



International Network of Arctic Indigenous Community-Based Environmental Monitoring & Information Stations (AICEMI stations)

Proposed as a Part of Global Integrated Arctic Information and Research
System for the International Polar Year 2007-2008

Statement

Scientists and public organizations have recognized the need for comprehensive and methodical monitoring of the environmental, social, and economic changes and trends in the Arctic and acknowledged an indispensable role of the indigenous peoples in systematic collection and analysis of data.

The call for joint international monitoring efforts involving scientists, indigenous communities and general public resonates in major international research projects, such as the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment, UNFCCC, IPCC and others.

International Polar Year could become a catalyst of multilateral, socially and scientifically diverse collaboration on a creation of an integrated, all-inclusive monitoring system.

UNEP-GRID Polar program and the Aleut International Association propose a program to address the need for such monitoring. Potential partners are Permanent Participants of the Arctic Council, national and international agencies and organizations involved in the scientific research in the Arctic. The program will reflect on the latest results of the projects conducted by Permanent Participants and the Arctic Council, such as ACIA, AHDR, AMAP reports, Snowchange, and other international and regional projects.

Problem Statement

Indigenous communities throughout circumpolar regions have experienced substantial increase of interest in scientific research as a response to various environmental changes, development of new technologies, and the surge of interest to traditional ways of knowing. The results of this research are often used in policymaking that could affect every aspect of an indigenous community's life. That is why involvement of the indigenous communities in

Program objective is creation of an international circumpolar network of AICEMI stations that will generate and exchange research and monitoring data collected by indigenous experts and scientists.

UNEP GRID-Arendal mission: "...to provide environmental information, communications and capacity building services for information management and assessment" and building "...partnerships in caring for the environment by inspiring, informing and enabling nations and people to improve their quality of life without compromising that of future generations".

the process is extremely important. In addition, indigenous peoples and many scientists believe that academic science cannot reach full understanding of the environment or accomplish sustainable research activities without collaboration with indigenous experts whose knowledge and skills could add a new dimension and practical contributions. New research programs could also create economic opportunities. In connection with this, the following problems are identified:

1. Poor flow of research information and its relevance to indigenous communities;
2. Relevant accuracy of research is compromised if indigenous ways of knowing are not an integral part of the research;
3. Unique skills and knowledge of indigenous peoples are not utilized and communities are not afforded an opportunity for a value-added product of scientific research;
4. Indigenous communities and organizations do not have ownership in many research programs and therefore have little influence on what's being researched, for what purpose, and how results are used;
5. Indigenous communities miss on economic opportunities that exist in providing services for research;

The depth of the problems varies in different countries but they are present everywhere.

Hypothesis

This program intends to explore two research venues where indigenous communities have already made substantial contributions and have the most potential: monitoring and information exchange.

IPY offers a special opportunity in creating a political and financial climate favorable for international cooperation in the Arctic that may not repeat itself for decades. By addressing identified problems while responding to the IPY goals at the same time, it could be possible to build a monitoring and information exchange network.

Creation an international "umbrella" program under the possible leadership of UNEP would provide missing synergy and strategic planning for bringing together all players and scientific information that's available today and that will be needed in the future.

Aleut International Association mission:
Bringing new opportunities for environmental, social and economic improvements to the region through international programs on protection and sustainable use of the Bering Sea, improvement of health, social and economic conditions of communities in the region, rebuilding cultural connections between Russia's and American Aleuts, dissemination of information about the region, its challenges and successes in the international community, and advancing scientific knowledge through incorporation of indigenous philosophies and knowledge into modern (western) scientific research; and providing Aleut organizations with a voice in international policy making affecting wellbeing of Alaska and Russia's Aleut communities.

Program Goal

Increase capacity and effectiveness of the circumpolar monitoring through involvement of the indigenous peoples communities and utilization of traditional ecological knowledge aimed at

- 1.) Better understanding of the social, economic, and environmental impacts of climate change and human activities in the Arctic;
- 2.) Assessment of vulnerability and adaptation to changes;
- 3.) Facilitation of circumpolar information exchange among indigenous communities;
- 4.) Increase in indigenous peoples' organizations participation as stakeholders in international cooperation.

Program Highlights

- Local staff will provide on-going year-round monitoring capabilities
- Indigenous and local knowledge contributes to efficient research practices
- Procedure standards and criteria will comply with appropriate international requirements to ensure interchange of data
- The stations will hold permits and licenses required by laws to conduct research and monitoring activities in specific regions
- One-stop logistical and personnel support for visiting researchers
- Maintaining database or a search engine of international research activities in the circumpolar region
- Participation in international information exchange programs, e.g. Northern View, CEON, to provide local communities with access to products of modern technology in monitoring

Program Timeline

Program will consist of four phases. The concept is based on the development of a regional network, a pilot project, as an initial step and then using the model for circumpolar application. The Bering Sea region is proposed for the pilot project.

Phase 1 – Development of a communication network synthesizing current research and monitoring efforts by scientists and indigenous organizations in the Aleutian, Pribilof, Commander Islands and the Bering Strait regions (2004-2005)

Phase 2 – Assessment of particular monitoring needs and development of an AICEMI station model (2005)

Phase 3 – Creation of 3-4 AICEMI stations and integrating them into the circumpolar research network (2006)

Phase 4 – Creation of circumpolar network of AICEMI stations (2007)

The purpose of this paper is to solicit input from Senior Arctic Officials, Permanent Participants, and Observers of the Arctic Council. All interested parties are invited to participate in the developing of an organizational structure for the program planning committee.