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Traditional Knowledge

March 2017

Progress Report

Anders Oskal, Saami Council and Mikhail Pogodaev, Association of World Reindeer Herders explain the difference between making reindeer blood sausage in the Saami and Even tradition.



Traditional Knowledge

Progress report: 2015-2017

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1. Context

The Arctic Council recognizes the importance of Traditional Knowledge (TK) and there is a growing appreciation for utilizing TK, Local Knowledge and science through a collaborative approach. This progress report provides an overview of efforts to include TK within the work CAFF and describes progress during the 2015-17 Arctic Council Ministerial period. While progress has been made it is important to note that a lack of funding support and capacity hinders effective utilization of TK within CAFF activities. Consequently, despite interest some activities e.g. the Salmon peoples of Arctic Rivers initiative have failed to secure the resources needed to move forward.

2. What is Traditional Knowledge (TK)?

The term Traditional and Local Knowledge (TLK) is the terminology used by the Arctic Council and is reflected in CAFFs use of this term in all its publications and activities. In 2015 the Permanent Participants agreed to a definition for TK which has not been adopted by the Arctic Council¹.

3. TK and CAFF

CAFF has had a longstanding recognition of the importance of TLK, and has endeavoured to incorporate it into its work. This is in line with the Arctic Council project tracking tool “Amarok”, which specifically provides a section for Arctic Council working groups to detail if/how Traditional

¹ “ Traditional Knowledge is systematic way of thinking and knowing that is elaborated and applied to phenomena across biological, physical, cultural and linguistic systems. Traditional Knowledge is owned by the holders of that knowledge, often collectively, and is uniquely expressed and transmitted through indigenous languages. It is a body of knowledge generated through cultural practices, lived experiences including extensive and multigenerational observations, lessons and skills. It has been developed and verified over millennia and is still developing in a living process, including knowledge acquired today and in the future, and it is passed on from generation to generation “(Ottawa Traditional Knowledge Principles 2015).

Knowledge has been incorporated into their project activities. This approach is also reflected in the CAFF project proposal template, which requires each new initiative to make clear if the use of TK would: lead to better project outcomes; explain how it would be used; and/or provide an explanation as to why TK is not applicable or feasible for the project in question.

4. Activities 2015-17

Circumpolar Biodiversity Monitoring Program (CBMP)

A major focus for inclusion of TK within CAFF's work has been through the CBMP, a foundational program underlying implementation of CAFF's mandate. Its activities are structured around development and implementation of Arctic Biodiversity Monitoring Plans for each of the major Arctic ecosystems (marine, freshwater, terrestrial and coastal). These plans help improve ability to detect important trends, link these trends to their underlying causes, predict future trends and scenarios for Arctic biodiversity, and helps assess the status of biodiversity monitoring programs, thereby provide more timely and credible information to support decision making. The CBMP has been learning and evolving with the development and implementation of each monitoring plan.

The State of the Arctic Marine Biodiversity Report (SAMBR) is the first integrated reporting outcome from the CBMP Marine Plan. Unfortunately, due to a lack of capacity and resources it proved not possible to include TK in this report. Although it is an imperfect treatment, the report provides examples to demonstrate the wealth and value that TK could contribute to such reports. In following up on the SAMBR, focus will be placed on how to better engage TK holders and TK within implementation.

The CBMP Marine Steering Group has also explored participatory approaches to engaging TK through work with ICC, and will continue with new focus on further implementation of the CBMP Marine plan and follow-up on the SAMBR.

Similarly, the importance of TK has been recognised in the ongoing development of the State of the Arctic Freshwater Biodiversity Report, where efforts were made to engage the Arctic Peoples of Salmon Rivers project within the development of the State of the Arctic Freshwater Biodiversity Report (SAFBR). Implementation of the CBMP Terrestrial Plan is just beginning and will build upon lessons learned from implementation of the Marine and Freshwater Plans. Part of the approach to the SAFBR includes a special scientific journal. One of the papers will be focused on Indigenous Knowledge which will be used to further inform the SAFBR.

The CBMP Coastal Plan has had the opportunity to learn from the experiences of the other three plans and now shows the strongest focus on bringing science and TK together through a co-production of knowledge in the development of their work plan. An important step included a meeting of TK holders in connection with a workshop to design the CBMP Coastal Plan (CAFF 2016). This early engagement of TK in the design of the monitoring plan has facilitated a more inclusive approach to the selection of Focal Ecosystem Components, attributes and parameters, where changes in the status of socially, culturally and economically important species will help users of the plan manage, adapt and mitigate change. Research and products developed by Indigenous organizations and inclusive of TK are actively being used to shape the coastal plan, under guidance of the Permanent Participants.

A new strategy to guide the implementation and development of CBMP is being developed for 2018-21. To inform this process a memo documenting lessons learnt has been developed, which emphasises a need to find ways to secure resources to allow for effective involvement of TK holders and inclusion of TK.

Arctic Traditional Knowledge and Wisdom: Changes in the North American Arctic

This report, written from the perspectives of the Arctic Athabaskan Council, Aleut International Association, the Gwich'in Council International and published accounts, acknowledges the importance of including TK in scientific efforts to fully understand the nature of biodiversity and biodiversity changes occurring in the Arctic. It argues that without this input included in a systemic way throughout the scientific community the real scope of changes taking place will not be properly understood.

Nomadic herders: enhancing the resilience of reindeer herder's ecosystems and livelihoods

This project being led by Russia and the AIA in cooperation with the International Reindeer Herders Association is considering the impacts of land use change and climate change on nomadic pastoralists, and assessing herders' adaptation options and opportunities. Important achievements include education and training for Indigenous youth, from Russia, Mongolia, Finland, Sweden and Norway on TK and how to document TK related to biodiversity. A short film about TK and how it can be used to conserve biodiversity is also being produced in advance of the 2017 Arctic Council Ministerial.

The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity in the Arctic (TEEB) scoping study

Led by Sweden and in cooperation with the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) the TEEB Arctic scoping study explores the possibilities of capturing the Arctic's diverse values beyond market mechanisms. Special attention is given to how the more intangible, yet so important values of this unique region can be made visible. The focus is not on monetary valuation, although this also is part of the approach, but rather how to recognize the importance of the Arctic. Describing and discussing the various view points on what makes the Arctic unique and valuable, in addition to including scientific and traditional knowledge, can be a new way to make people understand what the Arctic means to its inhabitants and the rest of the world.

Salmon Peoples of Arctic Rivers

This initiative led by AAC, Saami Council, RAIPON and AIA plans to bring together TK holders, scientists and resource agencies to design an assessment of freshwater river systems based on TK. The design of this holistic assessment will focus on "Salmon peoples" as a measure of ecosystem health, and outline future data needs that could contribute to the resilience and adaptation of these peoples and the salmon populations upon which they depend. However, despite the potential for co-development of knowledge offered by this approach the project has not yet secured the necessary resources to begin work.

5. Moving forward

In addition to direct engagement of TK, there are community-driven initiatives which should be better linked to CAFF working group activities, such as the Community Based Monitoring Atlas.

A Current CBM project on the CAFF work plan is the Community Observation Network for Adaptation and Security (CONAS). Led by AIA and building on the work of the Bering Sea Sub-Network (BSSN) CONAS is an international community-based monitoring network in the Bering Sea that documents local knowledge of environmental change, including challenges and opportunities faced by Arctic Indigenous communities adapting to the effects of climate change

in order to inform effective adaptive responses.

As the CAFF working group moves forward there is an understanding for the need to learn from past experiences and build upon our successes. With this in mind the *Actions for Arctic Biodiversity 2013-21: implementing the recommendations of the Arctic Biodiversity Assessment* (CAFF 2013) reflects continued efforts to increase engagement of TK and strengthen and create robust projects that bring together multiple knowledge systems. CAFF is building upon the experiences of each initiative to improve ways of engaging TK. A key part of this is securing sufficient funding to support TK holder involvement from the very beginning of a project and in the development of new initiatives. This effort is also reflected in the CAFF 2015-2017 Work Plan. The Arctic Biodiversity Congress 2, scheduled for 2018, will also provide an opportunity to facilitate discussions and actions on how to better use TK in CAFFs work.