
IPS Update



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No Flags on the Table: The Arctic Council Unplugged

The Arctic Council can be a formal place, at least at the meetings of Senior Arctic Officials. Each country has its national flag on the table. Positions are prepared before the meeting. There is little debate and much stating of position.

A recent conference hosted by the governments of the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, two observer countries at the Arctic Council, helped stir a more candid debate. It was called an opportunity to discuss the Council's achievements 12 years after the creation of its predecessor, the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy. Without their flags in front of them, participants spoke more freely in the informal setting.

The conference, which was attended by about 40 people, was meant to be "off the record" and statements cannot be quoted without permission (excerpts from a speech prepared by ICC International Chair Sheila Watt-Cloutier are quoted with permission in this issue of Update).

The main issue on the table at Wilton Park was a question: What is the Arctic Council doing to make a difference in peoples' lives?

The conference discussed subjects such as environmental threats, climate change, conservation and approaches to sustainable development. Throughout its four days, the role of indigenous peoples in addressing these issues was a constant theme.

As might be expected with such a broad agenda, there was a wide range of views on the successes and shortcomings of the Arctic Council. A few points stand out.

- The Arctic Council is an innovative project and came along at a time when there was a real need to move beyond the Cold War confrontation that had locked the Arctic into a wider ideological conflict. It broke ground when Indigenous Peoples' Organizations were accorded "Permanent Participant" status. It was stated repeatedly that this is a defining feature of the organization.

- Nevertheless, few people know that the council exists. A key task then is to make the work of the Arctic Council relevant to both indigenous and non-indigenous peoples in the circumpolar north. Several speakers commented on the need for the development of a communications strategy. Communications must be integrated into the planning and execution of projects and all Arctic Council activities.
- This led to questions about whether or not the council needs a permanent secretariat to carry out this kind of work. It's not a new topic and focuses on the need for predictable funding for the council.
- How to engage observer states – the UK, Netherlands, Germany, France and Poland – was also a theme. These countries all have an interest in the Arctic. What role should they play? Should there be a different status between states and other observers at the Arctic Council?

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In this issue

- | | |
|---|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2 | Building on Success – Ways Forward for the Arctic Council |
| 3 | Arctic Indigenous Peoples Share Experiences of Climate Change |
| 4 | Indigenous Observations of Ecological and Climate Change |
| 4 | The Long Road to Stockholm |
| 5 | Indigenous Peoples Urge Canada to Keep Contaminants Program |
| 6 | Schedule of Events |

- No matter where you go – from Alaska, through the western Canadian Arctic to Greenland and northern Scandinavia and across the vast expanse of Arctic Russia – the pace of industrial development is accelerating. Some participants said oil and gas development and mining are putting increasing pressure on ecosystems and potentially threaten the way of life of indigenous peoples. Others held that such development is inevitable and the issue is how to minimize its impacts on people and the environment.

What does the Arctic Council have to say about this pan-Arctic issue? According to many speakers, not much.

What should it say? Perhaps the way to answer this question is to take a step back and look at the Arctic in a longer time frame than the next couple of years, or the length of time that it will take to finish any one project, such as the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment or the Arctic Human Development Report.

We should begin from what we know. We know there is an development pressures are increasing, especially in the search for hydrocarbons. Given that this search is likely to continue, what are the long-term costs and benefits? What effect will this development have on the land rights of indigenous peoples? How do we ensure that development does not come at the expense of fragile Arctic ecosystems that have supported indigenous societies for millennia?

Perhaps another way to ask these questions is, “What do we want the Arctic to look like in 25 years?” Participants wondered whether the council, with all its successes, and given its diverse national viewpoints, will be able to grapple with the really serious questions around development. It remains to be seen what people will say once the flags go back on the table.

jpc



Building on Success – Ways Forward for the Arctic Council

This is an excerpt from a speech given by Inuit Circumpolar Conference chair, Sheila Watt-Cloutier, at an international conference on Arctic cooperation.

I am going to begin my formal remarks with two conclusions and one recommendation:

- The Arctic Council has been a modest success.
- The indigenous peoples’ organizations- the permanent participants – add significant value, purpose, edge, and northern reality to the council. We help to enrich it and add much of the dialogue, particularly at meetings of the senior Arctic officials. In short, the council needs us, just as much as we need the council.
- We should redouble our efforts to improve the council with the aim of doing three things: help northerners generally; bring circumpolar perspectives on global issues of importance to the Arctic to the attention of international agencies; and assist in the ongoing economic transition in northern Russia.

What are some of the key successes of the council?

Let us look at transboundary contaminants, an issue on which all acknowledge that the council has helped tremendously. The 2001 Stockholm global POPs convention singles out the Arctic, the only global convention to do so. Arctic states played a very significant role in persuading UNEP to sponsor negotiations.

Arctic Indigenous Peoples became well informed about the science of contaminants. We knew that transboundary contaminants in our food was a significant public health, environmental and cultural issue. We formed a coalition, initially among indigenous peoples in northern Canada, but later including RAIPON, to press for a comprehensive, verifiable and rigorously enforced convention. We helped to turn science generated by academics and governments, as assessed and reported by the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme, into international public policy.

Now let us look at last year’s World Summit on Sustainable Development. The declaration and global work program agreed to reference climate change in high latitudes and the existence of the council.

Arctic perspectives were raised repeatedly and firmly by Arctic states, non-governmental organizations and the permanent participants in the preparatory conferences. The best-attended side event at the summit itself was the climate change presentation organized by the government of Finland on behalf of the council, and the Northern Forum.

The commitment to address Arctic issues, to showcase Arctic perspectives globally, and to do so cooperatively is well illustrated by this event. This would not have been possible without the council.

My final example of a council success is climate change. I know this is rather premature – the assessment is still underway, and ministers will not see it until next year. Yet through the council we are moving vigorously to prepare the world's most comprehensive and detailed regional assessment of climate change, accompanied by policy and programme recommendations. Under Bob Corell's guidance, the assessment is incorporating our traditional knowledge and all permanent participants are contributing to the policy exercise. How the council responds to the assessment will be a huge test of its character, maturity and relevance.

I want to turn now to the future. How might we develop the partnership between Inuit and other northern indigenous peoples and Arctic states, and with the growing number of non-governmental organizations interested in Arctic issues?

- **Agenda:** It is vital to the long-term health of the council that its research and policy agenda be relevant to the people who live in the north. While we still have a long way to go, the agenda of the council is growing to include sustainability in its many manifestations.

In this regard, I must say something about harvesting, for this is a blind spot on the council. Inuit are a marine people. We hunt seals, walrus, whales, and we eat what we hunt. Yet the council is prohibited from even discussing marine mammal harvesting, management, and conservation issues because of the position of the United States. I hope we can pursue this in discussion, but let me state clearly that this prohibition acts against the long-term relevance of the council and does not help it to promote sustainable development.

- **Relations:** The council should move to deepen and broaden its external relations. The observer countries in particular should be invited more fully into the fold. Much of the science we use is generated by non-Arctic states.
- **Funding, capacity and communications:** All of the permanent participants operate in the council on a shoestring. Our capacity is thin, yet if the council wants to have an impact in the north it needs indigenous peoples' organizations to and regional governments to communicate what's going on, and to recommend priorities for the council. It really is important to find ways, means, and budgets to do this.

On the issue of funding permanent participants, it is important that all acknowledge the commitment and ongoing efforts of Denmark in funding IPS – a small body that is coming into its own and proving its worth.

- **Presence in Washington DC:** The United States has global responsibilities and the Arctic, perhaps not surprisingly, is low on the agenda. We need to develop a permanent presence in Washington in order to bring Arctic and indigenous perspectives to the attention of key agencies that have responsibilities in the United States and great influence around the world. The current work plan of IPS includes the goal of establishing a presence in Washington.

Arctic Indigenous Peoples Share Experiences of Climate Change

Representatives of several Arctic indigenous peoples gathered in Murmansk, Russia recently to share their stories about how climate change is changing their lives and environments. The indigenous peoples were attending a conference of the "Snowchange" project, coordinated Finland's Tampere Polytechnic University. The goals of the project are to collect and document climate change observations of northern indigenous peoples in ways that will enhance and support indigenous participation and work on climate change issues.

People attending the conference spoke of thinning sea ice, and of winter rains making thick barriers of ice between tundra plants and the animals that depend on them for grazing. "If something happens to reindeer and they disappear due to the changes in the environment, a significant part of the indigenous culture will disappear too", said Dmitri Khorolya, a reindeer herder from Russia's Yamal Okrug.

John Keogak from Sachs Harbour on one of Canada's Arctic islands spoke of the observations of the Inuvialuit in that region. Some species of animals, such as crows and frogs are increasing in number, while other animals are changing their travel and migration routes. Permafrost is seen to be melting, and local water levels are changing.

People spoke not only of the impacts of climate change on their lives, but also of their desire to be involved in documenting and addressing those impacts. That desire was expressed in a conference declaration, which is reproduced here.

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Some of the participants at the Snowchange Conference

Indigenous Observations of Ecological and Climate Change

Murmansk, Russia. 22-25 February 2003

As Arctic peoples have shown since time immemorial, life in the North requires flexibility. In the modern world, this principle applies not only to our physical and spiritual connections to the environment, but also to the legal, political, and economic circumstances that affect our lives. To maintain and improve our ability **to respond and adapt to climate change**, or any other environmental disturbances, we must preserve a healthy, resilient environment and create human institutions based on participation, and respect. This course means aiming not for maximum economic use of resources, but for investment in environmental reserves and cultural diversity.

The world is in an accelerating spiral of change and uncertainty.

We do not own the Earth, we just borrow it from future generations.

We, as participants at the Snowchange 2003, representing, a wide range of individuals and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), feel it is our responsibility to bring to the attention of world leaders that the unlimited misuse of natural resources must be contained within principles of sustainable development and a respect for human and indigenous rights.

On behalf of our people, our children and in respect of our ancestors, we call upon responsible nation states in general, and the Russian Federation in particular, as citizens of the global village and members of the United Nations who carry a responsibility to uphold international laws, ratified conventions and signed agreements, to immediately implement them.

We especially highlight the following actions:

- Ratification of the Kyoto Protocol by the Russian Federation to ensure its entry into force during 2003.
- The establishment of mechanisms for involving indigenous people when evaluating impacts related to transportation on the Arctic Seas, and extractive and industrial developments in the North.
 - Ratification of the International Labour Organisation Convention No. 169 concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries.
 - Securing rights and cultural interests of indigenous peoples in relationships to forestry, tourism and lichen industry.
 - The extension of an invitation to the UN Special Rapporteur of Indigenous Peoples issues, Mr. Rudolfo Stavenhagen, for an official visit concerning the Sami people on Kola Peninsula in Murmansk oblast.
 - The incorporation of traditional uses on the land by indigenous peoples, including the hunting and harvesting of culturally significant species, into environmental protection plans.

The Long Road to Stockholm

Northern Lights Against POPs: Combatting Toxic Threats in the Arctic

Edited by David Leonard Downie and Terry Fenge
McGill-Queen's University Press 2003
347 pp

The photograph doesn't show their exhaustion. It is early on a December morning in Johannesburg in 2000. The faces bear broad grins. The raised hands hold glasses of champagne. Negotiators have reached an agreement on the last contentious clauses in an agreement that would become the Stockholm POPs Convention, which bans 12 of the most toxic persistent organic pollutants.

POPs are extremely toxic, long-lasting chemicals that can travel long distances from where they are used and accumulate in the bodies of animals, ecosystems and people. They include pesticides like aldrin and DDT, industrial chemicals like PCBs, and byproducts of combustion like dioxins and furans. Over the last couple of decades, concern has increased over the long-term effects of these chemicals for the environment and human health. And they accumulate in Arctic food chains – and the bodies of indigenous peoples whose lives and cultures are intimately linked to the consumption of wild foods.

The Arctic Council's Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Program produced a key study in 1997 that demonstrated the how these chemicals get to the arctic and pointed to the alarming levels of contaminants being found in a region thousands of kilometres from where they were emitted.

Arctic Indigenous Peoples formed an effective coalition that helped drive an international negotiating process. Indigenous Peoples become not only the conscience of the process, but key players in making sure that an agreement was reached, and that it would be effective. *Northern Lights* documents the efforts that went into getting this agreement, which has now been ratified by 30 countries. Many of its authors played a role in the negotiations, or the research efforts that underpinned them.

Significantly, the book also documents how Arctic Indigenous Peoples "punch above their weight" on the international stage. Despite small numbers, vast distances and great differences in history and cultures, Indigenous Peoples have formed effective alliances through their status of Permanent Participants at the Arctic Council. This led to the development of other partnerships – with other Indigenous Peoples organizations, NGOs and states – that played a major role in the Stockholm POPs negotiations.

The alliances, lessons learned and outcomes of the fight against POPs have much to say about the role of indigenous peoples as they grapple with another threat to cultural survival – climate change. *Northern Lights* tells an important

story about how peoples can work together for change. It demonstrates that co-operation and seeking common cause can lead to results. It is an important message, not just on environmental issues, but in the area of international relations in general.

Sheila Watt-Cloutier is the International Chair of the Inuit Circumpolar Conference. As president of ICC Canada, she worked with leaders from other indigenous peoples' organizations, including the Arctic Athabaskan Council and the Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North. In *Northern Lights* she writes:

Though small in numbers, we became equal partners in a world of millions and helped to re-awaken a conscience. Though small in numbers and up against vested interests seeking the status quo, we were neither intimidated nor afraid in our attempt to save our cultural way of life, for the power itself was in the attempt. I have been changed forever just by the energy of that attempt.

jpc

IPS Update

The Arctic Council Indigenous Peoples' Secretariat (IPS) was established in 1994. The main task of IPS is to facilitate the involvement of Arctic Indigenous Peoples' organisations - the Permanent Participants - in the Arctic Council, particularly with regard to sustainable development, the environment and traditional knowledge.

The Indigenous Peoples' organisations approved as Permanent Participants in the Arctic Council are:

- Aleut International Association (AIA)
- Arctic Athabaskan Council (AAC)
- Inuit Circumpolar Conference (ICC)
- Gwich'in Council International (GCI)
- Russian Association of the Indigenous Peoples of the North (RAIPON)
- Saami Council (SC)

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Indigenous Peoples Urge Canada to Keep Contaminants Program

The Northern Contaminants Program in Canada has worked for the past twelve years to help keep Canadian indigenous peoples informed about toxic threats to their environment and their food. The government program has worked in partnership with indigenous peoples, providing information important to Canada, but also important internationally.

A lot of information about the amounts of toxins in the Arctic, how they got there, and what effect they are having on people was shared with other countries, through the Arctic Council's Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Program (AMAP). This in turn helped lead to an international treaty to work on ultimately eliminating some of the worst chemicals.

Now the Northern Contaminants Program is in danger of being allowed to lapse. Canada's government says it is looking for money to help keep the program alive, but has not said how much it has found.

The news that there was no official renewal of the program came as a shock to many of the people who gathered in Ottawa recently at a meeting to examine the program's results.

The importance of the program to informing indigenous peoples of the health of their traditional foods was emphasised by Bill Erasmus, Grand Chief of the Dene Nation in Canada's Northwest Territories, part of the Arctic Athabaskan Council. "We know eating our food is part of us, unless we eat our own foods, we are not Dene." Erasmus says the program helped Dene to communicate and talk with other indigenous peoples at an international level, so that they could collectively tell the world about threats to indigenous peoples' cultures and health.

Grand Chief Ed Schultz, speaking for the Council of Yukon First Nations, also a part of the Arctic Athabaskan Council, spoke of the fear in some Yukon communities before the Northern Contaminants Program began. Schultz says "The media was sensationalizing everything," and people were scared to eat their traditional foods. He says the program calmed those fears, but if it does not continue, then maybe the fears will return.

Other indigenous representatives also urged the Canadian government to put money back into the northern contaminants program. They noted that the signing of international agreements does not mean that the job of protecting the health of Arctic peoples is done. New substances are being identified as threats. Without a northern contaminants program, Canada may not have the capacity to monitor those substances, to document their effects, and to help indigenous peoples understand how best to cope with them.

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SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

- April**
22 - 25 **Northern Forum 6th General Assembly, St. Peterburg, Russia**
- May**
12 - 14 **17th AMAP Working Group Meeting, Boulder, USA**
 Contact: AMAP Secretariat
 Strømsveien 96
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 Tel./Fax; +47 23 24 16 35 / +47 22 67 67 06
 Email: inger.utne@amap.no Web-site: http://www.joss.ucar.edu/joss_psg/meetings/amap/
- 19 - 23** **5th International Congress of Arctic Social Sciences (ICASS V), Fairbanks, AK**
 Contact: IASSA secretariat
 PO Box 757730
 University of Alaska Fairbanks
 Fairbanks, AK 99775-7730 USA
 Tel / Fax: 907 474-6367 / +1 907 474 6370
 E-mail: fyiassa@uaf.edu Web-site: <http://www.uaf.edu/anthro/iassa>
- June**
2 - 6 **EPPR Meeting, Murmansk, Russia**
- 6 - 7** **9th International Conference on Minority Languages, Kiruna, Sweden**
 Contact: IX ICML (Birger Winsa), Department of Finnish
 University of Stockholm
 S-106 91 Stockholm, Sweden
 Tel. / Fax: +46 8 162 359 / +46 8 158 871
 E-mail: birger.winsa@finska.su.se Web-site: <http://www.finska.su.se/konf03.html>
- September**
8 - 17 **5th World Parks Congress – Benefits beyond Boundaries, Durban, South Africa**
 Contact: Peter Shadie, Executive Officer
 Rue Mauverney 28
 1196 GLAND
 Switzerland
 Tel. / Fax: +41 22 999 0159 / +41 22 999 0025
 E-mail: pds@iucn.org Web-site: <http://iucn.org/themes/wcpa/wpc2003/index.htm>
- 11 - 14** **12th International Congress on Circumpolar Health “Nuna Med 2003”, Nuuk, Greenland**
 Contact: ICCH12, Postbox 1001
 3900 Nuuk
 Greenland
 Deadline: May 1, 2003
 Tel./Fax: +299 34 44 06 / +299 34 44 25
 E-mail: nunamed@gh.gl Web-site: <http://www.icch12.org>
- 29/9 – 3/10** **World Conference on Climate Change, Moscow, Russia**
- October**
19 - 22 **PAME Workshop, Svartsengi, Iceland**
- 20 - 21** **Information and Communication Technology in the Arctic, Akureyri, Iceland**
- 23 - 24** **SAO Meeting, Svartsengi, Iceland**