



Paulatuk Hunters and Trappers Committee Focus Group Meeting Summary Report Food Sovereignty and Self Governance – Inuit Role in Managing Arctic Marine Resources¹



Photo: Carolina Behre

Food Sovereignty is the right of Inuit to define their own hunting, gathering, fishing, land and water policies; the right to define what is sustainable, socially, economically and culturally appropriate for the distribution of food and to maintain ecological health; the right to obtain and maintain practices that ensure access to tools needed to obtain, process, store and consume traditional foods. Food sovereignty is a necessity for supporting and maintaining food security.²

¹ This work is supported through a National Science Foundation grant (grant no. 1732373). 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.

² Inuit Circumpolar Council – Alaska. 2015. Alaskan Inuit Food Security Conceptual Framework: How to Assess the Arctic From an Inuit Perspective. Technical Report. Anchorage, AK.

Citation

This report reflects the knowledge and perspectives of Indigenous Knowledge holders attending the focus group meeting. The report should be cited as: Inuit Circumpolar Council Alaska. 2018. Paulatuk Hunters and Trappers Committee Focus Group Meeting: *Food Sovereignty and Self Governance – Inuit Role in Managing Arctic Marine Resources*. Anchorage, Alaska.

The focus group meeting was facilitated by Carolina Behe and Dr. Dalee Sambo Dorough with assistance from Rebecca Ruben. This report was prepared by Shannon William and Carolina Behe.

Quyanainni/Koana

Quyanainni to Diane Ruben for assisting with coordination prior to the focus group and to Sarah Green for providing the delicious food. Quyanainni to Rebecca Ruben for providing assistance with the focus group meeting and subsequent individual interviews in the community of Paulatuk. Quyanainni to the Paulatuk Hunters and Trappers Committee for participating in the focus group, providing the meeting space, providing support, and for welcoming us to Paulatuk. And quyanainni to the Inuvialuit Game Council staff for assisting in communications, logistics, and in setting up our visit to Paulatuk.



Photo: Carolina Behe

About the Food Sovereignty and Self Governance – Inuit Role in Managing Arctic Marine Resources (*FSSG project*)

The FSSG project is a follow up to our 2015 report How to Assess Food Security from an Inuit Perspective: Building a Conceptual Framework on How to Assess Food Security in the Alaskan Arctic. Through workshops, focus group meetings, research, and analysis associated with that project, a central theme emerged: that food security and food sovereignty were undeniably linked. It was concluded that without food sovereignty, we cannot realize food security. The key recommendation derived from that report is to analyze management and co-management structures within Inuit Nunaat and to understand how those governing frameworks need to be modified to achieve Inuit food sovereignty. The FSSG project aims to develop a comprehensive understanding of existing and emerging frameworks supporting Inuit self-governance by examining the current management and co-management of Arctic marine food resources. The three key objectives of the project are:

- Synthesize and evaluate existing frameworks for Inuit management and co-management of marine food resources presently reflected in law, policies, and legal authorities in the United States and the Inuvialuit Settlement Region of 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 about management and food sovereignty.

The project is made up of a team that includes the Inuit Circumpolar Council Alaska, The Inuit Circumpolar Council Chair, and the Environmental Law Institute. Other partners include the Association of Village Council Presidents, Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission, Eskimo Walrus Commission, Inuvialuit Game Council, and the Fisheries Joint Management Committee. The project is guided by an Advisory Committee made up of the project partners and further advised by the Inuit Circumpolar Council Canada.

The final report is scheduled for completion by May 1, 2020.

About the Paulatuk Hunters and Trappers Committee Focus Group Meeting

On March 14, 2018, the Inuit Circumpolar Council – Alaska (ICC AK) facilitated a focus group meeting with the Paulatuk Hunters and Trappers Committee (HTC) as part of the Inuit led project, *Food Sovereignty and Self Governance – Inuit Role in Managing Arctic Marine Resources* (FSSG). The goal of the Aklavik HTC Focus Group was to bring together Inuit to explore current management and co-management structures and decision-making pathways with the ultimate goal of developing a comprehensive understanding of existing and emerging frameworks that support Inuit self-governance.

The Focus group was attended by the appointed members of the Paulatuk HTC. Through this focus group, Indigenous Knowledge holders discussed co-management structures, policies and decision-making pathways surrounding the management of resources, and ways of moving toward Inuit food sovereignty. This report provides a summary of the information discussed during the Paulatuk HTC Focus Group Meeting.

Six Indigenous Knowledge (IK) experts (referred to as participants within the report) attended the focus group meeting. In addition, John Lucas Jr. attended the meeting as the Chair of the Inuvialuit Game Council at that time. Quyanainni to the HTC members who were able to attend:

Chris Ruben
Raymond Ruben, Sr.

Jody Illasiak
Lawrence Ruben

Joe Illasiak
Bill S. Ruben



Photo: Carolina Behe

Report Summary

This report provides a brief summary and general overview of the focus group meeting discussions and is not intended to be a complete review. Though this report has been broken into sections, all sections are interrelated, interdependent, and indivisible. For example, when speaking about the Inuvialuit Final Agreement (IFA), one must also consider, equity, changes in the environment, and youth education.

Key Themes/Concepts Discussed

The meeting was facilitated using a combination of guiding questions that were informed by the ICC Alaska food security report and further refined by the FSSG Advisory Committee:

- Personal Experiences in gathering food
- Consultation processes
- Decision-making pathways
- IK and Research questions
- Taking care of our homelands and waters, and what tools are used
- Impacts of regulations on the wellbeing of animals, water, land, air, and Inuit (i.e. culture, physical and mental well-being)

While the meeting was facilitated using guiding questions under key themes/concepts, the discussions were further focused and refined by the participants. Key themes/concepts and findings include:

- Inequity of funding
- Economic barriers to food sovereignty
- Challenges faced in educating youth
- Lack of adaptability and speed in decision-making
- Differences in consultation with various levels of government
- Relationships with NGOs

On Personal Experiences

During the focus group, participants discussed their personal experiences in their communities and out on the land. They stressed that the hunting and harvesting lifestyle is strong in ISR and in Paulatuk specifically. However, many challenges exist in maintaining this preferred lifestyle while simultaneously living in a world that operates primarily on a cash economy. Participants shared that they and their families would be happier out on the land, but the need for money means most people have to work in town. Participants noted that they are always working hard to find ways to balance working at the HTC and being out on the land.

Participants emphasized that being out on the land and harvesting food is not only about eating. Harvesting is connected to self-identity, a sense of peace, wellness, and a feeling of wholeness. However, participants noted that economic barriers often lead to decreased harvesting opportunities which can be an emotional hardship for people. In describing the effects of economic barriers, one participant commented: "One of my uncles, he has a camp. We see him there, then after a week he is gone because money is gone: no gas, no fuel. So he's got to wait for the next check to come in to do something. It is really sad. It's not what he wants to do—it harms his pride."

Participants also commented that they face challenges in making sure that people from outside the ISR are not going too far in bringing non-traditional practices onto the land. This crops up in many different ways, for example in the abundance of research projects that are taking place on the land and the many development and industry-related opportunities that communities must weigh. Participants noted that knowledge gained through research can be beneficial and sometimes industry is necessary. But it was stressed that communities must strive to keep balance and not let these things interfere too much with people's traditional lifestyles. Participants further highlighted the importance of ensuring that groups who come to the ISR looking to research or develop understand that Inuvialuit priorities take precedence.



Photo: Carolina Behe

On Education of Young People

Throughout the course of the focus group, a key concept discussed was the education of youth. Participants commented on the challenges that exist in passing on IK, making sure that youth understand how to balance the caretaking of the land with economic development.

Additionally participants discussed the importance of educating youth about the IFA.



Photo: Carolina Behe

Participants stressed the crucial importance of passing on a love for traditional ways, a love for learning, and an understanding of roles. To help encourage youth to learn, communities have created *On the Land* programs and language camps. Participants shared that these camps and programs are often hard to coordinate, but stressed the importance of continuing to organize them.

Participants agreed that the *On the Land* Programs help to foster a love for the lifestyle as a whole.

Participants also stressed the importance of educating youth on how to deal with economic issues, particularly development and industry. Participants indicated that development is inevitable and necessary as it provides a means for community members to earn money. However, they emphasized that the ultimate goal is to properly caretake the land. Managing development and balancing industry with stewardship can be very challenging. Participants commented that it is crucial to pass on a clear, strong message to the youth to never lose sight of the importance of the land. Additionally, they noted that youth should be educated on the power of unity. Participants commented that the strongest, clearest voices is one that comes from the community as a whole.

The importance of education regarding the IFA and its implementation was also highlighted. Participants stressed that it is crucial that young people understand how the IFA works and why it was created. It was indicated that many young people lack some of the context regarding the circumstances that lead to the creation of the IFA. They noted that it is important to pass on this knowledge and context to youth so that they can carry the torch.

"The struggle is to pass it on. I can't tell by words what I have inside of me. You've got to live it...Most of us are glad our kids have that in them. That they want to be out there [on the land]..." -Meeting Participant

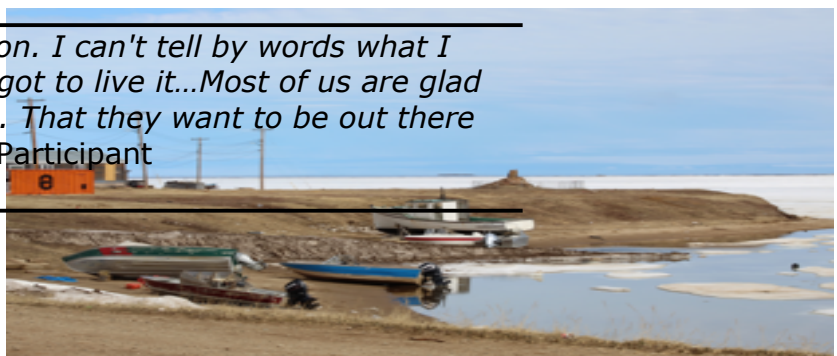


Photo: Carolina Behe

On Consultation

In discussing the consultation process, participants indicated that they felt involved and that the process. Participants further commented that the most positive consultation and co-management processes occurs when there are strong community and regional leaders who understand that the land is what makes Inuvialuit rich. Commenting on the value of land over money, one participant commented: "We sat in a [mining development] meeting and they were doing a preview of the presentation and they were using [phrases like] 'your people are going to be rich' and 'you hit a score of diamonds.' And I said 'look out there. We are rich. At tonight's meeting, don't use 'rich' and 'dollars.' That is not our riches. Our riches are out there.'"



However, because consultation is such a broad term, there is room for people to define or understand it differently. Participants specified that true consultation includes the other party coming directly to the community for face-to-face meetings. They stressed that consultation is less meaningful when it takes place over the phone. Participants noted that powerful consultation occurs when governments and industry meet face-to-face to hear Inuvialuit opinions and conditions before taking action. This is particularly important when meeting with industry. Participants noted that industry consultation meetings in Paulatuk are always open to the public and do not take place behind closed doors.



Photo: Carolina Behe

When the consultation process includes representatives from industry or territorial and/or federal governments involved visiting a community and sitting at the Inuvialuit table, it helps to lessen cultural misunderstandings and create awareness. For example, as an exercise, the Paulatuk HTC met with federal Ministers and gave them \$100 to spend at the local store. This allowed the ministers to see just how little \$100 can buy at the grocery store. Participants shared that this exercise aided in opening the Minister's eyes to one important aspect of food security. In describing the success of that exercise, one

participant commented, "The point is, they were trying to come and learn about the area we're living in."

Historically, certain federal and territorial employees and industry people have been slow to come to understand the importance of face-to-face consultation. Participants provided examples such as an eco-tourism company that took 15 years to finally send someone to Paulatuk for face-to-face consultation and a development company who tried at length to argue that phone conversations constituted consultation. Participants also identified instances when the consultation process has been unlawfully ignored. One main instance was when Prime Minister Trudeau acted on his own to put a moratorium on oil and gas. Although he realized that he had acted out of turn and should have consulted with Inuvialuit first, there is no way to withdraw the moratorium at this time.



Photo: Carolina Behe

Participants emphasized that consultation with researchers is also imperative. In discussing consultation with researchers, participants described a recent instance when a small bird researcher tried to do field research during caribou season and the HTC had to step in and say come another time. Without consultation, that person would be out on the land potentially disrupting the caribou.

On Impacts of Regulations

During the focus group, participants discussed the ways that government regulations have impacted their families and community. The conversation centered around impacts to harvesting, food security, lifestyle, handicrafts, and food sharing. It was stressed that various issues have resulted from tag regulations.

Participants provided polar bear harvesting tags as an example. Participants explained that under the management system, certain communities have had a stronger opportunity to harvest polar bears due to how tag boundaries had been drawn – resulting in hunters having to travel further distances. One participant described their frustration of trying to stay within a boundary and the rigidity of the regulations, commenting, "If you got a local

tag, you had to go way out and when you made the mark [when documenting the hunt], you had to make sure you marked correct. If you had a millimeter of your pencil off and marked on the other side of the line, they [regulators] saw that and they would go after you.”

Participants explained that the regulation was not working for people, so the territorial government was called to consult with the Inuvialuit. Following that consultation process, positive changes took place and eventually a compromise was reached that allowed for hunters to alternate between the two boundary areas each year. However, participants noted that those changes took an exceedingly long time to go into effect. Participants expressed that Paulatuk got the ‘short end of the stick’ for over a decade while they waited for the policy to change.

Participants noted that another Indigenous community in Northwest Territories, Sahtu, fought the government on a proposed caribou tag system and the government backed down. The Sahtu were able to maintain their traditional management practices and IK without using an imposed tag system. Participants indicated that resisting the tagging system may have been a more favorable way to go. Now that the tag system is in place in the ISR, the government is firm on holding them to it. Participants indicated that agreeing to the system in the first place seemed like a sacrifice, and that now it feels that they are locked in.

Participants commented that how the caribou tag system influences the use of IK, traditional rules, and inhibits different uses of caribou. For example, fawns used to be harvested for their soft hides and tender meat. Today no one wants to “waste” a tag for a small amount of meat. Instead, hunters now tend to go for larger, fatter bulls, which is not the traditional Inuvialuit way.

"I used this book today. I wake up and see what I can hunt today... We are regulated even in our own private lands... the impact on our lifestyle is there."

-Meeting Participant



Photo: Carolina Behre

Regulations also pose challenges in keeping the people in the community fed and food secure. Tags, quotas, and strict regulations compound the challenges that community members face in getting out on the land. One participant expressed how the emergence of food banks illustrates this point, sharing that, “we have food banks now coming up. It’s something of a strange thing. Our freezers could be full all year long, everything is out there that you need [but] having the challenge of tags and quotas imposed on us is a [barrier].”

Participants shared that regulations have impacted sharing systems and changes people’s sharing behaviors. While abundant animals such as fish and geese are still shared freely, the more heavily-regulated resources like caribou are not shared as freely anymore. As one participant commented, people are tending to hold on to what they get because there is not enough to go around: “A lot of us can’t share. We don’t have enough to share. We would like to and we do with the geese of course and the fish. But meat is always a big one. Everybody wants meat, year round.”

However, participants emphasized that the spirit of sharing is not gone. Sharing is still an important cultural value. But that the ways that people are able to share are changing now that there are more regulations and less country food to go around.

Participants commented that it can be difficult to see the cumulative impacts of these changes that are caused by regulations. Slow change, through multiple channels can sometimes make it difficult to detect the way lifestyles are being impacted. One participant illustrated how these slow changes can be difficult to detect, commenting, “We don’t always realize what is impacting our lifestyle. It is just distracting everybody from that... It is hard to say we have a lifestyle and we are trying to keep it when they are right under

us...”



Photo: Carolina Behe

On Challenges in the Co-Management System

During the focus group, participants discussed some of the challenges that they face within the co-management system. Participants emphasized that an incredible amount of positive progress has been made since the 1970s '80s when the people felt very overrun by the federal government and industry. Further, participants shared that the co-management system continues to improve as new voices make their way into the HTC.

However, participants indicated that despite a strong land claims agreement, the way wildlife is managed now is not entirely in line with traditional ways. Challenges exist in trying to compromise between Inuvialuit traditional management and a westernized management system. While Inuvialuit have decision-making pathways that ensure that they are able to make decisions based on their IK, they have also agreed to co-manage with the federal and territorial governments. Some consultation processes end in compromises that do not make sense to everyone involved.

Participants shared that this is particularly true when it comes to the pressures that are placed on Inuvialuit to prove that wildlife numbers are stable and to implement formal management plans. Judging the health of a species on numbers alone and the implementation of formal management plans are, themselves, outside concepts. Community leaders end up dealing with both sides of the coin: keeping a traditional lifestyle at the forefront of management decisions while simultaneously dealing with what the outside world expects management to look like. In the eyes of government agencies, management includes tag systems and quotas. As one participant commented, "[They are of a mind that] there has to be some sort of management and control that is visible and they come with tags and quotas; we have always been of a mind that you get what you need and use all of what you get."

Many of the quotas observed in the communities are voluntary. The community sets the quotas themselves when numbers are getting low. In this way, communities are able to keep federal and/or territorial governments' interference out of the equation entirely. However, past decisions to adopt tag systems for certain animals such as caribou (as previously shared), have created long last-lasting effects and "locked" the Inuvialuit management bodies into continuing to comply with the tag system.

Another challenge arises when a reactive decision is made by federal and/or territorial agencies outside of the co-management processes. Participants indicated that the HTCs have to be careful in how they relay information to government entities and expressed the need for decisions to be made at a

community level informed by Inuvialuit Knowledge. For example, when the char count was low on one of the rivers in Paulatuk, the Char Working Group decided it would be best to deal with the matter as a community, preferring to monitor the situation and to see if it was a fluke without the government stepping in and getting involved.

Choosing to deal with an issue as a community without involving government can be a way to prevent the territorial and/or federal governments from attempting to impose stricter regulations. However, through the co-management process, reactive decisions based on limited information are decreased as there are representatives from all levels of government, including Inuvialuit representation. Participants noted that the ultimate authority lies with the Inuvialuit and that other governments do not have the authority to impose such restrictions without consulting with the HTC. However, they explained that when government agencies do become involved it can complicate matters in terms of the time and effort that is often wasted on unnecessary discussions, explanations, and arguing.

Participants added that federal and/or territorial government co-managers often do not understand the perspectives of the HTCs regarding the health of the caribou herds. Directed by IK, people know which animals to harvest, when to harvest them, with consideration of multiple factors, including the health and wellness of the animals. Participants voiced frustration of this IK not being taken into account in decision making. For example, participants shared that the Blue Nose Western caribou are available year-round in the Paulatuk area; therefore, it should be legal to hunt the caribou year-round. However, the government does not agree and continues to enforce seasonal restrictions.

"We could go out hunting caribou in January, time permitting, life permitting, we could all be hunting caribou year round. But the government says no you can't because the numbers are down. But we don't perceive it that way. The availability of the caribou: because they are out there, we can hunt them. We know they are there... We know and we can go hunt caribou year round. But they don't understand that." -Meeting Participant

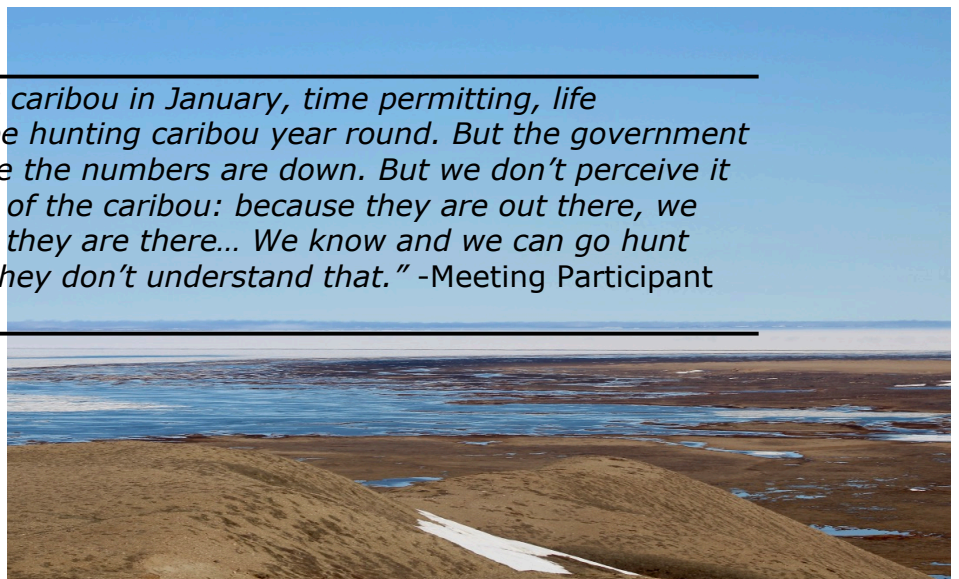


Photo: Carolina Behe

On Decision-Making Pathways

During the focus group, participants were asked to reflect on decision-making pathways and the inclusion of their traditional management and IK. Participants discussed the pathways as well as barriers that exist in making use of those pathways.



Photo: Carolina Behe

Participants first commented on international decision-making pathways such as the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). While UNDRIP has the potential to be a strong tool, participants pointed out that it is ultimately up to the federal governments to honor and implement the it. It remains to be seen to what extent Canada will apply UNDRIP, but participants noted that the

Canadian federal government is already in the habit of listening to Indigenous voices. However, Inuit at an international level may not experience any benefits from UNDRIP if their federal government chooses to ignore it.

"We have a voice now. We are basically in control of our future in terms of how our lands are maybe developed, how we live our traditional life." -Meeting Participant

Participants then discussed decision-making pathways that exist in the ISR. They explained that regulations for most species are made by the communities themselves via the HTC and then the IGC. Working groups are formed to manage species in the ways that Inuvialuit want them to be managed. In this way, the voices of the community guides all of the decisions being made.



Photo: Carolina Behe

Participants provided the example of the Western Arctic Marine Protected Areas Steering Committee which was created to aid in the management of the marine protected area (MPA). The Steering Committee aids in overseeing two community-based working groups. The Steering Committee

doesn't set rules or regulations but is there to consult and meet with the working groups and take direction from them. This structure ensures that community voices are heard and that community members know what is happening with the MPA and what the plans are. Participants noted that this system could be further improved if the Steering Committee came to the communities to work rather than operating out of Inuvik.



Photo: Carolina Behe

Each community's HTC manages their own area, creates their own bylaws, and sets their own conditions. When decisions are made, the rules come from community leaders rather than from territorial or federal agencies. When involved in co-management, HTCs can turn to the IGC for support if they feel that their decisions are not being respected by the territorial or federal government or by industry.

Participants commented that this is a marked difference from the co-management seen in Alaska where the working groups and commissions do not have the same authority because they lack pathways to back up their recommendations.



Photo: Carolina Behe

On Different Levels of Government and Equity of Funding

During the focus group, participants were asked how the territorial and federal government interact with one another; how they interact with the HTCs and IGC; and whether or not they tend to have the same goals as one another. Participants commented that they often deal with a sense that the territorial government is

struggling with the HTCs and IGC for power.

Participants indicated that a main driver in that power struggle is related to funding. Participants further shared that there is a general sense that governments use the allocation of funding as a way to hoard power. As Inuvialuit have made strides towards self-governance, the territorial government becomes less necessary as a middle man in terms of allocation of funding. As one participant shared, *"We used to have to beg first. Before we went to the federal government, we used to have to beg the territorial government for a seat at any table to lobby for funding."*

Inuvialuit have continued to move towards working directly with the federal government. This system is preferable because it allows for Inuvialuit to advocate for their own needs rather than having to rely on the territorial government to advocate on their behalf.

Participants explained that the shift in dynamic really began to take hold during the residential school reconciliation era in the 1990s. During that time, Indigenous governments were being recognized as governments within Canada. Participants noted that challenges in obtaining adequate funding became apparent early on. At first, Inuvialuit governing bodies were severely under-funded.

Though there has been an increase in funding over the years, participants shared that decision making processes are often slowed due to a lack of adequate funding. This impacts Inuvialuit decision making as they often find themselves waiting on government because for funding, as one participant shared, “they’ve got the purse with the money.”

On Challenges Faced in Co-Management

Throughout the day, participants identified challenges that are faced within the co-management and consultation processes. While many of these challenges are detailed in other sections of this report, this section focuses on the challenges that are faced when the values, priorities, and timelines of government bodies conflict with Inuvialuit values, priorities and timelines. The process of reconciling these differences is arduous, often taking many years to work through.

Participants indicated that the co-management process can feel slow, rigid, and overly complicated. To illustrate this, participants discussed the process of designating an MPA near Paulatuk. When they envisioned the creation of the MPA, the HTC wanted to go about things in an Inuvialuit way, without involving international standards. But the designation process required consultation with a federal agency. When the federal government representatives came to the table, it was felt that their perspectives were driven by money, industry, and international agreed upon standards. Attempting to come to a compromise through consultation has taken several years and has caused the original vision to become overshadowed at times.

A further challenge arises with federal government staff turn-over. With a change in staff comes a change in the dynamic mid consultation process. Participants recounted a situation in which an agreement was made with one federal representative who was leading the MPA project at the time. When that individual stopped working for that department, the replacement did not

have the same level of context of previous discussions and agreements or accountability.

Participants commented that it is frustrating to now see the government boast about how well the consultation process worked during the creation of the MPA and the emphasis placed on the role that IK plays in the development and management of the MPA. In reality, participants felt that the consultation process was wrought with shortcomings and resulted in an outcome that was not entirely desirable to Inuvialuit.



Photo: Carolina Behe

On Relationships with NGOs

During the focus group, participants shared that partnerships with Non-government Organizations (NGOs) can be beneficial to Inuvialuit in some cases. Certain groups have been open to foraging these relationships in order to obtain funding for their projects, noting that these partnerships can fill the gaps that are left by inadequate government funding.

Participants commented that the territorial and federal governments don't encourage partnerships with NGOs, but because the working groups have such a hard time finding funding to do research or purchase new equipment, these partnerships can be very helpful. For example, through partnerships with an NGO, the HTC was able to secure funding for underwater microphones and drones. The information gathered from this equipment aided in making an argument for the development of the MPA.

However participants highlighted the importance of remaining cognizant of the fact that these partnerships are not always beneficial. They indicated that NGOs have the power to both support and impede food sovereignty so it is important to keep in mind that Inuvialuit interests always need to remain at the forefront of partnerships.

"We got to be careful. Our interests are first. The information we divulge or share is extensive so I know we've got to be careful." -Meeting Participant

On Indigenous Knowledge and Research Questions

During the focus group, participants were asked to reflect on if their IK is equitably considered along with science to make decisions and determine research needs.

Participants noted that a lot of research is taking place—both academic research and government research. Research has become a large part of the local economy in Paulatuk. Participants shared, that with the massive influx of research projects, there is a challenge to find balance between fueling the economy and knowing when to draw the line.

Participants indicated that although they are involved in all of the various research projects, their IK is often not considered equitably alongside science. Research sometimes feels like the government's way of "proving" ideas that IK holders have always known. And, too often, there is no IK included in the final reports. Participants emphasized that a lack of inclusion of IK is not appropriate, reiterating that all research that is taking place within the ISR should include IK.

Participants shared that certain levels of government are more likely to involve representation of IK and Inuit values. Participants noted that they are happy with the inclusion of IK at a local and regional level, but not at a territorial, federal, or international level. One participant commented: "I see it at the local level and even the regional level, that TK is pretty strong, but once you get outside of that, pray after that." Another participant added: "Government at a certain level has to respect Traditional Knowledge. I wouldn't say the top level respects Traditional Knowledge."

Participants also explained that certain management systems are more conducive to equitable consideration of IK. For example, tag systems leave room for governments to try to steer the process, fight IK, and slow progress down, while voluntary limits that come from the HTC are driven by community members and based on IK. For this reason, voluntary limits are

"TK [Traditional Knowledge] is still a battle to get. Right now, in my view, traditional knowledge is still kind of down here on the government side... once it gets to the government, they sign that, it is the law and you butt heads for another 20 years to get those extra ten tags." -Meeting Participant

preferable to other forms of management.

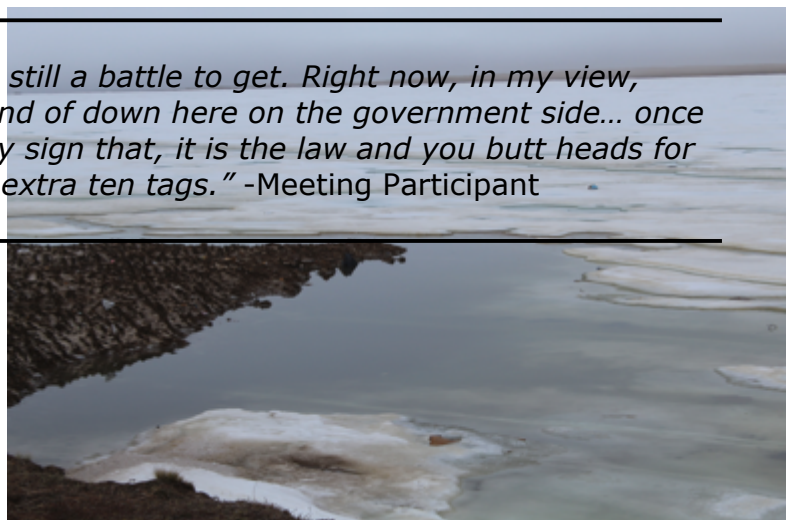


Photo: Carolina Behe

Other research-related challenges include finding ways for research to benefit the community in ways beyond hiring wildlife monitors or environmental monitors as well as in ensuring that the IK stays within the communities. Participants stressed the importance of ensuring that researchers, particularly those involved with NGOs, understand that the IK used in their projects does not belong to them.

Participants commented that positive changes have been made in the equitable consideration and inclusion of IK in research projects over the course of the last several years. One participant shared that at the start of their career, inclusion of IK in research questions was practically non-existent. At the time IK was not included unless it was very forcefully argued for.

Participants indicated that it now feels that things are at a tipping point where IK and Scientific data are starting to be recognized by the governments as having equal value. However, participants stressed that Inuvialuit should continue push for IK to become a stronger component in research.

Additionally, one participant pointed out that the terms “local knowledge” and “traditional knowledge” are conceptually distinct with traditional knowledge referring to IK that is ingrained and passed down from elders and local knowledge referring to knowledge that comes from being out on the land and learning from the environment. The participant noted that local knowledge is also needed in research, particularly when it comes to climate-related research. Local IK holders are on the land during all seasons and understand the changes that are occurring.

"I am proud to say that this community is mostly a traditional lifestyle community."
-Meeting Participant



Photo: Carolina Behre

Recommendations

Throughout the focus group, participants provided recommendations regarding ways to improve future co-management outcomes. These recommendations included the following:

- Limit research for research's sake
- Focus on the value of the land over the value of industry
- Understand that economic development is necessary, but not worth the degradation of the land
- Educate youth on the IFA so that they understand its importance and how to implement it in the future
- Never lose sight of the power of unity; have a strong clear voice as a community
- Continue to insist on face-to-face consultation; meetings that affect Paulatuk should take place in Paulatuk

Conclusion

During the Paulatuk HTC Focus Group Meeting, Inuit co-managers came together to have in depth discussions regarding what supports or impedes Inuit food sovereignty and exploring what the co-management system set in place by the Inuvialuit Final Agreement looks like in Paulatuk. The meeting provided an important building block in the Food Sovereignty and Self Governance project.

This report provides a brief summary of the discussion that took place over the course of the day-long meeting. The knowledge, ideas, and recommendations shared during this focus group as well as those shared in focus groups, meetings, workshops, and interviews that have helped to build the FSSG project will be shared in the final FSSG report. The final report is scheduled to be completed by June 1, 2020.