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# IPS Update

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## Let the [policy] debate begin

*“Our argument is we should tell them in a way that’s clear, objective, factual and then let the policy debate occur.”*

*Bob Corell, ACIA Chair  
On Thinning Ice Conference,  
Ottawa, Canada, January 2002*

The evidence from the traditional knowledge and scientific studies contained in the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment (ACIA) is clearly important. It is important for people from across the Arctic and from outside the Arctic to understand exactly what is happening to our climate, and what effects the changes are having on Arctic peoples and the Arctic environment. This evidence, gathered together and reviewed by experts, makes a strong foundation for the second part of the assessment, the policy recommendations that will suggest actions to be taken by Arctic governments and Arctic residents.

The Permanent Participants and the Arctic nations have taken this part of the job very seriously. Some of our best thinkers have been given the job of coming up with recommendations on what should be done about climate change, now that we have a deeper understanding of it.

But although we have put some of our best on to the job, the debate does not end there, between the people who framed the recommendations and the Arctic governments. There are many people, hunters, leaders, herders, scientists, who have ideas, thoughts, and experiences to contribute to the debate on what to do about climate change. For these people to be engaged, we need to make the recommendations public, and to do so as forcefully as we can.

The policy recommendations in the ACIA should not be debated quietly in back rooms, nor should they gather dust on the shelves of a select few people. These policy recommendations should be shouted from the mountains, called across the lakes, yelled over tundra and taiga, to reach everybody and to stir them to thought and action.

The secretariat preparing the report is already giving thought to how it will communicate the results of the assessment, and the policy options. Those efforts will not be successful unless they are given the full and complete backing of the governments of the Arctic states, which have the power and resources to ensure that the communications efforts succeed. This is why I am calling on those governments to not only make sure that policy recommendations are made public, but also that they are effectively publicised, so that each Arctic state can engage its own citizens in this crucial debate.

This is not a minor government policy we are discussing here; this is something that will have a profound effect of the life of every man, woman and child in the Arctic. Each of those men, women, and children, should have their chance to hear what is proposed on their behalf and to tell their political leaders what they think of the proposed policy options.

*Stephen Mills  
Gwich'in Council International*

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## The State of Arctic Climate Change

In this issue of IPS Update, please forgive us for telling you what you already know: that the Arctic Climate is changing. If you are an indigenous person living in the Arctic, you will have experienced the changes already. You may have seen a later freeze-up this past winter, or have noticed that the ice on the river or ocean is thinner. There may have been more forest fires or floods than usual. You may have seen a new insect in your area, or noticed changes in the behaviour or migrations of fish, birds, or reindeer/caribou.

We hope to add to your local knowledge by describing some of the larger ways in which the Arctic climate is changing, as described by scientists. We will also talk about how Indigenous Peoples are responding to this change, and include some views on how Arctic states might respond.

This first article will include some of the scientific evidence of what's happening around the Arctic. A good place to start looking for that evidence is in the many climate studies collected by the United Nations. The UN sponsored a process called the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). In one of its reports, the panel writes:

“Polar regions are expected to experience amongst the largest, most rapid climate changes of any region on earth, and will cause major physical ecological, sociological and economic impacts. Changes in climate that have already taken place are manifest in changes in sea ice, permafrost, coastal erosion, glaciers, and biological ecosystems.”

That means the Arctic homelands of Indigenous Peoples are considered to be the areas that will feel the effects of climate change before some other parts of the world. It also means that those changes are expected to be greater than in other parts of the world. The IPCC says the earth's temperature may increase by almost six degrees Celsius over the next 100 years or so.

The IPCC gives several examples of the changes it sees in the Arctic. Those were collected together with some information from the Arctic Council's Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Program and other recent studies, to form the starting point of the Arctic Council's Arctic Climate Impact Assessment.

The following information is from the website of the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment:

- Most inland Arctic areas have warmed in winter by 2 degrees Celsius per decade during the last 30 years, while more coastal regions have shown less severe warming and some records, particularly in the

Greenland/Davis Strait area, have even shown cooling (Chapman and Walsh 1993).

- Ozone depletion in northern latitudes and the resultant changes in UV radiation have increased markedly during the past decade, with some sectors of the Arctic experiencing temporarily up to about 20% reductions in ozone and more than a 40% increase in UV radiation (Taalas et al. 1996, 1997).
- Ongoing studies indicate that the current UV levels can have a significant effect on fish larvae survival rates.
- Precipitation has increased in some areas at high latitudes by up to 15% over the last 100 years. Most of this increase has occurred during winters within the last 40 years (Bradley et al. 1987, Groisman 1991, Karl et al. 1993, Groisman and Easterling 1994, Dahlström 1994, Hanssen- Bauer and Førland 1994).
- Indigenous peoples in northern Alaskan villages have reported thawing of previously frozen ground. These observations are confirmed by numerous measurements in Alaska and other parts of the Arctic (Osterkamp and Romanovsky 1996).
- General warming of soils in regions with permafrost, derived primarily from Alaskan data, has been observed over recent years, as summarized in Serreze et al., (in press).
- Variations in the geographic ranges of animals have been observed by Indigenous peoples communities in the last several decades. These animals include beaver and moose.
- There has been increased coastal erosion in the Bering Sea from storm surges resulting from reduced sea ice (Weller 1998).
- Sea ice extent in the Arctic has decreased Arctic-wide by 0.35% per year since 1979. During summer of 1998, record reduction of sea ice coverage was observed in the Beaufort and Chukchi seas (Johannssen et al., 1999; Maslanik et al., 1999; Vinnikov et al., 1999).
- Sea ice thickness has also been reduced by between 1-2 meters in most parts of the Arctic Ocean and the sub-Arctic seas (Rothrock et al., 1999).

*(The names and dates refer to the main authors of the studies, and when the studies were published. The phrase, "et al." means "and others".)*

As can be seen from these facts, some impacts of Arctic climate change are yet to be felt. Shrinking amounts of ice may have devastating effects on animals such as some seals that rely on ice cover to rest and rear their young. The changes in water temperature may move fish away from their traditional areas. Melting permafrost can cause difficulties for roads, buildings and pipelines that relied on the permafrost staying frozen, and riverbanks and shorelines may slip into the water.

The Arctic Climate Impact Assessment is trying to help answer peoples' questions about what impacts are being felt now, what impacts will likely be felt in the future, and

what can be done to try to avoid the worst impacts of climate change.

The Assessment, which includes both traditional and scientific knowledge, is expected to be released publicly in September 2004. At more than 1000 pages, it will be the most comprehensive regional climate study yet undertaken. The ACIA will be published with a shorter Overview or summary document that will explain the findings in plain language with plenty of maps and illustrations.

But the assessment is only part of the story – what is done with its findings and how people respond to them will be of crucial importance. That's why the Arctic Council has decided to produce a separate document with recommendations to local, national and international decision-makers. It will be released at the same time as the assessment and summary documents. Its recommendations will focus on ways that people and governments can respond and what can be done to reduce climate change impacts in the future.

When the ACIA and the recommendations based on it are released next year, the real work will begin. Indigenous Peoples will play a key role in the discussions and debates that will occur. Once again, they will present the human face of environmental problems in the Arctic (a point made by Sheila Watt-Cloutier in this edition of IPS Update).

The Arctic Council will also have a major opportunity to build on the work being done to raise the profile of Arctic issues in the global context. One of the key messages in the ACIA will be that Arctic processes have global implications. This is a message that the Arctic Council member countries, observers and Indigenous Peoples can work together to transmit to the world. This public discussion of recommendations, responses and options will take the partnerships that have been forged at the council to a new level

"Some of our communities are eroding into the oceans in front of our eyes because of the decrease in the multi-layered ice, which is allowing for larger storms to roll in."

*Duane Smith, President, ICC (Canada)  
Source: Reuters, Oct. 14, 2002*

## Dene Perceptions of Climate Change

*All the problems are man-made. We have to make a lot of noise to be heard. There's some places down south you can't even go fishing but we can still go fishing up here. All the stuff going into the water from down south is coming up here. We need to put the fire out at the source. We can't forget our traditional knowledge and to use our Elders. I want our children a hundred years from now to say 'My god, they did a good job!'* (Leo Norwegian, Liidlii Kue, Denendeh, March 13, 2003)

Dene knowledge speaks to the past, explains the now, as well as what may occur in the future. This knowledge is different from what scientists know about climate change. Each form of knowledge can be gathered together, not necessarily to change what each knows, but they can come together to allow each to appreciate and increase what can be known about climate change.

The Dene have always observed climate and have stories that speak about the way the climate is supposed to be. In addition to traditional knowledge, a great deal of what has entered into Dene thinking has come from international and scientific discussions of greenhouse gas emissions and global warming.

Dene are experiencing climate change as local changes to the land. Policies and programs set up to deal with climate change do not seem to be affecting or responding to the changes experienced by Dene.

In 2001, the Dene Nation formed the Denendeh Environmental Working Group (DEWG) in an effort to bring Dene views and voices into climate change discussions in the north, in Canada, and into international discussions such as the Snowchange Conference and the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment.

Why are Dene observations and knowledge being documented now? In part, the development of government policy and programs has had a significant influence on Dene understanding of climate change. Governments are developing various programs independent of the north, which influences how climate change is being shaped for northerners. International assessments and policy are not focused on any specific or local reality of climate change, but rather on how the north is being affected by global processes. Northern Indigenous Peoples' organizations approach climate change differently, to each the impacts at the local and regional levels are as important as what is going on internationally.

The importance of hearing from Indigenous Peoples is recognised by the Arctic Council, and attempts are being made by each of the Permanent Participants to bring circumpolar views together into the Arctic Climate Impact

Assessment. Two challenges to the success of this integration persist: lack of resources for the Permanent Participants to effectively gather, document and link traditional and local knowledge to the assessment; and the heavy influence of scientists, who may rightly or wrongly conclude that traditional knowledge is without scientific value.

For Dene and others, the most efficient way of contributing to a better understanding of climate change is to share some of what they gather during workshops. For example, Arctic Athabaskan Council is bringing forward Athabaskan views from Alaska, Denendeh and Yukon to the ACIA. As we begin our review of the draft chapters of the ACIA we have many questions. Foremost among these will be to consider how representative the assessment is about climate change for the circumpolar north; as well as how relevant it will be of each of our nations.

*C.D. James Paci, Dene Nation/AAC*

### What is the Dene Nation

Dene Nation is a non-profit Aboriginal "governmental" organization mandated to retain sovereignty by strengthening Dene spiritual beliefs and cultural values in Denendeh, which encompasses five culturally and geographically distinct areas in northern Canada, six language groups, and is home to over 25,000 Dene in 29 communities. As indigenous peoples Dene cultures, languages, and title come from time immemorial.

In the international arena the Dene use the Arctic Athabaskan Council, a Permanent Participant to the Arctic Council, and the Assembly of First Nations. These institutional linkages enable Dene to tackle difficult science and policy issues of climate change by maintaining activities at the local to international level. The Dene National Office is able to speak as the voice of Dene because of the knowledge and participation of the member regions, and the expertise of the staff who work in-depth on matters affecting Dene.

More info:

<http://www.denenation.com/>

## The view from Alaska

Traditional knowledge is meant to be an integral part of the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment. The Indigenous organizations at the Arctic Council are helping to draft the policy options, and have also nominated people to help ensure that indigenous knowledge informs all parts of the assessment.

Alex Whiting is Environmental Specialist for the Native Village of Kotzebue and co-author of the Indigenous Perspectives chapter of the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment, uses the Tribes Environmental Change Project as a case study of the chapter.

He spoke with Update editor, Clive Tesar.

### What was the purpose of the environmental change project?

The purpose of the project was to talk to people and document environmental changes they had noticed over their lifetime in northern Kotzebue Sound (northwest Alaska) from the last half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The elements included for discussion were all inclusive, basically everything, whether it was the colour of the sky, precipitation, changes to populations of animals and fish, erosion. Basically everything under the sun, including the sun, was open for discussion.

### Who did you ask about these changes?

Older people generally, at least in their 50's, to have been alive during the period we were talking about. The average age of our respondents was about 60. Some of them may have been a little bit on the young side, but they still either had a lot of first-hand knowledge, or stories that their parents had told them, or things they had learned even as a small child. There was definitely a consensus that things had changed and that changes were occurring at an accelerated pace, especially since the 1970's onward.

### Where were they from?

They were all Qikiktagrukmiut from Kotzebue, our native village.

### From your perspective, as somebody who's been involved in working in the process, what place does this traditional knowledge have in the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment?

I think it gives it needed perspective. Since the Arctic seems to be the most dramatically affected of the environments through climate change, there's a lot of lessons to be learned for the rest of the world outside the Arctic, from seeing how changes are occurring in the Arctic.

**What lessons would other people learn from what the Indigenous Peoples of your area had to say?**

How change is more than theoretical, I suppose, how it's more than scientists printing out data sheets, how it actually affects the way societies go about doing what they do.

**Do you think there are things that Indigenous Peoples have noticed that might escape the attentions of science?**

I'm sure that there are – that's another valuable contribution of indigenous perspectives, the fact they can at times point out subject matter or elements that have escaped scientific notice. Things we haven't thought about before until we start to talk to people. For instance it has been noted that the most radical changes to the northward migration of willows and trees corresponds with the increase in the use of aircraft, whether there is a direct correlation could be a potential area for further research, but this has been brought up by some of our people.

**What are the most significant things that emerged from your study?**

The fact that the climate is changing. All of our people understand that things change, nothing remains the same, but the process and the time period of change is different and the year-to-year changes have increased. In the past, things were a little more consistent; now the changes are more radical, more extreme, whether it's temperature, or the timing of freeze-up or break-up. Almost every part of the environment that we look at seems to be changing a little more rapidly and a little more extreme from what people remember in the 1950's or 1960's.

**Do people separate out climate change from other forms of change they're experiencing, such as technological change, or increases in pollution, or population pressures?**

It depends on the particular element, there is some linkage for instance between modern day jet transportation and changes to the clouds and precipitation, a couple of people made connections between jet exhaust and changes in the clouds and atmosphere and of course the earlier reference made to the northward migration of willows and trees. Also, there are connections made between the use of motorboats and the change in distribution of belugas in Kotzebue Sound, as a couple of examples.

**How do the people you talked to feel about climate change?**

I think it adds to security issues, food security, and cultural security. It makes people a little more insecure, especially when it is added to things like pollutants and cultural assimilation, it's one more thing to be concerned about. I mean if you accept some scientific models predicting radical shrinking of the ice coverage in the Arctic this

could have great implications for the continuation of core activities, like harvesting seals and walrus.

**In your experience is climate change something that people talk about a lot, is it a top-of-mind issue?**

I would say it's something they talk about a lot, not in the sense of global change, but in terms of their daily life, people talk about the weather and water bodies every day. People understand that changes are a lot more radical now, and predicting weather or freeze-up is almost impossible now, people have begun to not even try to predict some of those things that they would do normally in the past, it's a lot harder now to do those things using the past for a reference. So people talk about it every day, but in a local sense, not a global sense.

**How do people feel about their ability to affect climate change?**

I don't think they feel like they have any control over it. I would say most people don't think that anyone really has the power to change those large-scale things like the atmosphere. They just feel like they have to accept whatever occurs. Change is happening, people are more or less powerless to affect that change, and that leads to their sense of insecurity. At the same time our people will continue to carry out their traditional activities to the greatest extent possible and will adapt to whatever the future brings, there really is no other choice but to do so.

*Clive Tesar*

"The bottom line is that the rain will penetrate farther into the interiors of the continents, where most of the reindeer are. This is a consequence of climate change that specifically affects native peoples. They have depended on reindeer and caribou for thousands of years, but they don't have the means or the ability to deal with these effects."

*Jaakko Putkonen, University of Washington  
Source: Environmental News Service, Dec. 22, 2002*

"I went to school on the mainland, and when I came back, my house was gone. They moved it to the other side of the village, or it would've fallen in."

*Leona Goodhope, Shishmaref, Alaska  
Source: The Independent (UK) Sept 20, 2002*

## Adapt or Mitigate? Indigenous Responses to Climate Change

For people living in the Arctic, there is no question that some adaptations will have to be made to live with climate change. People are already changing their lives to deal with the new realities of weather patterns that are different from what they are used to.

Adaptation is not the only possible response to change, however. It is also possible to try to affect the change. To slow down, and to attempt to stop the most drastic change is another option. This option, also called mitigation, would require international co-operation to reduce the “green-house” gases linked to climate change.

The balance between these approaches is of great interest to Arctic Indigenous Peoples. It was the subject of a recent speech by Sheila Watt-Cloutier, Chair of the Inuit Circumpolar Conference. What follows is part of that speech, delivered to participants at an informal meeting to discuss the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment in Svalbard, Norway, in August 2003.

“Indigenous peoples must learn to adapt to climate change—it is happening now and the ACIA tells us it is going to get worse. The magnitude of projected change to the Arctic climate is dramatic and daunting, and so is our adaptation task. To adapt successfully we are going to need enlightened policies and programmes by national governments, firm commitments to work closely with us, and a willingness to provide indigenous peoples and all northerners with decision-making tools, that is, authority to make decisions.

Let me elaborate on this for moment. If Arctic Indigenous Peoples are to adapt to climate change we must do so on our own terms. We must make the decisions and we must understand the consequences of our actions. Without these ingredients adaptation may be a very slippery slope to assimilation.

Plans are already in place to relocate some coastal communities in northern Québec [the east coast of Canada] to protect people from coastal erosion. This is pretty drastic, but I have heard some people in southern Canada say that Inuit may have to move from their homelands if that is what’s needed to adapt to climate change. Let me be very clear about this: I can not envisage any scenario that will persuade Inuit to do this. I think all northern Indigenous Peoples would say the same.

Some of you may be uncomfortable with this analysis, but please understand the extraordinary pressure, intended and unintended, on Indigenous Peoples to become like everyone else. We are looking for policy options that expand, not narrow our life choices. So, adaptation to climate change must be only part of the solution.

The most effective long-term solution to climate change in the Arctic and globally is to reduce the emissions of greenhouse gases worldwide. The ACIA will show the eight Arctic nations the costs in the North of inaction. The policy document will recommend what they should do to forestall climate change projections.

Our first task is to signal to the global community the need to respond to the Arctic dimension of climate change—to use the ACIA to press energetically for ambitious use of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. Together we can use the ACIA to encourage the developing as well as the developed world to embrace significant reductions in the emission of greenhouse gases. The ACIA should inform preparations for global negotiations in the post-Kyoto commitment period.

This is the balance we are looking for — Indigenous Peoples adapt to climate change at the same time that Arctic states use the ACIA to press for national and international action to reduce emission of greenhouse gases in accord with long-term emission reduction targets. Of course, we must work together on these two tasks--learning from our positive experience in translating the Arctic Council's assessment work on contaminants into the Stockholm POPs Convention.”

“Our community has seen real dramatic effects as a result of the warming that is occurring in the Arctic Ocean and the Arctic environment. In the springtime we are seeing the ice disappearing faster, which reduces our hunting time for walrus, seals, and whales. The ice freezes later. Ice is a supporter of life. It brings the sea animals from the north into our area and in the fall it also becomes an extension of our land. When it freezes along the shore, we go out on the ice to fish, to hunt marine mammals, and to travel. Ice is a very important element in our lives. We see ice in different ways. When the quality of ice, in other words, its hardness, its durability, and our ability to walk on it, hunt on it, changes, then it affects our lives. And it affects the animals too. They depend on the ice for breeding, for pupping, denning, lying, and having their young. They moult on it, they migrate on it. And so ice is a very important element to us. When it starts disintegrating and disappearing faster, it affects our lives dramatically.”

*Caleb Pungowiyi, Nome, Alaska  
Source: Native Americas Journal, Feb. 5, 2000*

## Anna Lindh - in Memoriam

“A rights-based approach to development puts the poor and the marginalised at the centre of attention. It emphasises the equal value and rights of each individual. It empowers women, minorities and indigenous peoples, and promotes participation in development.”

*Anna Lindh, Speech to UN Commission on Human Rights – March 2003*

Arctic Indigenous Peoples lost a friend and advocate with the recent death of Swedish Foreign Minister, Anna Lindh. Ms. Lindh died on September 11<sup>th</sup> after being stabbed the day before.

As Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ms. Lindh was one of the forces behind the adoption and development of the European Union's 'Northern Dimension' that has put more EU resources into Arctic issues. She was also a passionate promoter of human rights, including the rights of Indigenous Peoples. As a former Environment Minister, Ms. Lindh also understood the importance of environmental threats to the Arctic, including toxic pollutants and climate change.

We send our condolences to Ms. Lindh's family, and to her country.



### 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)

### IPS Staff

John Crump, Executive Secretary (jpc)  
Alona Yefimenko, Technical Advisor (ay)  
Gunn-Britt Retter, Technical Advisor (gbr)  
Laila Chemnitz, Administrative Secretary (lch)

### IPS Update Editor

Clive Tesar (ct)

### IPS

#### NB New address:

Strandgade 91, 4. DK-1016 Copenhagen K

Telephone: +45 3283 3790

Facsimile: +45 3283 3791

E-mail: [ips@ghsdk.dk](mailto:ips@ghsdk.dk)

Web-site: <http://www.arcticpeoples.org>

## SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

### October

- 19 -22 PAME Workshop, Svartsengi, Iceland**  
Contact: PAME Secretariat  
Hafnarstraeti 97  
600 Akureyri  
Iceland  
Tel. / Fax: +354 461 1355 / +354 462 3390  
E-mail: [pame@pame.is](mailto:pame@pame.is) Web-site: <http://www.pame.is>
- 20 - 21 Information and Communication Technology in the Arctic**  
Akureyri, Iceland
- 22 SDWG Meeting**  
Svartsengi, Iceland
- 23 - 24 SAO Meeting,**  
Svartsengi, Iceland  
Web-site: <http://www.arctic-council.org/index.html>

### November

- 7 -9 Havighurst Center for Soviet & Post-Soviet Studies Annual International Young Researchers Conference: Russia in Global Context: Peoples, Environments, Policies**  
Organizer: Susan A. Crate, PhD  
Miami University, Oxford, OH  
E-mail: [havighurstcenter@muohio.edu](mailto:havighurstcenter@muohio.edu)  
Web-site: <http://casnov1.cas.muohio.edu/havighurstcenter/>
- 7 - 10 The 8th Circumpolar Universities Cooperation Conference**  
Whitehorse, Yukon  
Web-site: <http://www.yukoncollege.yk.ca>
- 10 - 13 University of the Arctic Council Meeting**  
Whitehorse YK, Canada  
Web-site: <http://www.uarctic.org>
- 11 - 14 ACSYS Final Science Conference, St. Petersburg, Russia**  
Contact: Norwegian Polar Institute  
N-9295 Tromsø  
Norway  
Tel./Fax: +47 77 75 05 00 / +47 77 75 05 01  
E-mail: [acsys@npolar.no](mailto:acsys@npolar.no) Web-site:  
<http://acsys.npolar.no/meeting/final/conf.htm>
- 18 - 20 CAFF Management Board Meeting**  
Homer, Alaska  
Web-site: <http://www.caff.is>