



INUIT CIRCUMPOLAR COUNCIL ALASKA

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

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS REPORT

ABOUT THE INUIT CIRCUMPOLAR COUNCIL (ICC)

Founded in 1977 by the late Eben Hopson, Sr. of Utqiagvik, Alaska (formerly Barrow), the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC) has flourished and grown into a major international non-governmental organization (NGO) representing approximately 180,000 Inuit of Alaska, Canada, Greenland, and Chukotka (Russia). The organization holds Economic and Social Council NGO Consultative Status II at the United Nations and is a Permanent Participant at the Arctic Council.

To thrive in our circumpolar homeland of Inuit Nunaat, we had the vision to realize that we must speak with a united voice on issues of common concern and combine our energies and talents towards protecting and promoting our way of life. The principal goals of ICC are, therefore, to:

- Strengthen unity among Inuit of the circumpolar region;
- Promote Inuit rights and interests on an international level;
- Develop and encourage long-term policies that safeguard the Arctic environment;
- Seek full and active partnership in the political, economic, and social development of circumpolar regions

ICC represents the interests of Inuit and we have offices in four Arctic regions – Alaska, Canada, Greenland, and Chukotka. Though each of our communities are unique, we are one people, in a single homeland, across four countries.



Inuit drummers from across the Circumpolar drumming at the 2018 ICC General Assembly. Photo: Jacki Cleveland

All information and concepts within this report are a product of a collaborative effort among 91 contributing authors (Indigenous Knowledge holders), the project Advisory Committee, the Inuit Circumpolar Council Chair, Inuit Circumpolar Council Alaska, and the Environmental Law Institute. The Project was facilitated by Dr. Dalee Sambo Dorough (ICC Chair), Carolina Behe (ICC Alaska Indigenous Knowledge/Science Advisor), and David Roche (Environmental Law Institute). Legal research and evaluation was done by David Roche and Dr. Sambo Dorough with support from Cynthia Harris and the Environmental Law Institute. Workshops, focus groups, interviews, and information and data analysis were facilitated and conducted by Carolina Behe with support from Shannon Williams Mockli and in collaboration with the project's Advisory Committee.

The final report was prepared by Dr. Dalee Sambo Dorough, Carolina Behe, and David Roche in collaboration with the project's Advisory Committee and the contributing authors. Support was provided by the project research assistant (Shannon Williams Mockli), the legal researcher (Cynthia Harris), and institutional support staff from the Inuvialuit Game Council (Chanda Turner and Jennifer Lam) and the Fisheries Joint Management Committee (Emily Way-Nee and Kiyoo Campbell).

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QUYANA / IGAMSIQANAGHHALEK / QUYANAINNI / KOANA / QUYANAQ!

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ICC Alaska recognizes the passing of Tapaghhaghmii (Chester Noongwook), who was a contributing author to this report. He generously offered his deep knowledge and profound Yupik understanding of the world around us. We are honored by his contribution.



Eskimo Walrus Commission
"To protect the pacific walrus population."



KUSKOKWIM RIVER
INTER-TRIBAL FISH COMMISSION



ABOUT THIS REPORT

This summary report was created for those who are looking for a quick glimpse at what food security and food sovereignty means and a quick reference to the Transformative Recommendations put forward by the contributing authors.

Within both reports you will find, the Transformative Recommendations – calls to action that can ensure the food security, health, and well-being of Inuit throughout the Arctic for generations to come. The calls to action are grouped under seven themes. Not all communities or regions are the same, so the recommendations specify when they apply to a specific region or across Inuit Nunaat.

We strongly encourage everyone to read the full technical report which utilizes case studies as a window into deeper discussions about management and co-management, Inuit holistic approaches, and the many connections to food sovereignty, such as language, ecosystem health, monitoring, human rights, and self-determination. The technical report can be accessed on our website at – https://iccalaska.org/wp-icc/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/FSSG-Report_-LR.pdf

A Holistic View

Though this project looks at management through four case studies, it was made clear from the beginning that Inuit have a holistic view and approach, understanding the interconnections between all within an ecosystem. In fact, the single-species approach to management emphasized by dominating cultures is one of the largest barriers to a co-management system that equitably includes Inuit, and that approach is often viewed to be harmful to animals.

Throughout this report, it is important to remember and understand that the walrus, char, beluga and salmon are intimately interconnected to each other and all other parts of the ecosystem. Like the nature of human rights, everything is interrelated, interdependent, and indivisible. If you alter

one element, you impact the whole. The walrus, char, beluga, salmon, and Inuit share the environment and are species within ecosystems teeming with bowhead whales, seals, polar bears, cod, seaweed and on land caribou, freshwater fish, muskox, berries, roots, and bird eggs.

The goal of the case study approach was to possibly expose a pathway to a larger, interconnected discussion about management and food sovereignty. In Alaska, two cases involved salmon and walrus management. In the Inuvialuit Settlement Region, the two cases examined char and beluga management.



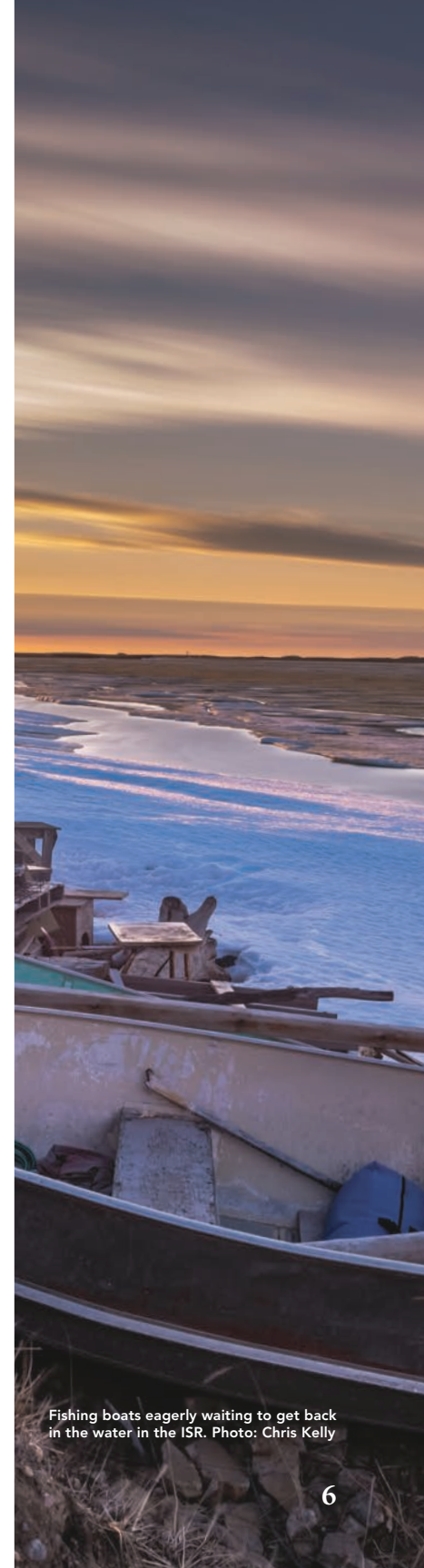
Inuit from across the circumpolar drumming and dancing at the 2018 ICC General Assembly.
Photo: Jacki Cleveland

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Fishing boats eagerly waiting to get back in the water in the ISR. Photo: Chris Kelly



Top left to right: Chinook salmon in the smokehouse. Photo: Mary Peltola; Sharing is a strong value maintained across Inuit Nunaat and supports food security. Photo: JD Storr; Dolly Varden char from the Aklavik community harvest at the Big Fish River fish hole in the ISR. Photo: Fisheries Joint Management Committee; Broad whitefish in the ISR. Photo: Chris Kelly

Middle left to right: Beluga whale being harvested. Beluga is an important food source for many families and communities within the ISR. Photo: Hans Lennie; Sockeye salmon in the smokehouse. Photo: Mary Peltola; Harvesting near Paulaturk in the ISR. Photo: Rebecca Ruben

Bottom left to right: Walrus and boats in Gambell, AK. Photo: Carolina Behr; Walrus outside of Little Diomedede, AK. Photo: Maasingah Nakak; Herd crossing. Photo: Chris Kelly

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For thousands of years, Inuit have been part of the Arctic ecosystem. Inuit have thrived and built their culture rooted in values that shape the relationships they have held with everything within this ecosystem. Those values—including respect, collaboration, and sharing—all aid in supporting healthy and harmonious relationships and communities. A core element of Inuit culture that incorporates these values is hunting, gathering, and preparing foods. Discussions about food security require an understanding of the far-reaching implications of how issues of food security interact with culture, history, management systems, and world views. The interconnections between all peoples, wildlife, and the environment within the Arctic ecosystem directly influences food security, and food sovereignty is distinctly tied to food security.

Without food sovereignty, Inuit cannot achieve food security was a primary finding of ICC Alaska’s 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*. In Alaska, Inuit recognized the lack of decision-making power and management authority to be the greatest threat to Inuit food security. One of the key recommendations of the 2015 report was to learn what is occurring within other Inuit regions, leading to a comparative analysis of co-management practices across Inuit Nunaat (homeland).

To address this recommendation, the *Food Sovereignty and Self-Governance – Inuit Role in Managing Arctic Marine Resources* project was developed through partnerships across Alaska and the Inuvialuit Settlement Region (ISR) of Canada. The project goal was to examine current management and co-management of Arctic marine food resources in order to develop a comprehensive understanding of existing and emerging frameworks supporting Inuit self-governance. 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 ISR 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.

A project led by Inuit

A key component to this project was bringing Inuit together to lead their own work. The project was co-developed with the Inuvialuit Game Council and the Fisheries Joint Management Committee (in the ISR) and the Eskimo Walrus Commission, the Association of Village Council Presidents (AVCP), and the Inuit Circumpolar Council Alaska (in Alaska) as well as Environmental Law Institute (ELI). Since the development of the project, the Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (Alaska) joined the group. Throughout the project, ICC Canada has played an advisory role. The project leads, partners, and an Advisory Committee comprised of Indigenous Knowledge (IK) holders from Alaska and the ISR worked together to design and direct the project. Together, these Inuit individuals and Inuit-led organizations have taken ownership of this project and all of its activities.

Defining Food Security and Food Sovereignty

In discussions about food sovereignty and food security it is important to understand that Inuit are talking about something

that goes far beyond “resource management” or similar terms used in management systems. To Inuit, marine animals, land-based animals, birds, and plants have worth and cultural relevance far beyond their material value to Inuit. Furthermore, terms such as “subsistence,” used primarily in the legal context, does not capture the multiple social, cultural, economic, and spiritual dimensions of Inuit food security. Throughout this report, the term ‘subsistence’ is only used in reference to federal/ state/ territorial laws. The term food security is more frequently used to capture the multifaceted nature of food described by Inuit.

This project was guided by the Food Security and Food Sovereignty definitions developed by Inuit in Alaska during the creation of the *Alaskan Inuit Food Security Conceptual Framework: How to Assess the Arctic From an Inuit Perspective*.¹ While this definition was developed within the Alaskan Arctic, project partners agreed to use the definition and developed conceptual framework (refer to Figure 1) to guide this work.

Inuit Food Security

Inuit Food Security² is the natural right of all Inuit to be part of the ecosystem, to access food and to care-take, protect and respect all of life, land, water, and air. It allows for all Inuit to obtain, process, store, and consume sufficient amounts of healthy, nutritious, and preferred food – foods Inuit physically and spiritually crave and need from the land, air, and water. These foods provide for families and future generations through the practice of Inuit customs and spirituality, languages, knowledge, policies, management practices, and self-governance. It includes the responsibility and ability to pass on knowledge to younger generations, the taste of traditional foods rooted in place and season, knowledge of how to safely obtain and prepare traditional foods for medicinal use, clothing, housing, nutrients and, overall, how to be within one’s environment. It means understanding that food is a lifeline and a connection between the past and today’s self and cultural identity. Inuit food security is characterized by environmental health and is made up of six interconnecting dimensions: 1) Availability; 2) Inuit Culture; 3) Decision-Making Power and Management; 4) Health and Wellness; 5) Stability; and 6) Accessibility. This definition holds the understanding that without food sovereignty, food security will not exist.

Inuit Food Sovereignty

Food sovereignty is defined as the right of all 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; and the right to obtain and maintain practices that ensure access to tools needed to obtain, process, store, and consume traditional foods. Within the Inuit food security conceptual framework, food sovereignty is a necessity to support and maintain the six dimensions of food security.³

¹ Inuit Circumpolar Council Alaska. 2015. *Alaskan Inuit Food Security Conceptual Framework: How to Assess the Arctic From an Inuit Perspective*. Technical Report. Anchorage, AK

² Id.

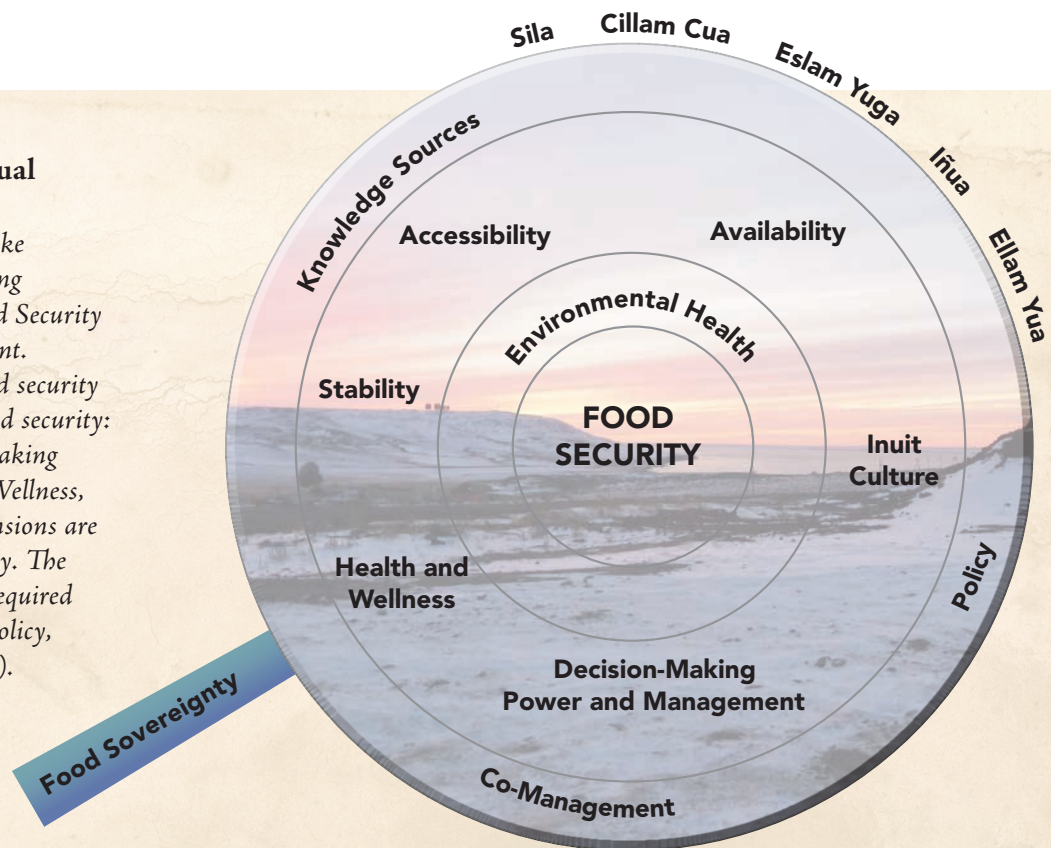
³ The food sovereignty definition presented here accounts for all points identified by Alaskan Inuit and has been adapted from the definition written by Hamm and Bellows in First Nations Development Institute’s *Food Sovereignty Assessment Tool*, 2004 and in addition to the definition provided in the Declaration of Nyéléni (2007).



Josephine Aloralrea (left) and Agnes McIntyre (right), members of the Nunamta Yup'ik Singers and Dancers group. From Bethel, AK. Photo: Brian Adams as part of the ICC AK led, I AM INUIT project

Figure 1. Food Security Conceptual Framework

The Conceptual Framework is shaped like a drum and illustrates the interconnecting components of Inuit Food Security. Food Security is characterized by a healthy environment. Surrounding the characterization of food security are the six dimensions that make up food security: Availability, Inuit Culture, Decision-Making Power and Management, Health and Wellness, Stability, and Accessibility. These dimensions are constituted by drivers of food (in)security. The outer ring of the drum shows the tools required to obtain and maintain food security (policy, co-management, and knowledge sources). Surrounding the drum is the spirit of all, written in Inupiaq, Yup'ik, Cup'ik, St. Lawrence Island Yupik, and Inuvialuktun⁴. The drum handle is food sovereignty. Food sovereignty is required to hold the drum together and to control actions, movements, and the beat of the drum. If any piece of the framework is missing or lacks strength, resiliency will decrease and food security will decrease – any disruption or interference to one piece has impacts for the whole.⁵



⁴The Inuit Food Security Conceptual Framework was developed by Inuit in Alaska. For the purpose of this report, the Project Advisory Committee members from the Inuvialuit Settlement Region suggested to add the word 'Sila' to the words describing the Spirit of all surrounding the drum.

⁵Inuit Circumpolar Council Alaska. 2015. Alaskan Inuit Food Security Conceptual Framework: How to Assess the Arctic From an Inuit Perspective. Technical Report. Anchorage, AK6 Inuit Circumpolar

Box 1. What is Indigenous Knowledge

ICC offers the following definition:

Indigenous Knowledge (referred to as IK in the remainder of the report) 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.” This knowledge can identify research needs and be applied to them, which will ultimately inform decision-makers. There is a need to utilize both Indigenous and scientific Knowledge. Both ways of knowing will benefit the people, land, water, air, and animals within the Arctic.

**Note: Inuit at times may refer to their knowledge as Indigenous Knowledge, Inuit Knowledge or Traditional Knowledge. The definition provided above is understood by ICC to apply to all three terms.*



Top left to right: Harvesting beluga. Photo: Hans Lennie; Picking Aqpik (salmon berries). Photo: Chris Arend
Bottom left to right: Braiding seal intestines to dry and eat later. Photo: Tom Gray; Prepping fish for sharing in the ISR.
Photo: John Noksana

INTRODUCTION: MANAGEMENT FROM THE INUIT PERSPECTIVE

For thousands of years, Inuit ingenuity and IK were solely responsible for the successful management of Arctic resources. Inuit have been and continue to be part of the environment through deeply rooted values which govern relationships with the whole environment. Project Participants repeatedly stressed that “management” is not a new concept. As Participants shared, “Our ancestors thrived by living an Inuit way of life, using our IK, applying our rules/laws/practices” and “We have our own way of life, we have our own laws.” These rules/practices/laws and values shared need to be at the forefront of all management discussions.

Inuit hold a strong spiritual connection to the animals, land, water, and air. Hunting, fishing, and gathering are important for clothing, building materials, art, medicine, spirituality, self and community identity, health and wellness, connecting to the land, and all of the other components that make up food security. The reciprocal relationships held between Inuit and the environment in which they are part was described by participants to be a source of happiness. As participants shared, there is a happiness felt from the relationships with the animal, to an animal giving itself to the hunter, and to providing for the community.

For many communities, relationships with particular animals are central to the relationships within the community itself. One participant commented that their entire community was based on walrus, stressing the importance of the community coming together around harvesting and preparation. Many Participants made it clear that their spiritual relationships with Arctic animals (such as walrus) have worth and cultural relevance far beyond their material value. This intangible cultural relevance is incalculable. Hunting and gathering times, such as walrus or beluga hunting, are central to traditional Inuit management and overall food security. Those interactions not only strengthen bonds between people, they also give people a chance to tell stories about the hunting season and allow for the circulation

and sharing of important information regarding the walrus, sea ice, water movements; sharing and eating the clams found in the walrus stomach; and overall accumulation and passage of IK.

Many traditional practices continue to be in use today, rooted in IK and focused on relationships, leading to a holistic and adaptive approach that is applied to decision-making. Through this approach, key values such as gratitude, respect, honesty, humility, sharing, cooperation, following animals and the weather as opposed to trying to exert control over the environment, and even humor are all part of maintaining resilience, sustainability, and a healthy environment (including human health).

Many shared rules/laws/practices continue to be used today. Rules such as ‘never take more than you need’ are known by all Inuit. It means that what is taken should be treated with respect and shared, and no part of what is taken should be wasted. As one participant shared, “We don’t over harvest, we get what we need, what we’ll share and that’s what we get. And that’s always been that way...” If people do not use the animals and maintain a relationship with the animals, there is an imbalance within the ecosystem. These practices are key attributes of sustainability.

Many Participants from both the ISR and Alaska shared that decisions go back to traditional use of the animals. Communities hunt and fish in tune with a holistic understanding of the environment and not solely on the basis of numbers. Inuit are constantly adapting. When needed, they agree to restrain hunting practices without regulation by the governments.

Participants stressed the importance of being taught these practices from birth or as young children and of being taught by their parents, grandparents, other family members, and community leaders. Participants shared that Inuit rules/laws/practices have been passed down orally and through everyday



Alice Carroll picks berries at her family camp in Sisualik, AK. Photo: Majja Lukin

practices. These rules/laws/practices have been enforced independently by communities forever and even now when there are other laws being imposed. Participants agreed that their Inuit rules/laws/practices are simple and effective and take into consideration the Arctic environment in a more holistic way than laws coming from outside or external governing bodies.

In one ISR community, Participants described traditional Inuit management as a way of putting wildlife first to make sure that there is enough for the future. It is generally agreed that the community follows the “old-time rules” and continues to practice traditional management, looking to Elders for guidance, just as they always have. Within both Alaska and the ISR, Inuit agreed that they tend to follow traditional management rules/laws/practices regardless of formal laws.

Inuit rules/laws/practices are adaptive, flexible, and allow for quick decision-making. Within both the ISR and Alaska, the ability to make quick decisions is not always reflected in the external management systems that Inuit operate within today. Working within slow-to-adapt systems has become more of a challenge as rapid rates of climate change make weather and related factors (i.e. migration patterns, birthing success, salmon returns) harder or impossible to predict.

With all the changes occurring in the Arctic, there is an urgent need for management practices that are adaptable and holistic. Participants commented that management practices and regulations must be revised and adapted to remain current and relevant within the changing climate and empower Inuit to use rules/practices that have worked for thousands of years.

There is a strong concern that outside regulations do not capture the emotional and spiritual connection that Inuit have to hunting, harvesting, and fishing, or being part of the environment. Inuit continually emphasized the animals as having important economic, social, cultural, political, and spiritual value.

As state, territorial, and federal governments have laid claim to these resources, sovereign rights and Indigenous management systems have too often been undervalued or ignored.

Box 2. Inuit Traditional Rules/Laws/Practices. Throughout the project, Participants shared important Inuit traditional rules/laws/practices. Though not exhaustive, this list offers examples of the many important rules/laws/practices followed to this day.

- *Respect; your relationship to everything within the environment; yourself, your neighbor, and your enemy*
- *Do not waste; use all parts of the animal; be conservative*
- *Fasting helps create abundance*
- *Share; share your first catch with Elders; share with widows; make sure that all are provided for*
- *Take care of each other*
- *Never argue about the animals (e.g. birds, fish, land animals, sea animals)*
- *Take care of the land and the land will take care of you*
- *Give wholeheartedly without expecting anything in return*
- *Include youth in hunting and fishing; celebrate youth involvement*
- *Everyone in the family has a role*
- *Be quiet and humble and live in harmony*
- *Focus on caretaking, not fighting*
- *Let the Elders eat first*
- *Elders should share their knowledge; youth should gain the knowledge of their Elders*
- *Have patience – take time*
- *Follow the seasons, follow the animals*
- *Take animals when they give themselves to you; harvest a resource when it is available*
- *Honesty*
- *Land owns you rather than western view that you own the land*
- *Communication*
- *Cooperation*
- *Take no more than you need*
- *Don't talk about the animals when you are going to be hunting that day because they might hear you*
- *Don't make plans for the meat before you go out hunting*
- *Be observant, pay attention to your surroundings*
- *No matter which way the wind is, the waves go towards the land*
- *A priority is the safety of your crew (i.e. a whaling crew)*
- *All things are interrelated*
- *People are not individualistic and avoid a hierarchical structure*
- *Speak from within the environment*
- *Never brag about what you catch*
- *Leave animals alone when they are having young ones*
- *Pay attention to all of the pieces that make of the environment - holistic management*
- *Keep what you catch – no catch and release*
- *Let the larger animals go first – they lead the others*
- *Always listen*



Harvesting caribou in the ISR. Photo: John Noksana

Box 3. Management and Co-management

A theme that continually arose during workshops and reviews is that management is not a new concept. Though many Inuit do not refer to it as management, it is clear that Inuit have governed their relationships within the Arctic environment for thousands of years. What is relatively new, is the ‘management’ brought into the Arctic by dominating cultures.

Throughout this project, Participants referred to many different types of management. People discussed Inuit management—rules/laws/practices that are used daily and have been passed from generation to generation. Participants also discussed the management systems that they are working within. Sometimes these are co-management systems, sometimes they are collaborative agreements, and sometimes they are management systems in which Inuit struggle to have a place or a voice.

Therefore, the terms “management” and “co-management” in this report need to be understood in various and specific contexts. “Management” and “co-management” may be an expression of support for full Inuit management – the ability of Inuit to define their responsibilities and values concerning all that they coexist with and harvest. The term may also embrace Inuit-to-Inuit co-management, such as the bilateral agreements that exist between the Inuvialuit and Inupiat. In the context of Alaska, it may solely mean the role, behavior, and actions of the non-Inuit governments. Finally, the term true co-management is used to illustrate a framework where state, federal, and territorial governments genuinely share power with Inuit governments in real partnership, collaboration, and cooperation. True co-management is based upon each party exercising the rights and responsibilities relating to decision-making and information gathering.

Oftentimes, there is a lack of knowledge about what Inuit food security is. Many assume that it is just about nutrients, calories, and money, rather than about culture, spirituality, Inuit knowledge, and Inuit rules/laws/practices.

Concern was also expressed about the differing reasons why people are involved in management discussions or related activities. As a participant shared, “Many agency representatives take on a job to build their resumes and careers. But this is our lives...it is everything that we are”.

In Alaska, Participants further stressed that prior to US management, adaptive and holistic practices allowed hunters to sustain multiple species across time and space. Now, hunters face disjointed management and can get arrested for exercising what they know to be sustainable hunting practices. For example, several Participants noted that within Alaska in 2017 and later, all animals “across the board were available slightly earlier than expected.” With animal migrations changing, unpredictable weather, and changes in temperatures, it is important to harvest when the animals and plants are available, accessible, and the weather supports preparing and storing the food. Participants expressed frustration that there is no effective way to change the regulatory seasons to accommodate availability and accessibility of resources through a timely and holistic approach.

Participants stressed that having policies, regulations, and agreements that do not reflect Inuit ways of life and values have drastic impacts on Inuit communities, animals, water, and on the entire ecosystem. That concept informs the main conclusion of this report: management must change to support both equity and a healthy environment.

PROJECT PARTNERS, LOCATION AND METHODOLOGY

Project Partners and Location

The project took place within Alaska and the ISR through partnerships with the Eskimo Walrus Commission (EWC), Inuvialuit Game Council (IGC), Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (KRITFC), Fisheries Joint Management Committee (FJMC), and Association of Village Council Presidents (AVCP).

Methodology - Indigenous Knowledge, Science, and Legal Review

This project used IK, social science, and legal research approaches. A co-production of knowledge approach was of key importance to all that have been involved in this project. Through this approach, no one person's knowledge or perspectives were more important than another person's knowledge or perspectives. At the same time, we recognized a lack of Inuit voices and their knowledge within this type of work. With this in mind a strong focus was placed on bringing forward Inuit perspectives and knowledge - in addition to conducting legal research, in order to support equity. Additional information on the project methodology and IK is in the project technical report.

Figure 2. Food Sovereignty and Self-Governance Project Map.

The map shows a snap shot of communities involved in this project. See Appendix for a complete list of communities involved in the project.



KEY CONCEPTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following concepts and recommendations were raised by Inuit throughout the project workshops, focus groups, and expert interviews. All concepts and recommendations directly relate to Inuit food sovereignty. The following should be of interest to all seeking a better understanding of Inuit food sovereignty and management. The concepts shared are key to how Inuit view the world through IK. The recommendations shared are for the benefit of the entire Arctic.

Key Concepts

- Inuit have rules/laws/practices, values, and customs that have remained successful for thousands of years
- Inuit have holistic approaches to decision-making with a focus on relationships between components of the ecosystem and an understanding of cumulative impacts
- The Arctic is not new - the Arctic has remained homelands of Inuit for thousands of years
- Inuit have inhabited the Arctic based on their ingenuity and adaptation
- This unique region has undergone rapid, major changes
- National and international level policies and decision-making tends to be top-down and hierarchical in approach. This can slow response times and limit adaptations to rapid environmental/ ecological changes, threatening Inuit ways of life
- Co-production of knowledge, in which IK and science are brought together, is essential to understanding the Arctic as well as for adaptive, holistic decision-making
- Trust and respect are essential in all interactions
- The absence of effective legal protection of land tenure and access rights represents a fundamental threat to Inuit integrity and resilience
- Inuit are borderless and view the wildlife and marine system as interconnected

Recommendations

Inuit have made it clear that changes are required to existing management and co-management frameworks. Some needed changes are based on the mechanics of how law works. While those changes matter, it's not just about laws. Participants expressed that a fundamental shift is needed in how government officials interact with Inuit. At the forefront is a need for communication that respects and honors the inherent status, rights, roles, and governance systems of Inuit, while also acknowledging the history of injustices from federal, state, and territorial governments.

Despite the fact that national policy prohibits racial discrimination and international law proclaims "that Indigenous peoples, in the exercise of their rights, should be free from discrimination of any kind," numerous Participants expressed concern about the continuing legacy of discrimination and how it is manifested by state/territorial/federal managers and regulators in the course of hunting, fishing and other harvesting activities.

Successful and equitable management systems require recognition and identification of systemic and institutionalized racism and discrimination that continues to exist today. Many of the overarching regulations, agreements, and laws employed by international fora/ federal/state/territorial governments were developed to address dominant cultural perspectives and worldview. Equitable management requires approaches, processes, and interpretations that are inclusive and respectful of multiple and diverse worldviews and knowledge systems, especially those of Inuit.

Project Participants broadly agreed on the following recommendations, listed under the following eight themes.

- 👉 Self-determination requires that Inuit lead the way in decision-making processes and also requires the support of international coordination
- 👉 Inuit management and co-management bodies should be provided with stable, long-term federal/state/territorial funding that supports capacity building as defined by Inuit
- 👉 Meaningful working relationships require trust, respect, sharing, and cooperation, and education
- 👉 Consultation should be treated as a truly substantive exchange of ideas, knowledge, and views between partners, with increased weight given to Inuit voices, rather than a procedural box-check
- 👉 Allocation and regulation of resources should start and end with Inuit co-management bodies, with federal/state/ territorial government bodies supporting those decisions
- 👉 Research funding should flow to Inuit and outside research projects should heavily involve Inuit input and direction
- 👉 Disputes should be resolved on an equal footing
- 👉 Climate Change and Inuit Food Sovereignty

The recommendations under each theme aim to strengthen current management systems within Alaska; the co-management system within the ISR; and/or equitable involvement of Inuit decision-making within international fora, with varying application in each region. In addition, detailed recommendations are provided within the summary reports of each focus group and workshop.⁶

⁶There are nine summary reports, one for each focus group meeting or workshop held throughout this project. All reports can be accessed at the ICC Alaska webpage. Accessed on Jan. 27, 2020. <https://iccalaska.org/media-and-reports/inuit-food-security-project/>



From top: King Island Dancer performing at the 2018 ICC General Assembly. Photo: Jacki Cleveland; Aklavik Drummers and Dancers, joined by others from the ISR, performing at the 2018 ICC General Assembly. Photo: Jacki Cleveland.



Ulus. Photo: Jacki Cleveland

There are numerous positive examples within the ISR and Alaska in which Inuit communities and IK holders are engaged in a respectful and positive way and where equitable relationships lie between Inuit and those working with them to make decisions. Those relationships are important for better understanding the Arctic and to better address the challenges faced today. With these recommendations, we support such relationships and actions and aim to make them the norm as opposed to the exception. All recommendations intend to strengthen Inuit food sovereignty.

Overall, it's imperative to consider that these recommendations are not just to improve management, but to recognize centuries old yet continuing, vibrant Inuit culture, values, and economies reflective of the important interconnecting relationships that exist for Inuit within the Arctic. The following recommendations are essential for human rights and justice in a changing Arctic environment.

The recommendations are not listed in a specific order. Each recommendation provides a brief overview and a call to action. Aspects of these recommendations are further explored in the corresponding sections of the report. For this reason, it is important to be mindful of the distinctions between structures, entities and the organization of the respective management and co-management boards and bodies.



Self-determination requires that Inuit lead the way in decision-making processes and also requires the support of international coordination

At the heart of international law is the right of self-determination for all peoples, including Inuit and other Indigenous peoples. Both the US and Canada have acceded to important international instruments, including human rights treaties and declarations. It is time to put these commitments into action through management and co-management.

Simultaneously, transboundary coordination and decision-making is essential since 1) Arctic animals do not abide by imposed geographic boundaries and 2) Inuit Nunaat crosses four Arctic countries. Management strategies that don't consider the transboundary movement of animals, demographic history of a region, and/or seasonality create false silos that are ultimately self-defeating.

Within the Inuvialuit Settlement Region

The Inuvialuit Final Agreement (IFA) largely supports the role and decisions coming from the Inuvialuit. While Inuit food sovereignty needs to be strengthened in some instances, the IFA is a strong, legally binding instrument used by Inuvialuit to continue to improve their equitable role in decision-making. There are existing success stories that can be celebrated as a shared achievement of Inuvialuit and the federal and/or territorial governments.

- ✦ **Call for action:** Continue empowering Hunters and Trappers Committees (HTCs), the Inuvialuit Game Council (IGC), and all co-management bodies under the Inuvialuit Final Agreement.
- ✦ **Call for action:** Support and, where necessary, enhance autonomy in decision-making unless exceptional circumstances exist.
- ✦ **Call for action:** Engage with institutions that will provide funding/logistical support to Inuvialuit communities and organizations.

Within Alaska

In the US, Inuit often feel that their voices are not heard. There is a need for the state and federal governments to make fundamental changes in interactions with Tribal Governments and Inuit organizations. Success stories are often the result of an incredible effort and patience from Inuit, along with some individuals in US government who go above and beyond their duties. Consistent efforts by federal and state government representatives to equitably engage with Inuit, through demonstrated trust and respect, should be the rule rather than the exception.

- ✦ **Call for action:** Inuit voices should drive decisions; Inuit should be able to exercise their right to say no, yes or yes with conditions unless exceptional circumstances exist; Inuit should engage directly with federal and/or state governments to ensure provision of funding/logistical support to Inuit communities. For those in Alaska, such an action is fully consistent with the government-to-government relationship that exists in the US.
- ✦ **Call for action:** Acknowledge and work to provide a unified, collaborative approach across Inuit regions in Alaska toward collective gains that may result in a collective Inuit-based management system.
- ✦ **Call for action:** Determine a strategy to enhance capacity and authority of Inuit political institutions (such as Tribal governments) in the area of management and co-management of lands, territories, Arctic marine wildlife, and coastal waters.

Throughout all of Inuit Nunaat

- ✦ **Call for action:** Inuit organizations consider the development of additional Inuit-led bi-lateral and multilateral collaboration across Inuit homelands similar to the Inuvialuit-Inupiat Polar Bear Management body or other successful examples.



Maktak Salad- a mix of Indigenous foods, like beluga, with vegetables. Photo: Majja Lukin

- ✦ **Call for action:** Expand the Food Sovereignty and Self-Governance dialogue to include Inuit across all of Chukotka, Alaska, Canada, and Greenland.
- ✦ **Call for action:** Gather and publish materials documenting Inuit rules/laws/practices, customs, and values related to hunting, fishing, and harvesting activities as well as the positive stories and examples of Inuit food security and food sovereignty.
- ✦ **Call for action:** Continue to increase communications across Inuit organizations and Tribal Governments by enhancing networking capabilities. This action would improve collaboration, coordination, and education among circumpolar Inuit communities (in particular, active hunters, fishers and harvesters) including the active sharing of information and development of coordinated monitoring activities.



Inuit management and co-management bodies should be provided with stable, long-term federal/state/territorial funding that supports capacity building as defined by Inuit

Whenever there is an uncertainty in funding, management suffers. Putting Inuit on the same footing as an NGO or other entity is disrespectful and unjust. Such an approach is inconsistent with Inuit legal and political status, rights, and roles. In addition, it undermines the investment into capacity-building that is needed for adaptive and holistic ecosystem-based management.

Within the Inuvialuit Settlement Region

In the ISR, increased and stable funding from federal and/or territorial governments would allow for sustained positive changes in the health of Inuvialuit communities and the environment. Though a funding regime exists, additional resources would enhance capacity to be responsive to ever increasing requirements for reports, monitoring, collection of IK, and other needs. Funding needs should be determined by Inuit organizations.

- ✦ **Call for action:** Increase funding levels annually beyond the rate of inflation and proportional to need; Inuit organizations receiving funding should have the authority to determine allocation of funds to address needs they have identified; provide more grants when additional funding is needed to support Inuit adaptive and holistic ecosystem-based decision-making, including important management functions in a changing Arctic.
- ✦ **Call for action:** Increase or adjust federal/territorial delegations and their approach to management and co-management meetings to ensure that decision-making is both holistic and takes place in a timely, effective fashion, ideally including decision-makers in the meetings.

Within Alaska

In the US, funding is uneven and places Inuit under dramatic uncertainty rather than recognizing their status as sovereign governing entities and meeting the full commitments of the trust responsibility, with the corresponding obligations. A relatively small investment can have massive returns for Inuit, the environment, the state of Alaska, and the US government. Too often, though, insufficient funding may be provided to management and co-management bodies under cooperative agreements. Yet, corresponding federal agencies are fully funded and all federal employees are salaried. Comparatively, IK holders, including Inuit hunters, do not have funding to play an equitable role within the context of the cooperative agreements and the many policies and rules that must be understood.

- ✦ **Call for action:** Provide assurance of continued, sustainable funding with increases for inflation and without reductions. Such funding should ensure that Tribes and Inuit management bodies are able to determine priorities. Additionally, funding should be made available to support adaptive and holistic ecosystem-based decision-making, including gathering baseline information, and long-term monitoring based upon IK, science, or both, as well as Inuit community engagement.



Meaningful working relationships require trust, respect, sharing, and cooperation, and education

Participants described interactions with government officials and/or researchers that often feel adversarial, as if there is a winner and a loser. Instead, interactions should emphasize respect, trust, equitable partnership, and mutual goals. Ideally, meetings would attempt to find agreement, rather than pitting people against each other. Education systems related to culture and governance, knowledge of laws, policies, and instruments which support Inuit food sovereignty, and capacity building can nurture healthier interactions and genuine trust.



Aklavik Drummers and Dancers performing at the 2018 ICC General Assembly.
Photo: Jacki Cleveland

Within the Inuvialuit Settlement Region

Education modules have been developed to ensure that Inuvialuit are intimately familiar with the IFA and that all actors are encouraging use of the IFA in support of Inuvialuit rights. IFA education modules have been successful, and many interactions are described as beneficial. However, there is still some concern that not all provisions are being implemented

in a comprehensive fashion and that many federal/territorial government representatives are unfamiliar with the IFA. Additionally, there is continued concern that Inuvialuit voices are not always heard by officials that view it as a part of the job, rather than an essential element of human rights for Indigenous peoples and a shared legal agreement.

- ✦ **Call for action:** Continue to support and provide funding for the development of education modules.
- ✦ **Call for action:** Prioritize cultural training for any official and researcher that works within the ISR with an emphasis on ensuring that government representatives have a working knowledge of the IFA.
- ✦ **Call for action:** Continue and enhance internal education initiatives focused upon increasing Inuvialuit knowledge and awareness of their rights and the provisions of the IFA.
- ✦ **Call for action:** Comprehensive implementation of all provisions and aspects of the IFA.

Within Alaska

In the US, Participants expressed that trust is undermined when conversations and meetings feel unproductive, with officials not even listening. Trust, recognition, and respect are crucial for any good governance, especially governance of human relationships with animals which Inuit have relied upon for generations and continue to rely upon. Too often, federal/state representatives have a rule book and are present simply to enforce the rules. Many have little experience or hold relationships with individuals or the communities they work with. Plus, high turn-over rates can cause an inordinate amount of stress and upheaval for Inuit and their communities. There must be a fundamental change in how US officials engage with Tribal Governments, Inuit organizations, and their members.

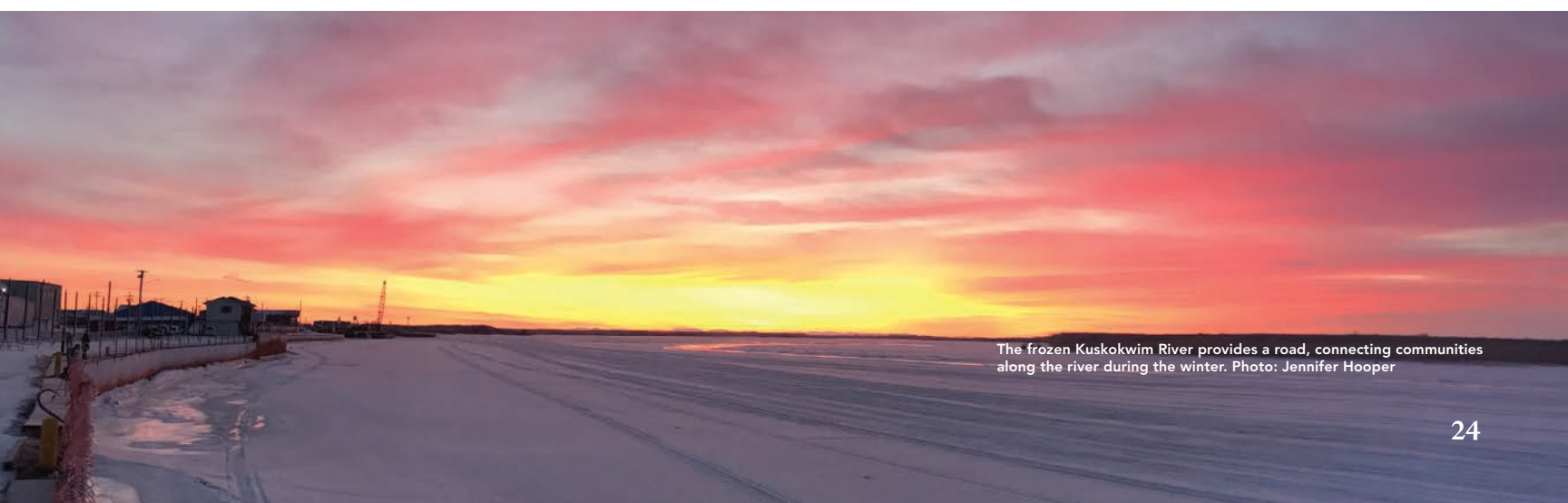
- **Call for action:** Provide cultural training and evaluation for all officials; create protocols to support culturally appropriate processes for Inuit to respond to disagreements/miscommunications/complaints when necessary.
- **Call for Action:** In order to rectify many current conditions, positive steps must be taken to eliminate discriminatory or other barriers and to ensure that Inuit are able to gain recognition of and respect for their rightful entitlements under federal law and agreements. Such steps may include preference for the hire of Inuit for management positions, especially at the local level; development and adoption of genuine partnering principles in order to develop relationships that benefit both parties; sustained cultural orientation training; and a requirement for extensive knowledge of the distinct rights of Inuit.

Throughout Alaska, the Inuvialuit Settlement Region, and all of Inuit Nunaat

Trust, sharing, and cooperation are important values within the Inuit culture and a key component of trust and respect. Having knowledge of Inuit culture, providing culturally appropriate material, and making space for culturally appropriate discussions will strongly encourage equity, trust, and respect. Culturally appropriate discussions include recognition of seasons and cycles important to Inuit. For example, there must be respect and recognition of Inuit requests for no meetings

during the height of a harvesting season. Furthermore, Inuit must have greater latitude to set meeting dates, determine how meetings take place, and to facilitate such meetings – this will likely lead to greater and more active Inuit participation. In addition, too often, federal/territorial and sometimes industry funding is provided but is limited to expenditure by government and industry representatives.

- **Call for action:** Provide culturally appropriate educational materials and activities to increase knowledge related to national and international law generally and related to Indigenous peoples and Inuit specifically, in particular in the field of management, co-management and use of animals. Such materials and activities should emphasize youth in order to recognize the intergenerational nature of Inuit harvesting activities and rights.
- **Call for action:** Meetings should be structured in culturally appropriate ways to emphasize and support honesty, sharing, and cooperation by all parties. With direction from Inuit partners, meetings may call for different activities and points of action, such as longer periods of time for discussions, for food to be shared, language interpreters, inclusion of appropriate Inuit dialects, face-to-face meetings, written materials, visuals, and focus placed on discussions as opposed to presentations that do not allow for real dialogue.



The frozen Kuskokwim River provides a road, connecting communities along the river during the winter. Photo: Jennifer Hooper



Top left to right: Winter in Savoonga, AK. Photo: Carolina Behe; Job (Jobeb) and Van Kapsner fishing to provide for their family on the Kuskokwim River, AK. Photo: Mary Peltola; Alecia Jade Lennie dancing as part of the Inuvik Drummers and Dancers group. Alecia is wearing a dance parka made by her mom, Billie Lennie. Photographer unknown. Photo provided by Alecia Jade Lennie

Bottom left to right: Phillip Charlie, Jr. talking about how big the berries were where he was picking and how much rain pours in a few seconds. Photo: Charlie Charlie; Across the Arctic, we feed our families from the land and water. Photo: John Noksana



Consultation should be treated as a truly substantive exchange of ideas, knowledge, and views between partners, with increased weight given to Inuit voices, rather than a procedural box-check

Consultation is meant to be meaningful throughout all management and co-management actions because it is an ongoing process where Participants come together to exchange ideas, knowledge, and perspectives. What is considered 'meaningful consultation' can take on very different definitions from an Inuit perspective and those representing federal/state/territorial governments. Many Inuit Participants describe current consultation activities as frustrating, with some saying that current methods render "consultation" meaningless.

Within the Inuvialuit Settlement Region

In the ISR and elsewhere in Canada, consultation is enforceable in court and a Crown responsibility, with the requirement for written justification of decisions.

- **Call for action:** Continue assurance of Inuit voices being given weight in decisions.
- **Call for action:** Ensure that Inuvialuit are able to raise important issues outside of a single-species focus and through culturally appropriate discussions and methods defined by Inuvialuit.
- **Call for action:** Ensure that federal/territorial government representatives attending meetings are the commensurate counterparts and decision-makers to those of the IFA to ensure that such meetings are meaningful, productive, and result in timely decisions that make the best use of time and resources.

Within Alaska

In the US, Participants described consultation as a process that is viewed as a burden by federal/state government officials, rather than an opportunity to meaningfully engage, develop partnerships, and to have equitable dialogue. Some project Participants essentially describe consultation as similar to talking to a wall. A key frustration raised within Alaska is the point at which consultation occurs. Discussions are often introduced by federal/state government representatives prepared to make decisions before meaningful dialogue and consultation has taken place.

- **Call for action:** Tribes and Inuit management organizations should encourage development of formal guidelines and procedures for meaningful consultation. Any federal/state guidelines must be developed in collaboration and cooperation with the Inuit concerned to ensure that such processes prioritize Inuit voices and participation in culturally appropriate ways.
- **Call for action:** Subject matter of consultations that may trigger legal or executive actions must ensure genuine consultation and again, prioritize Inuit rights, concerns, and voices, including those concerning conservation questions.
- **Call for action:** Justification for decisions should be provided to Inuit Participants in all instances, including providing information on potential impacts of decisions to Indigenous Peoples and their food sources; legal changes or executive actions should be consistent with international and other standards.
- **Call for action:** Consideration must be given for time and financial resources, time of year (considering cultural activities, hunting, etc.), translation needs, location of meetings, and the formation of the meeting (for example, the way discussions are held, including food).



Allocation and regulation of resources should start and end with Inuit co-management bodies, with federal/state/territorial government bodies supporting those decisions

Repeatedly, decisions led by Inuit have resulted in a healthier environment and stronger, healthier communities. Inuit-driven management and co-management requires responding/adapting to a rapidly changing environment from the community-level up, along with exercising power and authority over decisions that are not supported by IK.

Within the Inuvialuit Settlement Region

In the ISR, the FJMC can make recommendations at any time throughout management processes, which is optimal. In practice, the FJMC takes strong direction from the Inuvialuit Game Council.

- ✦ **Call for action:** Federal government to implement and apply the utilization of IK in management decisions; support continued prioritization of Inuit objections to any policies or interpretations that contrast with IK.
- ✦ **Call for action:** Fund IK coordinator positions within Inuvialuit organizations to engage in all activities and assist with communication.

Within Alaska

In the US, Tribes and Inuit organizations sometimes face an illogical legal framework of varying federal and state subsistence regulations - regulations which demonstrate a lack of understanding Inuit food security. Simultaneously, Tribes and Inuit organizations are not adequately given a voice in management processes, or a voice in objecting to existing processes. The law and interpretations of the law must change to reflect and accommodate their distinct legal status, rights and role as Tribal Governments.



Walrus outside of Little Diomed, AK. Photo: Maasingah Nakak;
Photo: Carolina Behe;
Photo: Tom Gray



Clockwise from left: Aklavik Drummers and Dancers performing at the 2018 ICC General Assembly.
Photo: Jacki Cleveland;

Sharing Indigenous Knowledge between generations. Photo: Tom Gray;
Photo: Carolina Behe

- ✦ **Call for action:** Establish agency policies that elevate Inuit harvest to first priority, including legislative approaches and legal changes; create agency policies that allow for an objection-and-review process that respects the right to self-determination, including recognition of the right to say no.

Throughout Alaska, the Inuvialuit Settlement Region and all of Inuit Nunaat

As shared throughout this report, IK stands alone as its own body of knowledge, with its own validation and evaluation processes. Problems have arisen through misuse and unethical practices of engaging with IK. For example, the attempted translation of IK into western science or piecemeal use of IK from reports to support scientific points has left many Inuit at an uneven place relative to other researchers. The ethical use of IK requires that the IK holders are involved in all aspects of study design and research.

- ✦ **Call for action:** Recognize the need for equitable inclusion of IK in evidence-based decision-making.
- ✦ **Call for action:** Adequately fund and account for time needed to effectively co-develop projects, monitoring, and decision-making based on both IK and science.
- ✦ **Call for action:** Develop a written plan and agreement for the equitable and ethical inclusion of IK through all planning, information gathering, and decision-making.
- ✦ **Call for action:** In partnership with Inuit, evaluate processes and procedures to ensure equitable and ethical engagement of IK and processes that genuinely respect and recognize IK and IK holders.



Winter in Ulukhaktok. Photo: Carolina Behe;
Morning Breeze. A unique iceberg near the coast of Tuktoyaktuk. Photo: Chris Kelly;
Photo: Carolina Behe



Research funding should flow to Inuit and outside research projects should heavily involve Inuit input and direction

Inuit have a deep knowledge of their environment that is built on thousands of years of expertise. Any project in the area must include funding for IK holders and must coordinate with Inuit before, during, and after projects. Where they exist and/or are emerging, such activities should include Inuit protocols for engagement of communities and involvement of IK. Additionally, Inuit research needs and questions should be prioritized and addressed over those of the outside research community.

Within Alaska

- **Call for action:** Federal/state support for Tribal Governments and regional Inuit organizations to house their own experts, in order to conduct research that is directly guided by communities.
- **Call for action:** Funding support for Tribal Governments and Inuit organizations to develop a needs assessment using IK and methods – one that accounts for all aspects of Inuit food security (i.e. culture, accessibility, availability).
- **Call for action:** Support of regional internal review boards governed by Inuit to provide reviews of research proposals.

Throughout Alaska, the Inuvialuit Settlement Region, and all of Inuit Nunaat

Within the ISR, Alaska, and internationally there are similar systems for research coordination and needs. There are some positive examples, often driven by researchers that go beyond requirements. Within the ISR, there are stronger examples and systems to support Inuvialuit engagement in research processes.

For example, depending on where research is occurring, researchers must present their ideas and work to Hunters and Trappers Committees and to the Inuvialuit Game Council. As an Inuvialuit participant indicated, “researchers are not doing things that the Inuvialuit are not in favor of or not consulted on.” However, poor practices and actions by researchers persist, including negative examples of researchers that do not engage Inuit nor provide respect for or recognition of IK. One significant disparity is funding from government or large academic institutions with huge expectations from Inuit freely providing knowledge, expertise, and time without compensation. This dynamic is then compounded by lack of respect for IK and IK holder contributions. Ultimately, Inuit communities need to benefit from the research taking place as well as ensuring the viability of research. Inuit Nunaat should not simply be used as the “training grounds” for research. Rather, reputable research utilizing IK in a respectful, good faith fashion must take place, resulting in benefits for both Inuit and others.

- **Call for action:** Sustainable funding should be made available for Inuit-led projects addressing research needs determined by Inuit concerned.
- **Call for action:** All projects should have a mechanism for funding of IK components and IK holders.
- **Call for action:** All projects should be subject to “free, prior and informed consent” by Inuit management organizations, Tribal governments, communities, and peoples concerned.
- **Call for action:** Sustainable funding to support Inuit community-driven research and monitoring programs.



Disputes should be resolved on an equal footing

A major problem with current management and co-management systems is related to how disagreements are settled. Some Participants indicated that objecting can backfire, leading to no substantive changes, just more distrust. While each situation varies, the problem exists in both the US and the ISR.

Within Alaska

Within Alaska, Participants stressed the need for enhanced collaboration and cooperation between the Inuit corporations and Tribal governments on management and co-management.

- ✦ **Call for Action:** Review and amendment of relevant areas of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) and Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) that have stifled or hindered genuine management and co-management of resources that Inuit communities rely upon for food security. Such action will greatly enhance food sovereignty.

Throughout Alaska, the Inuvialuit Settlement Region, and all of Inuit Nunaat

- ✦ **Call for action:** Establish or improve procedures and entities that allow disputes to be resolved with weight given to IK. Such a body should be effective and readily available at all levels and applicable for all issues raised by the Inuit concerned in order to be fair and equitable.
- ✦ **Call for Action:** Meetings and dialogue between co-management parties should accommodate an Inuit cultural context, supporting Inuit to set the meeting agenda and facilitate discussions, including format and face to face meetings, structure, procedure, language and dialects, interpretation if needed, written materials, visuals, allowance and provision of food, and related elements.
- ✦ **Call for Action:** Inuit must have the ability to set the agenda, facilitate dialogue and meetings, and govern the proceedings in a fashion that respects and recognizes the important Inuit cultural context and holistic approach.



Potluck with bowhead and beluga whale muktuk. Photo: Chris Arend



Sarǰiq is the Inupiaq (NW Arctic dialect) word for “Stinkweed” or *Artemisia Tiliesii*, an indigenous medicine used for centuries. Photo: Maija Lukin



Climate Change and Inuit Food Sovereignty

Throughout Alaska, the Inuvialuit Settlement Region, and all of Inuit Nunaat

In every meeting, focus group, and workshop, Participants raised concerns about the rapid, major changes taking place due to climate change. As already noted, these environmental and ecological changes are directly threatening Inuit ways of life, harvesting and food security. Examples of changes include: water temperature fluctuations affecting salmon; changes in the birthing of walrus in coastal seas due to lack of sea ice; the influx of new species both on land and waters; an increase in vessel traffic impacting marine habitat; and numerous other transformations. Though Participants are adapting to the impacts of climate change and taking action to mitigate such changes, more must be done by government.

Federal/state/territorial governments must take greater responsibility for mitigating the impacts of climate change, including the provision of financial resources for increased monitoring, assistance due to adverse impacts such as coastal erosion, utilization of IK related to adaptation, and emergency preparedness. Many answers lie within Inuit communities – the ingenuity and knowledge held within Inuit communities provide solutions, adaptation strategies, and management approaches that are needed. Federal/state/territorial governments and international approaches will be strengthened through meaningful partnership with Inuit and by looking to Inuit for solutions and direction.

- ✦ **Call for action:** The US and Canada must take their international commitments seriously, especially in areas where climate change impacts are creating food insecurity. Such measures should include policy development, funding, and actions (in collaboration with Inuit) to respond to the call for “Nationally Determined Contributions” and “National Adaptation Plans” in the context of the UN Framework on the Convention of Climate Change (UNFCCC).
- ✦ **Call for action:** IK and Inuit perspectives should be drawn upon within UNFCCC Facilitative Working Group of the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples’ Platform and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.
- ✦ **Call for action:** Federal/state/territorial governments must work in partnership with Inuit communities in the development of solutions, research prioritization, and adaptive management to address climate change.
- ✦ **Call for action:** The US and Canada must take concrete action and measures to comprehensively implement the *UN Declaration* in order to give full effect to its interrelated provisions and to safeguard Inuit food security in the face of rapid change that Inuit are facing due to climate change.
- ✦ **Call for action:** To develop Inuit-specific educational materials and platforms on the substance and objectives of the *UN Declaration*.

A CHANGING WORLD MAKES ADAPTIVE CO-MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS OF PARAMOUNT IMPORTANCE

Through the project, Participants emphasized the changes that are occurring throughout Inuit Nunaat. There are multiple drivers to the changes that are occurring. It is important to look at the Arctic holistically to understand the interconnecting drivers and cumulative impacts. For example, there are connections between warming sea surface temperatures, change in sea ice movements, growth of berries and other vegetation, animal movements and behavior, conflict of interests - visiting sports hunters, shipping, scientists and environmental groups who work and lobby through single species lenses, economics, pollution, and a young boy giving his first catch to an Elder. All of these components, and many more, are interlinked and all hold components of decision-making. Throughout this project Inuit have shared many concerns about the different changes that are occurring and how it is impacting their lives and the Arctic as a whole. All of these concerns and/or how the concerns are addressed are directly connected to food sovereignty. At the same time it was stressed that Inuit have always adapted and will continue to adapt.

Participants stressed that concern comes not from change alone – in this dynamic environment, change has been constant and Inuit have always adapted. Additional concern comes from the lack of respect expressed toward all within the Arctic ecosystem and decisions made with unintentional impacts. Those decisions are sometimes made by individuals, governments, and institutions that are far from the Arctic, by those with differing value systems, by those that take a single species view of the world, and from those that lack adaptability. A lack of equity, discrimination and

racism within some areas, and the lack of trust and respect for Inuit and their knowledge within decision-making pathways to address these concerns impedes Inuit food sovereignty.

Throughout the project, Participants shared the following key changes occurring (this list is not exhaustive). Not all of the changes described come with concern. For example, when a new whale species gives itself to a hunter (traveling near a community), there is an opportunity to provide for the community. All of the items listed below require adaptive change in human behavior in order to be in harmony – or as one participant shared, to “follow the weather and the animals”

- Change in animal timing, migration, and behavior
- Change in food webs (animals are eating different food sources)
- Change in vegetation timing (i.e. berries are ripening at different times)
- Warming temperatures earlier in the day
- Impacts on preservation of food
- Rapid change in quality, timing, and formation of ice
- Change in sea ice - unpredictable sea ice, change in shore fast ice, rapid melting of ice, formation of new types of ice (thin ice)
- Change in harvesting and processing practices due to change in weather and ice
- Increase in storm variability and severity of storms
- Increased risk in hunting and other related safety concerns

- ✦ Increasing erosion
- ✦ Change in land formations affecting timing of sunsets
- ✦ Animal health
- ✦ Large animal die offs and animals with unusual hair loss and sores in Alaska (i.e. birds and salmon)
- ✦ New species in some areas
- ✦ Harmful algal blooms
- ✦ Change in prevailing winds
- ✦ Changes in air and water currents and temperatures
- ✦ Decline in health of water and air
- ✦ Declining populations of certain species (ptarmigan, king salmon, muskrats)
- ✦ Ocean acidification
- ✦ Loss of permafrost
- ✦ Change in salinity levels
- ✦ Changes in precipitation (increase in rain and less snow in some areas)
- ✦ Increase safety risk
- ✦ Additionally, hunters noted that some animals are disappearing

- ✦ Overall climate change
- ✦ Change in ice cellars
- ✦ Decrease in types of animals (i.e. birds)

Additional changes and concerns related to an increase in industrial marine ship traffic, increase in pollution (i.e. contaminants, plastics), increasing costs, and overabundance of certain species due to overarching management decisions that conflicted with Inuit traditional practices. Many of the changes listed above related to climate change and human actions occurring from outside of the Arctic.

Inuit are at the forefront of all of these changes. Inuit adaptability, ingenuity, and holistic worldview is needed to navigate this changing environment. This requires moving to a community-driven approach to decision-making, open involvement of IK, and equity. It also requires that national governments take responsibility for many of the changes occurring and provide financial support for communities to be responsive to the changes.



Flying over the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta of Alaska. Photo: Carolina Behe

CONCLUSION

There are many local, national, and international laws and legal instruments that support the interrelated, interdependent, and indivisible rights of Indigenous Peoples which were developed to safeguard their distinct status, including hunting, fishing, and harvesting rights. However, the present system for management and co-management falls short in diverse ways and requires improvement and reform to realize the legal protections that exist and to gain true co-management.

One crucial starting point is to effectively uphold the laws, policies, agreements and human rights instruments intended to ensure the survival of Inuit as distinct peoples. In addition, the objectives of this project have revealed many of the flaws and inequitable processes that impede true partnership with Inuit in order to support Inuit food sovereignty and subsequently Inuit food security and ecosystem health.

In the ISR, the case studies on beluga whales and char demonstrate that the IFA has provided a strong legal basis for equitable inclusion of IK and Inuit community-focused management. In Alaska, the case studies on walrus and

salmon demonstrate that there is still work to be done to elevate Inuit voices. Across all four case studies, Participants emphasized the need for respect and shared goals to support adaptation to climate change.

Across the circumpolar Arctic, Inuit are facing similar political and legal threats. Throughout the project, Participants shared realities which were sometimes painful and sometimes encouraging. The consensus is that both minor and major changes are needed to achieve food sovereignty and self-governance. In the context of such change, the worldviews, perspectives, knowledge, culture, and most importantly, Inuit themselves, must be central in the process.

To Inuit, the term “management” can be difficult to translate directly, but the matter goes far beyond law and policy. Rather, it is closer to a way of life central to the continued existence of Inuit communities. Moving forward, the Inuit way of life must be recognized, respected, and elevated in the rapidly changing Arctic.

APPENDIX 1 . PROJECT GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE

The project map (Figure 3) provides a visual of the connections that Inuit hold across Inuit Nunaat, regardless of imposed borders. The project took place in this area. All communities listed below have engaged in this project through organization representation and/or through representation at meetings, expert interviews, and/or through project team visits. Communities are listed by the partnering organization that they are part of.

Eskimo Walrus Commission

Utqiagvik	Little Diomede	Shishmaref
Brevig Mission	Mekoryuk	Stebbins
Gambell	Manokotak	Unalakleet
King Island	Nome	Wainwright
Kivalina	Point Hope	Wales
Kotzebue	Point Lay	
Kwigillingok	Savoonga	

Inuvialuit Game Council and Fisheries Joint Management Committee

Aklavik	Tuktoyaktuk	Ulukhaktok
Inuvik	Paulatuk	Sachs Harbor

Kuskokwim River Inter Tribal Fish Commission⁷

Akiachak	Kasigluk	Oscarville
Akiak	Kipnuk	Quinhagak
Aniak	Kongiganak	Red Devil
Atmautluak	Kwethluk	Sleetmute
Bethel	Kwigillingok	Tuluksak
Chefornak	Lower Kalskag	Tuntutuliak
Chuathbaluk	Napaimute	Upper Kalskag
Crooked Creek	Napakiak	
Eek	Napaskiak	
Georgetown	Nunapitchuk	

⁷ Through this project we worked with the Inuit (Yup'ik and Cup'ik) members of the KRITFC located within the Alaska. In addition to Yup'ik and Cup'ik communities, Dené communities belong to the KRITFC, including - Lime Village, McGrath, Takotna, Nikolai, Stony River, and Telida.



“Number one, is to keep the family on the land, keep in touch with the land, and live.” – ISR

“Food from the land is so much healthier than going to the store. I love it when I go to Shingle [Point] so I can work with my fish. Being at my age, I just love being there cutting it. I just love the peacefulness of that time...when I come back, I bring it to the Elders.”
– ISR

“What is well-being? My own being: the sun rises, you have food in your stomach, you have provided for your family. To be able to go out on the land, that’s well-being right there. You take care of the animals, the animals will take care of you, like that—simple as that.”
– Alaska

“As long as there is the ocean, we are going to hunt sea mammals because we know how. We know the migrations, we know where we can get them. We know where they have their young. That is all Indigenous Knowledge that was passed on to us. So we are going to survive whether the laws and regulations come around...We’ve got to make sure that the managers of Fish and Wildlife take into consideration our knowledge. Because we know. We are part of the land. We are out there living it.” – Alaska

“Earlier on, they would send higher level people that can come and sit down with you, you look them in the eye and you make decisions there on the spot. Those people were fairly knowledgeable” later adding “sometimes you’re sitting there across the table with someone who knows absolutely nothing about your land claim and can’t tie their shoes without going back to their office and speaking with their superior.” – ISR

“They amended our marine mammal act...so that they can hunt polar bears. Now everybody got their polar bears. They [international governments and entities] made another amendment to shut it down now. Really, the big world, takes a lot on how we conduct our lives up here.” – ISR

“All governments should know that Inuit are borderless. We are all brothers and sisters. So it doesn’t matter if you are in Greenland or Alaska, we are all one.”
– ISR

“We want to be sovereign in our own state and way of being, but there is always someone in the way stopping us – this is the state and federal government.” – Alaska

“We are the keepers of our beautiful land. The lands. We are the keepers. We are being rooted, generation after generation. So I think that it’s our responsibility to teach our youth. It is powerful. When I go out on the land, I can feel it.” – ISR

“It is about feeling whole, the hunter being in the right mind, being firm, being stable – [this is] also true for those who aren’t the captain or the hunter. It is healthy state of mind, holistic.” – Alaska

“We learned how animals’ behaviors are, and they [hunters] learned how to hunt successfully. When you live in an area, you become part of the environment, we are part of the environment. We have been sustaining this environment for thousands of years without degrading it. Resources keep coming back to us, year after year. And that’s one thing millions of people in the world misunderstand: we are actually part of the environment...We’ve been sustaining this environment and keeping it clean and everything, without hurting the [animals]. It’s what I learned as a hunter a long time ago. You better be part of that environment if you want to be a successful hunter.” – Alaska

All quotes provided during interviews, focus group meetings, and/or workshops held within Alaska and the Inuvialuit Settlement Region (ISR) of Canada.

“We depend a lot on migration here. Which is pretty much everywhere in the North I guess, is how people live, they live off the migration of animals and fish.” – ISR

“... in our own ways co-management is traditionally been used all these years by each village has their own management style they comply by their tribal laws and by voice and by oral record. When I was growing up, I was told you are going to go hunting you don't take too much, you just take what you need. You don't waste. You don't shoot at animals any time anywhere that is against our law. Those were the laws and the policies you have and they were strong. And the respected hunters that oversee these [laws] if there was any wrongdoing or disturbance, the infracted person was taken in front of the Umialik (whaling captain/leader) council.” – Alaska

“Inuvialuit look up to the Inuvialuit Final Agreement (IFA) and it is looked up to from other agreements in Canada, because it is a unique one and it is unique for a reason. It was the Elders before us that put this thing [the IFA] into—they negotiated some good stuff. We can be proud to be Inuvialuit.”
– ISR

“Because we have the Inuvialuit Final Agreement signed, we have a lot of say in projects that do take place.” – ISR
“Right now, living by other people's rules – [it is causing] loss of language, culture...” – Alaska

“...beluga whale in English is just beluga whale. But when you go into Inuvialuit and it is [a name for] each, the older whale—it is like people where you have Elders and middle age, same thing with beluga whales. Each one have four maybe five different names. Like the yellow- old one is different [a different name]. There is not just one whale, there are four different names for them. But in English, it is just beluga whale.” – ISR

“But we have our ways - we were not taught to overharvest—we just take what we need because us as Inuvialuit were around for many, many, many years and that is how we co-managed stuff.”
– ISR

“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].”
– ISR

“I noticed how much anxiety we all have, you can feel it in town. Fish camp is always a great time and healing. Wanting to fish is in my blood, in my body. [But it is] really hard to go fishing in June because we are not allowed [by outside regulations].” – Alaska

“Laws come already written: pieces of paper dictating how we must live.”
– Alaska

“Yeah, I think that is one thing [consultation] that we are continuously working on. For so many years we have been wanting to be consulted and we have never been heard. Even if we spoke, they never listened to us. But more and more now it is starting to work both ways. I think the feds and the territorial governments still have to work on their approach to the consultation process, but for us I think it is starting to work better. We are starting to be consulted more. So that part is a turn-around for us. We are starting to be heard, we are starting to be voiced.” – ISR

“In order to become healthy again, we need to be in control of our lives here.”
– Alaska



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