



January 20, 2014

*UPDATE REPORT ON: “How to Assess Food Security from an Inuit Perspective: Building a Conceptual Framework on How to Assess Food Security in the Alaskan Arctic.”*

The project has been moving along quickly with fourteen villages visited and two more to be visited in early 2014. Since our last update, our focus has been on fundraising to hold regional food security evaluation workshops, and on the analysis of information gathered through expert interviews.

*As a reminder, the Objectives and Outcomes of this Indigenous led project are:* Through community meetings, semi-directive interviews, and workshops we are gathering information from traditional knowledge holders to identify the baselines needed to assess the vulnerabilities of food security. The established baselines will identify what Inuit priorities are in assessing food (in)/security and where vulnerabilities lie. For example, baselines may include the need to have full understanding of ice coverage to understand food web dynamics; an increased utilization of traditional knowledge applied to under ice currents to gain a better understanding of salmon distribution; or for an increase effort to be applied to establishing food web models that move beyond one-dimensional energy transfers, incorporating abiotic vulnerabilities and/or the human dimension. The project will contribute to our understanding of the pressures to traditional food resources and communities that are resulting from climate changes and increased human presence and development in the Arctic.

Three objectives will be met within this project: 1) provide an understanding of Arctic food in/security, from an Inuit perspective; 2) identification of drivers of food in/security; 3) identify what will need to be monitored in order to create action plans, 4) create an assessment tool.

*Preliminary Findings:* In this environment we easily see that food security is synonymous with environmental health. An environment is considered healthy when all parts are fit together. One elder explained that the Arctic environment is like a puzzle, with all pieces having a place and needed to make up the entire puzzle; this includes native languages, retention of traditional knowledge, animal health, etc.

Though we have a lot more work to do, what we know so far is that an accumulation of stressors are causing food insecurity, that food security is synonymous with environmental health from an Inuit perspective, where the term ‘environment’ includes the Inuit as part of the ecosystem; that decisions need to be based on both traditional knowledge and science and that means that research needs to be based on both. By applying a food security lens to the changing Arctic, adaptive management, a holistic understanding of the arctic systems and preservation of the entire ecosystem will be achievable.

*Current Activities:*

We continue to work with regional leadership and the food security advisory committee in gaining the needed information for the project. Following the gathering of information through village visits we have begun analysis of the information and in holding regional workshops. Through the analysis process we have drawn out preliminary over-arching drivers of food in/security and are gaining a deeper understanding of what food security means within the Alaska Inuit culture.

*Workshops:* Each workshop is an important part of the overall project methodology, allowing for greater engagement of Arctic villages and a preliminary evaluation and validation process. For each workshop Traditional Knowledge experts are identified by their respective Tribal Councils and peers, to validate and evaluate the preliminary findings gained through analysis of information documented through expert



interviews and offer further insight on drivers of food security and insecurity. In November 2013 the first workshop was held in Barrow, AK. We are currently planning for the second workshop to be held in Kotzebue, AK in February. A similar workshop will be held in both Nome and Bethel by April 2014.

*Funding Update:* Since the last update, we have been awarded funding from the Alaska Native Fund and the World Wildlife Foundation. A grant application has been submitted to Conoco Phillips and we hope to submit another grant proposal to the National Science Foundation. Additionally, regional membership organizations have contributed in-kind resources to allow for the workshops in Barrow and Kotzebue to take place.

*Youth Representative Update:* In September Nicole Kanayurak joined the food security advisory committee as the North Slope region youth representative. All representatives have received a digital camera to build photo journals of their thoughts and reflections on food security. We are still looking for a youth representative for the Bering Straits regions. Please let us know if you have any suggestions.

For copies of the project summary, past updates, and/or the North Slope regional food security workshop report contact our office or go to our website:  
<http://www.iccalaska.org/servlet/content/home.html>.

Please contact me with any questions, thoughts, or to say Hi.

Sincerely,

Carolina Behe  
*Traditional Knowledge/Science Advisory*

Food Security Advisory Committee:

Tim Andrew	Myron Naneng
Julie Raymond-Yakoubian	John Goodwin
Lee Ballot	Percy Ballot
Qaiyaan Harcharek	Austin Swan
Denali Whiting	Suzanne Heckman
Nicole Kanayurak	Maija Lukin



Villages Visited:

1. Kaktovik
2. Point Lay
3. Kivalina
4. Selawik
5. Kobuk
6. Wales
7. Stebbins
8. Gambell
9. Emmonak
10. Pilot Station
11. Atmautluak
12. Lower Kalskag
13. Toksook Bay
14. Mekoryuk