

NRI Annual Summary Report (November 2012)

Research License 02 010 12R-M

Dynamics and Change of the Devon Ice Cap, Nunavut

**Martin Sharp, Department of Earth and Atmospheric Sciences,
University of Alberta**

Field Personnel 2012: Peter Bezeau, Brad Danielson, Gabrielle Gascon, Colleen Mortimer, Ian Scriver (University of Alberta)

Dates in the field: 18 April – 14 May, 2012.

This research program aims to quantify the mass change rate of Canada's Arctic ice caps, determine the underlying causes and mechanisms of change, and evaluate the significance of these changes for global sea level. The program relies on remote sensing to achieve these goals, but fieldwork is essential to validate remote sensing measurements and understand the mechanisms of change. Fieldwork on the Devon Island Ice Cap has two major components: (i) calibration and validation of the radar altimeter on the CryoSat2 satellite (a collaboration with David Burgess of the Geological Survey of Canada), a new tool for monitoring changes in the thickness, volume, and mass of Arctic ice caps, and (ii) a study of ice dynamics, hydrology, and iceberg calving at the Belcher Glacier that is designed to explore how tidewater outlet glaciers respond to climate change and contribute to overall mass loss from Arctic ice caps.

Recent Progress

Changes in the mass balance of Canada's Arctic ice caps in the 21st century are unprecedented in the 54-year period of observations. Year-to-year changes in the mass balance of these glaciers are mainly due to changes in summer climate and surface melting. The decade of the 2000s had the warmest summer temperatures in the last 60 years, and 2005-2009 was the warmest 5-year period. Across the Queen Elizabeth Islands, measured mass loss rates after 2005 were up to 3.8 times higher than the ~50 year average. Modeling of the regional surface mass balance and estimates of mass change rates based on satellite laser altimetry and gravity measurements show that from 2007-2009, melting of ice caps in the Canadian Arctic was probably the single largest

regional mass contributor to global sea level rise after the Greenland and Antarctic ice sheets. Our annual surveys of the Devon Ice Cap show that there has been a huge change since 2005 in how quickly snow is turned into glacier ice. Every year now, even at the highest elevations on the ice cap where, until the 2000s, surface melt occurred only once or twice a decade, surface meltwater is penetrating deeply into snow and firn near the glacier surface and refreezing to form ice. The last time this happened was around 4200 years ago.

2012 Field Season:

(i) ***CryoSat calibration-validation.*** Changes in the amount of ice within snow and firn change how energy transmitted by the CryoSat2 radar altimeter is reflected from the ice cap. With more ice present, more energy is reflected from within the snow and firn relative to the amount reflected from the ice cap surface. This may reduce the accuracy of the surface height measurements made by the altimeter. To see if this is the case, we have made measurements of surface height and height change along the “CryoSat line” with GPS every year since 2004. We use ground-penetrating radar (GPR) and shallow ice cores to document the amount of ice in the snow and firn. These data allow us to check the accuracy of the surface height and height change measurements made by the satellite altimeter and assess how it is affected by changes in snow and firn properties across the ice cap and over time.

2012: GPS and GPR surveys were conducted along the 47 km long CryoSat line. We also conducted GPR surveys of four 100 m by 200 m grids and collected shallow ice cores along the CryoSat line to produce detailed three-dimensional maps of the structure of the upper 10 m of the ice cap. We retrieved ten 16 m deep cores [5 along the CryoSat line between ~1800 m.a.s.l. and 1400 m.a.s.l.], logged the distribution of ice layers and firn in each core using infrared photography and measured density profiles for each core. Comparison with results from the same locations in previous years allows us to document changes in the structure of the firn layer that have resulted from recent summer warming, and show how more rapid conversion of snow to ice is resulting in lowering of the ice cap surface. This is important because these changes in surface elevation do not indicate loss of mass from the ice cap. To test whether increased refreezing of meltwater within the firn has warmed the firn by release of latent heat, we also measured

temperature profiles in 15m deep boreholes at several locations in the ice cap summit region, where temperatures had been measured in 1970 and 2004. These measurements show the firn has warmed by about 5.7°C since 1970, and 3.8°C since 2004, while the air temperature has increased by 1.8°C since 1970 and 1°C since 2004. Thus, between two thirds and three quarters of the firn warming is due to latent heat release from meltwater refreezing in the firn.

(ii) ***Belcher Glacier:*** We made a repeat GPS survey along a longitudinal profile that has been measured each year since 2007, to determine annual changes in the glacier's thickness and surface elevation. We maintained a series of continuously recording GPS sensors that measure the glacier's velocity throughout the year. Batteries were replaced, data from 2011/2012 were collected, and the GPS sensors were set up to record for another year. GPS sensors that were no longer functioning were removed and will be replaced in 2013. Several time-lapse cameras were installed along a system of interconnected supraglacial lakes and streams to document the processes involved in lake drainage events that appear to deliver water to the glacier bed and affect the rate of glacier flow. We also serviced and retrieved data from a weather station that provides us with information about when, and how rapidly, melting occurs on the glacier surface in summer.

Five high-resolution time-lapse cameras were installed to observe iceberg calving from the glacier. Ground control points [latitude, longitude, and elevation of identifiable features] were measured to facilitate analysis of these photographs. Two-component geophones, an audio recording system, and two sets of accelerometers were also installed in the terminus region. The data collected from these instruments will help us identify and characterize iceberg calving events and, when interpreted in conjunction with the velocity data obtained from the GPS sensors, will help us investigate the relationship between glacier velocity and iceberg calving.

NRI- d^a d^c Δ^a Δ^c Δ^b Δ^d (2012)

ፍጅጋካፖፌፌጋጠኤር ረፈካኤ 02 010 12R-M

ክፍል ስም: የፍልጣት ስልጣን ለማሳደግ የሚያስፈልጉትን ሰነዶች ይጻፉ፡

፲ቡ ነፃ ልማት ማረጋገጫ ስልጣን ለሚሰጥበት ሚኒስቴር ማረጋገጥና ለሚከተሉት ስልጣኖች ማረጋገጥ

[illegible]

▷^c▷Δ^c ወይጋኑህ፡፡ 18 Δ>▷ - 14 ሊΔ, 2012.

[illegible]

ᐱᓄᑦ ᐱᓂᓕᐅᓂᒃᔭᐅᓪᓴ:

[illegible]

(ii) $\wedge \nabla^c \rho$ $\rho^c \nabla \nabla \sigma$: $\triangleright \cap^{b^c} \sigma \subseteq \triangleright \nabla^c$ GPS-d^c CL^a_a
 $\triangleright \cap^b \nabla^b \nabla \triangleright \cap^{b^c} \sigma^c \rho^c \sigma$ $\triangleright \rho \subseteq \nabla^b \nabla \nabla$ CΔL^a_a Δ^cJCL^c $\triangleright \cap^b \nabla^b \nabla \triangleright \cap^b \nabla^c \nabla^c \nabla^b \nabla^b$

[illegible][illegible]