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Traditional Knowledge

Progress report: 2017-2019

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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 of CAFF and describes progress during the 2017-19 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 and TK holders within CAFF activities.

2. What is Traditional Knowledge (TK)?

The term Traditional Knowledge (TK) is the terminology used by the Arctic Council and is reflected in CAFF’s use of this term in its publications and activities. In 2015 the Permanent Participants (PPs) agreed to a definition for TK and updated in 2018.¹ These definitions include fundamental principles

¹ “Indigenous Knowledge is a systematic way of thinking and knowing that is elaborated and applied to phenomena across biological, physical, cultural and linguistic systems. Indigenous 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 multi-generational 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 and revised in October 2018).

The Permanent Participants engaged in the review of this document expressed a preference for the use of the Term Indigenous Knowledge.

for the Use of Indigenous Knowledge in strengthening the Work of the Arctic. These have not been adopted by the Arctic Council².

3. TK and CAFF

CAFF has had a longstanding recognition of the importance of TK, and has endeavoured to utilize TK and the inclusion of TK holders in its work. This is in line with the Arctic Council project tracking tool “Amarok”, which provides a section for Working Groups to detail if/how TK has been utilized within project activities. This approach is also reflected in the CAFF project proposal template, which requires each new initiative to explain if and how TK would be used and how its use may lead to better project outcomes, and/or provide an explanation as to why TK is not applicable or feasible for the project in question.

4. Activities 2017-19

Circumpolar Biodiversity Monitoring Program (CBMP)

A major focus for the utilization 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 help assess the status of biodiversity monitoring programs, thereby providing 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.

CAFF recognizes that TK is an important source of information for understanding Arctic biodiversity and developing and implementing effective conservation strategies. However, bringing together TK and science holds many challenges, such as resource and time constraints. Throughout the development of the Arctic Biodiversity Monitoring Plans CAFF has learned and built upon efforts to better utilize different sources of information. Today we understand the need for the inclusion of TK from the inception of projects through analysis, and output.

- 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 was not possible to utilize TK or involve TK holders in the development of this report. The SAMBR contains a advice on how TK might be more effectively utilized to allow for increased understanding of changes in the Arctic. The report provides examples to demonstrate the wealth and value that TK could contribute to such reports. The CAFF board has asked that this group continue to explore opportunities for collaborative and meaningful engagement of TK holders in future work.
- Similarly, the importance of TK was recognised in the *State of the Arctic Freshwater Biodiversity Report (SAFBR)*, where efforts were made to engage the Arctic Peoples of Salmon Rivers project and to include documented TK collected through systematic literature searches. One of the papers for the special issue accompanying this report

² The Gwich’in Council International undertook with the support of the Indigenous Peoples Secretariat at the March 2017 meeting of Senior Arctic Officials to consult among the PPs to see if there is agreement upon the use of the term Indigenous Knowledge and its definition (SAO Meeting report March 2017).

will focus on TK which was 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 has the strongest focus on building a platform that will support bringing together TK and science and through a co-production of knowledge approach. Throughout the development of the Coastal plan, important steps have included a meeting of TK holders in connection with a workshop to design the CBMP Coastal Plan (2016, and associated participation of TK holders in subsequent drafting meetings (Anchorage 2017, and Tromso, 2018).

This early engagement of TK in the design of the monitoring plan 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, mitigate and adapt to change. Research and products developed by Indigenous organizations and inclusive of TK were used to shape the coastal plan. Continued and consistent inclusion of TK holders in the process and national implementation plans will be important for moving these efforts forward.

The *CBMP Strategic Plan 2018-21* emphasises a need to find ways to secure resources to allow for effective and meaningful involvement of TK holders and inclusion of TK. One of its four goals is to ensure that the CBMP is relevant to Arctic States, Permanent Participants, the scientific community, Traditional and Local knowledge communities and other partners. In order to accomplish this goal *Objective 1.3: aims to include TLK in CBMP when possible* and defines a series of tasks to be undertaken:

- When developing CBMP products, gather information from diverse sources of knowledge and analyse them together with appropriate experts where possible;
- Build a platform to allow for a co-production of knowledge process between Indigenous peoples and scientists;
- Include TK and science in any revisions of Arctic Biodiversity Monitoring Plans;
- Seek participation from TK holders, and support their capacity to participate meaningfully; and
- Continue to highlight the relevance of TK in communication and outreach efforts.

Arctic Biodiversity Congress, 2018

The Arctic Biodiversity Congress 2018 provided an important space for all those who wished to make specific and significant contributions to the conservation of Arctic biodiversity through dialogue among scientists, Indigenous peoples, policy-makers, government officials, industry, academia, and civil society. This entailed inter-disciplinary discussion, action and status updates on implementation of ABA policy recommendations. Arctic Indigenous Peoples played a role in the organization of the Congress, participated in leading sessions and plenary talks. Throughout the congress TK holders engaged in dialogues and/or provided presentations. Support was provided to help ensure Indigenous Peoples were able to attend and participate in the Congress. Session reports from the Congress are now available³.

Inspiring Arctic Voices Through Youth

This initiative is focused on advancing youth involvement and leadership in public outreach and education about the Arctic. The objective is to create spaces or opportunities for dialogue amongst

³ www.arcticbiodiversity.is/congress

youth around the world to share their perspectives on Arctic biodiversity conservation. The first Arctic Youth Summit and Arctic Youth Exchanges were held where Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth were able to meet and explain the importance of their cultures to Arctic conservation. Resulting dialogue included discussions on TK⁴ and its role in understanding the Arctic. Among the outcomes of the Youth summit was a declaration which emphasized the importance of TK and a video co-produced with indigenous and non-indigenous youth.

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

This project led by Russia, AIA in cooperation with the Association of World Reindeer Herders 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.

Salmon Peoples of Arctic Rivers

The Salmon Peoples of Arctic Rivers initiative (SPAR) led by AAC, Saami Council, RAIPON and AIA. brings 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.

The first phase of SPAR is complete with a workshop held (September 2017) which gathered TK holders from across the Arctic who shared what they know of TK, what TK can tell them about the whole Arctic and salmon social-ecological systems. Participants expressed the need to build bridges between each other, between generations, between commercial and subsistence users—and with natural scientists, particularly the biologists that use the scientific method. Participants identified what it means to be "Salmon Peoples," and identified ecosystem and social-ecological system relationships that can be used to develop *Salmon Peoples of the Arctic Rivers* assessment.

Community Observation Network for Adaptation and Security (CONAS)

In addition to direct engagement of TK, there are community-driven initiatives such CONAS Led by AIA. 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.

Resilience & Management of Arctic Wetlands

One component of the Wetlands initiative will explore how TK and participatory processes are included in circumpolar wetlands conservation. The study will focus on how Indigenous engagement in data collection, planning, implementation, evaluation, and reporting contribute to wetlands conservation efforts. The information collected will be used to inform best practices for the inclusion of TK and participatory processes in Arctic wetland conservation; and provide recommendations for engaging Indigenous communities in ways that are inclusive of Indigenous perspectives, resource needs, and knowledge within wetlands conservation efforts.

⁴ The Youth declaration uses the term Indigenous Knowledge.

5. Moving forward

As CAFF 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 holders and using 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.