

SUMMARY OF RESEARCH TOPIC & THESIS

Exploring the Role of Social Sanctuary in Arctic Community Development: A Case Study of Nunavut and Greenland

Abstract excerpted from paper presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Rural Development, November 27, 2018 © Vonique Romaine Mason-Edwards

Since the Post World War II era, democratic countries such as Canada and Denmark have joined the international community in adopting strategies of development as a means of preventing and alleviating human suffering. Canada and Denmark continue to be measured by their ability to provide social programs that meet the needs of their citizens. As these countries continue to pursue this objective, it is increasingly important for policy makers at all governmental levels to accurately measure how well Canada and Denmark are looking after their indigenous citizens, and to determine which models, policies and programs will be most useful in facilitating indigenous Arctic social development. This research used an international comparative analytical case study of Nunavut (Canada) and Greenland (Denmark) to explore the conceptual and programmatic policy role of *Social Sanctuary* in Indigenous Arctic social development.

Its central thesis is as follows: *Social Sanctuary* is an important concept that policy makers and community stakeholders can use to design, implement and manage social programs that promote and secure the fundamental social, economic, and cultural rights of Arctic communities. *Social Sanctuary* can be preliminarily operationalized through the promotion of a *Social Sanctuary Guide* that uses official government statistical data as a point of reference. The conceptualization and measurement of the level of *Social Sanctuary* in indigenous Arctic communities is critically important for determining the types of community development models, policies and programs that are needed to improve the lives of citizens in these rural communities. This study analysed statistical government data from Canada and Greenland to explore the underpinnings of the *Social Sanctuary Guide*.

The main conclusions were as follows: firstly the provision, protection, and preservation of a core suite of social, economic and cultural rights and freedoms by the state for its citizens can be conceptualized as *Social Sanctuary*; secondly, the core suite of rights and freedoms at the conceptual base of *Social Sanctuary* can be measured in terms of human development and social welfare; thirdly, there are significant overlaps and interconnectedness between the proposed domains of *Social Sanctuary* and three key rural community development models and frameworks; fourthly, there are significant similarities between the proposed domains of *Social Sanctuary* and contemporary indicators of indigenous economic success; and lastly, the *Social Sanctuary Guide* is a useful needs-assessment tool for indigenous Arctic communities as it demonstrates scalability to the community level.

SUMMARY OF THE EXCHANGE PERIOD

My name is Vonique Mason-Edwards. I am a student at Brandon University, Manitoba where I am enrolled in the Masters of Rural Development program. The RPLC Research Exchange Grant offered me the unique opportunity of completing my Masters Thesis as a Research Exchange student at the University of Saskatchewan. This is significant because I am an international student with a family that consists of two small children.

At the end of March 2018, our family made the 8-hour drive from Manitoba to Saskatchewan. Through the research exchange network, we were able to secure housing on Souris Hall at the University of Saskatchewan. This put us in contact with almost 70 other families that shared similar experiences. During our time on Souris Hall, our family formed solid friendships. Our children spent many days touring the expansive campus. Their favourite spot was the Geology Department with the towering life-size replicas of dinosaur fossils.

My research was an exploration of social development in indigenous Arctic communities through an international comparative assessment of Nunavut and Greenland. I am grateful for the vast resources at the University of Saskatchewan's Library, as well as the expertise of Dr. Phil Loring, my research exchange supervisor, whose incisive comments helped to enrich the quality of my research. Through this connection I was afforded the opportunity of presenting at the 2018 AAAS Arctic Division Conference in Saskatoon in October 2018.

The RPLC Research Exchange Grant and the possibilities that it has opened, have helped me to realize that it is possible to fulfil your academic dreams while engaging your family in the process. Many times, especially women, feel that they must choose between the two. It is a beautiful experience to be able to embrace both. Our children celebrated both their birthdays during this period and my husband and I celebrated our 6th wedding anniversary as well. This is not an experience that we will soon forget.

More resources need to be invested in the study of rural policy in Arctic communities. Solutions will only arise through active engagement and ongoing conversations. My research has developed a needs-assessment tool that shows promise for scalability to the Arctic community level, but there is a need to ground truth these preliminary findings to ensure authenticity. Enquiries of this nature should be encouraged and facilitated as the development of rural policy depends on it.

