

An illustration of an Arctic landscape. In the foreground, there are ice floes and a person on a sled being pulled by a dog. In the middle ground, a large blue whale is swimming in the water, with a smaller boat nearby. The background shows mountains, a reindeer, and various birds like seagulls and a snowy owl. The overall style is colorful and stylized.

## PROJECT SUMMARY AND UPDATE

# FOOD SOVEREIGNTY AND SELF GOVERNANCE: INUIT ROLE IN MANAGING ARCTIC MARINE RESOURCES

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The Food Sovereignty and Self Governance Project is bringing Inuit together to lead their own work. The project was co-developed with the Inuvialuit Game Council and the Fisheries Joint Management Council (Inuvialuit Settlement Region) and the Eskimo Walrus Commission (Alaska), the Inuit Circumpolar Council Alaska (ICC Alaska) and Environmental Law Institute (ELI). Since the development of the project, the Kuskokwim River Intertribal Fish Commission (Alaska) joined the group. These project partners work together with an Advisory Committee comprised of Inuit Indigenous Knowledge holders from Alaska and the Inuvialuit Settlement region to design and direct the project. The Project Partners and the Advisory Committee have worked together to develop the methodologies and outputs for this project and to lead the project activities. Together, these Inuit individuals and Inuit-lead organizations have taken ownership of this project and lead activities.



### PROJECT SUMMARY

**Inuit food security** is founded upon a holistic understanding of the Arctic, one in which Inuit are a part of the ecosystem and their physical, cultural, mental, and spiritual health are profoundly related to the environment. There is an undeniable connection between food *sovereignty* and food *security*. **“Food sovereignty is the right of Inuit to define their own hunting, gathering, fishing, land and water policies; the right to define what is sustainably, socially, economically and culturally appropriate for the distribution of food and to maintain ecological health...”**. Without food sovereignty we cannot realize food security.

**With the intention** to analyze management and co-management structures within Inuit Nunaat and to understand how those governing frameworks support or need to be modified to achieve Inuit food sovereignty, this project intends to examine the potential for Inuit living in Alaska and the Inuvialuit Settlement Region of Canada to manage and co-manage resources important for food security of the Arctic region, and to further identify the tools that Inuit communities need to sustain the overall integrity of their communities. The project will achieve the following objectives:



### PROJECT OBJECTIVES

- Synthesize and evaluate existing frameworks for Inuit management and co-management of subsistence resources presently reflected in law, policies, and legal authorities in the United States and Inuvialuit Settlement Region, Canada;
- Evaluate how existing Inuit self-governance is operationalized by examining four co-management case studies focused on marine resources that are aimed at ensuring food sovereignty, to gain a comprehensive understanding of the social, political, and institutional parameters affecting implementation of key legal frameworks;
- Assess how Inuit self-governance supports food security by evaluating food sovereignty objectives against the existing legal and structural frameworks and their effective implementation and outcomes

The work is structured around four case studies – salmon and walrus in Alaska and char and beluga in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region. These case studies are used as a pathway to a larger, interrelated discussion.



### PROJECT UPDATE

**We have been busy** in the first year of this 2.5 year grant. We began project activities in September 2017. **Project activities in Year 1** have focused on gathering information and the legal analysis. Under the guidance of the advisory committee and the Inuvialuit Game Council, we adjusted the project from holding one meeting in Inuvik to visiting five communities within the Inuvialuit Settlement Region. In the project’s first year, Carolina Behe (one of the co-leads) spent a little over **one month** in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region over two visits. And co-lead, Dr. Dalee Sambo Dorough, spent about **two weeks** in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region. Throughout their

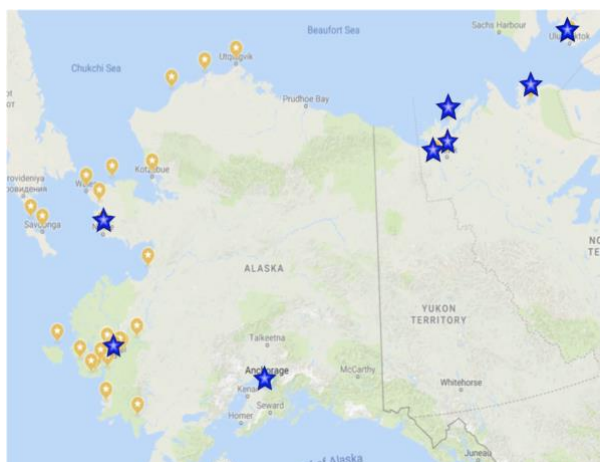
tour, five communities were visited where three focus groups with Hunter and Trappers Committees, individual interviews were conducted, and a focus group meeting with the Inuvialuit Game Council were held. Within Alaska, **one** focus group meeting was held in Anchorage and **two** regional hubs were visited where they held **one** focus group meeting and **one** workshop. All focus groups, workshops and interviews explore the respective co-management that individuals and groups are part of, including policies and decision-making pathways that support or impeded Inuit food sovereignty. The discussions have further focused on the interpretation of Inuit rules and management practices, federal management laws, how the laws are being implemented, challenges with processes in the face of rapidly changing environments, and what may be missing from existing federal laws and policies. Below is a brief summary of these activities.



**In March**, Carolina visited Aklavik, Ulukhaktok, and Inuvik. During these visits, a focus group meeting was held with the Hunters and Trappers Committees in Aklavik and Ulukhaktok. Interviews were held with individuals identified by the HTC. Returning to the Inuvialuit Settlement Region **in June** with Dalee, the two co-leads visited Paulatuk and held a focus group meeting with the HTC, followed by individual interviews. A focus group meeting was held with the Inuvialuit Game Council and an informative meeting was held with the Tuktoyaktuk HTC.

Within Alaska, activities have been focused on the originally scheduled meetings to be held in conjunction with existing co-management meetings. **In December 2017**, the first focus group meeting was held in Anchorage with the Eskimo Walrus Commission, immediately following their annual meeting. The leads and advisory committee realized the challenge in holding in depth discussions following a busy week of hard work.

**In March 2018**, with additional funding provided by the Ocean Conservancy, we were able to host a face-to-face advisory committee meeting and a workshop, *Inuit Past and Current Managers of Marine Resources*, in Nome. The workshop provided an opportunity to engage with members of the Eskimo Walrus Commission that were unable to attend the first focus group, while creating a cross cultural and topic exchange amongst Inuit from different regions of Alaska and the Inuvialuit Game Council Chair.



Blue stars indicate the communities we have visited and meeting locations. The additional yellow points indicate where meeting participants are from.

of what is ‘on the books’ has occurred, including a comprehensive overview of co-management laws and regulations in Canada and the U.S. A review and summary of the first phase of the legal analysis is now underway. These activities will continue into project Year 2

## PROJECT YEAR 1 – Activities



**In May 2018**, a focus group was held with Yup’ik members of the Kuskokwim River Inter Tribal Fishery Commission and a few Yup’ik and Cup’ik representatives from communities that are not members of the Commission. The focus group intentionally included Indigenous Knowledge holders that are part of daily decisions, but not part of the Commission, in order to be inclusive of coastal communities. We were also joined by a few people that were authors on the ICC 2015 food security report, in which a recommendation to investigate co-management structures across Inuit Nunaat was made.

Throughout these activities, we have visited **two locations in Alaska and five locations in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region**. To date, the project has engaged with representatives from 33 communities.

Within Year 1 of the project, a large portion of the **legal analysis** of what is ‘on the books’ has occurred, including a comprehensive overview of co-management laws and regulations in Canada and the U.S. A review and summary of the first phase of the legal analysis is now underway. These

**What People are talking about** – though information is still being gathered and much work needs to be done through the validation and evaluation process of our preliminary findings, there have been a few recurring themes in many of the workshops. Through the meetings, Inuit have stressed the following:

Inuit have always had management practices –practices that guide peoples’ relationships within their environment and govern behavior. Management is not a new concept and many conversations have stressed the need to put Inuit management at the forefront, as opposed to always working within an imposed or foreign framework. And, there is a need to co-develop frameworks in which management or co-management structures exist or will exist.

The conversations occurring under this project reflect a holistic understanding with strong relationships between different animals, plants, weather, seasons, and human relations. The four case studies of this project are salmon and walrus in Alaska and char and beluga in Canada. The case studies were designed to act as a window into a larger discussion, with an understanding that Inuit do not manage through a single-species approach.

People have also stressed the far-reaching effects that international, national, and regional management policies can have on even the smallest community.



**PEOPLE TALKING ABOUT**



**YEAR 2**

**Activities within Project Year 2 include** - continued collection of information, working with participants to review information gathered, analysis of information, a large collective meeting, and another face-to-face advisory committee meeting.

Learning from our visits within the Inuvialuit Settlement Region and with appreciation of the importance of visiting communities directly, we will work to visit four or five communities within the case study areas of Alaska before

January 2019. The community visits will support the focus group meetings that have already occurred in Alaska.

Throughout the project, people have emphasized the need for greater youth and elder involvement. With this in mind, we are currently organizing a meeting that will bring together a small group of youth, elders, and active hunters and gathers. Through this meeting we hope to strategically outline key Inuit management practices/rules (values that guide relationships throughout the food chain). Through the suggestion of the face-to-face advisory committee, ICC is developing a plan to publish those key Inuit management strategies in a booklet. Though the workshop is separate from this project, we hope that the outcome of the meeting will provide those working on this project with additional insights.

We are looking forward to providing more updates on this project as it progresses. Please look for our next project update in January. If you have questions or comments on the project, please reach out to the Project Leads at any time at 1(907)274-9058 or [carolina@iccalaska.org](mailto:carolina@iccalaska.org).

*No opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation.*

