limitations is to explicitly acknowledge their existence.

This thesis broadly supports historical institutionalism as credible framework with which to study political phenomena in the Russian Federation. However, a case study of Yupiget political autonomy offers a new contribution towards using historical institutionalism to explain institutional development and influence. Future research could use more of the tools of historical institutionalism to further advance understandings of both the theoretical framework and Yupiget political autonomy. Another possible avenue of further research could include using historical institutionalism to investigate the institutional development of similar groups to generate comparisons. The political development of Saami and other Indigenous peoples are all possible case studies of institutional development that would benefit from an historical institutionalist perspective.

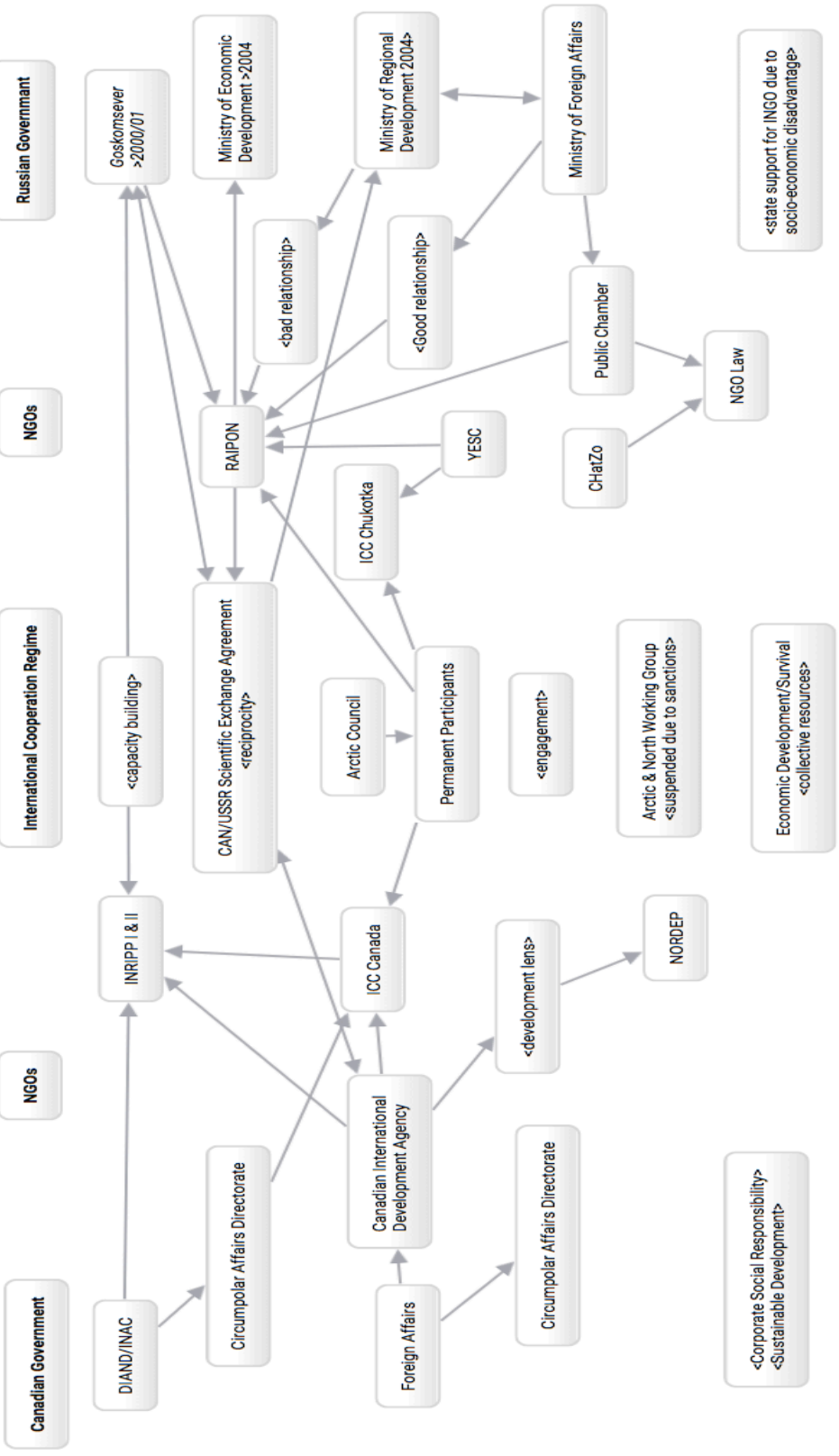
In addition, as noted above, any future inquiry into Yupiget political development would benefit from the inclusion of Inuit, and more importantly, Yupiget voices and perspectives. Furthermore, such studies would benefit by being conducted in partnership with organizations such as the ICC or the Arctic Council in order to utilize their long-standing relationships with

Yupiget, and other Indigenous peoples in Chukotka. Such relationships are an important factor in conducting safe, ethical and effective research in the social sciences (Association of Canadian Universities for Northern Studies, 2003). In addition to Yupiget, the political development of Chukchi, who share an historical connection with Yupiget, would help to determine how a titular minority's political development occurs compared to another Indigenous minority in the Russian Far East. For example, do Chukchi experience more political autonomy by virtue of their participation in state governing institutions such as the regional Duma and *Okrug* Charter, or does the increasing power of the central authorities set limits to their autonomous arrangement? There are certainly many avenues of inquiry open to furthering our understanding of institutional development of Indigenous peoples, and a wide range of prospective cases to further study political autonomy and self-determination in the Russian Far East. This thesis outlines only one of many paths.

Appendix 1: Historical Institutionalism Concept Map



Appendix 2: Canada-USSR/Russian Federation Arctic Cooperation Concept Map



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