



## Application of Indigenous Knowledge in the Arctic Council

There is an increasing need to better understand changes occurring within the Arctic and a growing appreciation of how Indigenous Knowledge (IK) may illuminate understanding of these changes. This knowledge source will add to the quality of research/reports being conducted/created under the auspice of the Arctic council (AC), when utilized effectively.

Various challenges are faced on how to include IK in a meaningful way within the AC working groups. One such challenge is confusion of how to define and utilize IK, and how to employ both IK and science together. This paper will attempt to articulate and address these concerns, while outlining a process to ensure the application of IK within AC work.

**Definition:** With an understanding that there is a need to utilize both sources of knowledge, IK and science in Arctic research, to better inform decision-making, it is important to first come to a consensus on what IK is. To this extent, Inuit Circumpolar Council offers the following definition:

Indigenous knowledge is a systematic way of thinking applied to phenomena across biological, physical, cultural and spiritual systems. It includes insights based on evidence acquired through direct and long-term experiences and extensive and multigenerational observations, lessons and skills. It has developed 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.

Under this definition, IK goes beyond observations and ecological knowledge, offering a unique ‘way of knowing’ to identify and apply to research needs which will ultimately inform decision makers.

**Fundamental Concepts:** The following concepts are offered to allow for meaningful use of IK and science together. These concepts may be built upon as needed. It is suggested that Arctic Council working groups develop a mechanisms within their processes, which allow for these concepts to be incorporated. The development of a IK expert group may aid in this process.

1. Research needs and objectives to be identified by both Permanent Participants (PPs) and Arctic States. Under such an approach both will benefit equally from the project, respecting that each group may have differing views on value of outputs.
2. Project funding utilized to gather data from both sources of knowledge and to employ IK holders and scientific experts.
3. PPs provide evaluation of which projects or work themes include the need to utilize IK and to which extent.



4. Culturally appropriate methodologies are utilized to gain information from IK holders such as, semi-directive interviews, three-dimensional modeling through the creation of maps, etc.
5. Employment of a participatory approach, where appropriate. A participatory approach ensures that information is gathered from both sources of knowledge and the analysis of this information is done with both sources of knowledge, or ways of thinking. Under such an approach, a fish ecologist and IK holder with expertise in fish will work together from conception to analysis.
6. IK methodologies and final products are peer reviewed and validated by IK holders. With a clear understanding that IK holds its own methodologies and objectives one can begin to appreciate the importance in not attempting to translate one source of knowledge into the other. Scientific information is analyzed with a perspective uniquely trained to scientists. The same is true of IK. While the two sources of knowledge may complement each other in many cases, they are not the same and should be appreciated for what each is able to bring to the table.
7. Knowledge is exchanged mutually between scientists and IK holders in plain language (using translation where appropriate/required) with regards to the scientific aspect of the project.