

## **PROMOTING TRADITIONAL WAYS OF LIFE**

### **Issue Overview**

Circumpolar Northerners have a proud history of self-reliance and self-sufficiency, sustained through generations of traditional economies and cultural practices. For many, living according to these traditional ways of life creates a sense of cultural identity, fosters a close connection to nature and provides Northerners with increased control over their own fate. Sustaining these traditional ways of life, through the transfer of these traditional practices, ensures that these values are sustained and important social and cultural links are maintained.

As a result of factors such as globalization and climate change, Northerners have experienced increased trade, greater migration and increased dissemination of knowledge, all with the potential to positively and negatively impact traditional ways of life. While the North has been undeniably impacted by globalization and modernization, it is important to also acknowledge that traditional ways of life can co-exist with the modern in ways that benefit the people of the circumpolar North. Arctic residents are finding innovative ways to help ensure that their traditional ways of life remain a sustainable choice. The positive impacts of these best practices are being realized in the circumpolar North and beyond.

### **Background and Context**

In a time of accelerated social, economic and cultural change, the people of the circumpolar North continue to demonstrate resilience and an ability to adapt. These efforts underscore the special relationship the Northerners have with the natural environment and the principal need to ensure that cultural skills, values, and spirituality are maintained. These northern traditional ways of life play a key role in the health and wellbeing of Northerners.

The initiative “Promoting Traditional Ways of Life” will highlight the importance of traditional ways of life through the promotion and sharing of best practices being incorporated in a modern context across the North.

### **Proposal**

It is proposed that this initiative create a compendium of best practices, highlighting unique, successful approaches taken by Arctic States, Permanent Participants, accredited Observers, northern communities and regions in promoting traditional ways of life.

Arctic Council members, accredited observers, and working groups and task forces would be asked to contribute best practices in order to create a (set of) plain-language, promotional publication(s) sharing successful best practices to promote traditional ways of life that have been implemented in the circumpolar North. Best practices may range from community-level to international in scope.

A communication and advocacy strategy for the compendium would also be developed, to be implemented after the completion of the compendium.

The Arctic Human Development Report<sup>1</sup> and Arctic Social Indicators Report<sup>2</sup> identify seven indicators of human development, three of which are considered unique in measuring wellbeing in the North – fate control, cultural identity and a close relationship with the natural world. The best practices highlighted by the “Promoting Traditional Ways of Life” project would promote and embrace sustainable, traditional ways of life and emphasize the importance of these indicators. The compendium would provide an overview of each best practice and how the approach or method has proven successful in more broadly promoting traditional ways of life.

The compendium would be written for a broad audience, including Arctic Council members and accredited observers, governments (national, sub-national, community and Indigenous), NGOs and academia. Audiences would be able to use the compendium as a tool for sharing knowledge, providing inspiration and promoting Northern traditional ways of life. This compendium can also be used as a tool by the Arctic Council and its members to promote traditional ways of life outside of the circumpolar North.

As suggested during the October 2013 meeting of Senior Arctic Officials in Whitehorse, the project leads would work with the Socio-Economic and Cultural Expert Group, via the Sustainable Development Working Group (SDWG), and the Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna Working Group (CAFF). Through its connections to traditional economies, the initiative may also share linkages with the Arctic Economic Council as the two initiatives move forward. It is important to note that there are linkages between this project and the work of the Traditional and Local Knowledge (TLK) initiative under the SDWG. This initiative will include references to TLK and how it can be used to promote traditional ways of life.

### **Advocacy and Communications**

A communications strategy would be developed alongside the compendium with the assistance of the Arctic Council Communications Contact group. There will be an emphasis on advocacy activities to promote the compendium and the identified best practices. The compendium will be most effective when shared and promoted across all levels of government and organizations, to help raise awareness and encourage dialogue between best-practice practitioners and those seeking to adopt or build upon highlighted best practices.

### **Themes**

The best practices will be grouped within the compendium by theme. Themes will include governance, traditional economies, arts and language, health and wellness, and the natural world. The proposed themes may evolve during the creation of the compendium, recognizing that some best practices may overlap or not fit within the current proposed themes.

### **Milestones**

- *March 2014:* Approval of proposal at Yellowknife SAO.
- *April 2014:* Call for submission to compendium.
- *June 2014:* Meeting on the margins of the Iqaluit SAO meeting in a one day working session to review the submissions to date, assess gaps and develop the table of contents.

---

<sup>1</sup> AHDR (Arctic Human Development Report) 2004. Akureyri: Stefansson Arctic Institute.

<sup>2</sup> Arctic Social Indicator Report, TemaNord 2010:519, Nordic Council of Ministers, Copenhagen 2010.

- *September 2014*: Draft compendium shared with working groups, task forces, states and PPs for comment and review. Finalized.
- *November 2014*: Design, translation and printing of compendium.
- *December 2014*: Communications strategy and launch of compendium.
- *January - May 2015*: Advocacy and implementation of communications strategy.

### **Lead**

It is proposed that the preparation of the best practices document be led by Canada (supported by the Government of the Northwest Territories), another Arctic State, and a PP (both to be determined). Participation of all other Arctic States, Permanent Participants and accredited Observers (as appropriate) would contribute through compendium submissions, communications input and advocacy planning.

### **Related Text from Kiruna Declaration**

**Stress** the importance of traditional lifestyles to the economic well-being, culture and health of circumpolar indigenous peoples, **recognize** that the Arctic Council can play a role in promoting traditional lifestyles, and **instruct** Senior Arctic Officials to develop ways and means for the Arctic Council to support and showcase to the international community the value of traditional lifestyles, and to **report** on those efforts at the next Ministerial meeting in 2015.