



Food Sovereignty and Self-Governance Workshop Summary Reports:

Inuit Coming Together from Across Alaska and the
Inuvialuit Settlement Region



This report reflects the knowledge and perspectives of Indigenous Knowledge holders attending the focus group and joint meetings. Each report includes guidance on how they should be cited. This collective document should be cited as Food Sovereignty and Self-Governance Workshop Summary Reports: Inuit Coming Together from Across Alaska and the Inuvialuit Settlement Region. Compiled in 2022. Anchorage, Alaska.

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About the Inuit Circumpolar Council

Since the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC) was founded in 1977 by the late Eben Hopson of Utqiagvik, Alaska, ICC has flourished and grown into a major international Indigenous Peoples' organization representing approximately 180,000 Inuit of Alaska, Canada, Greenland, and Chukotka (Russia). ICC holds the Non-Governmental Organization Consultative Status II with the United Nations Economic and Social Council and is a registered NGO with consultative status with numerous UN specialized agencies and bodies (i.e., registered observer for multiple UN treaties and conventions). ICC is a Permanent Participant of the Arctic Council.

ICC strives to strengthen unity among Inuit of the Circumpolar; promote Inuit rights and interests at the international level; develop and encourage long-term policies that safeguard the Arctic environment; and seek full and active partnership in the political, economic, and social development of the Circumpolar North. The ICC represents the interests of Inuit, and we have offices in four Arctic regions – Alaska, Canada, Greenland, and Chukotka. We are one people, in a single homeland, across four countries.

The ICC receives its mandate from a General Assembly held every four years. At the Assembly, delegates approve a declaration that is the international organization's mandate for a four-year term. The mandate to develop the Circumpolar Inuit Protocols for Equitable and Ethical Engagement is included in the Utqiagvik Declaration (2018-2022).



About This Document

Over four years, Inuit came together from across Alaska and the Inuvialuit Settlement Region (ISR) as part of the Food Sovereignty and Self-Governance: Inuit Role in Managing Arctic Marine Resources project (FSSG). The project was facilitated by the Inuit Circumpolar Council Alaska and Inuit Circumpolar Council Chair in partnership with the Eskimo Walrus Commission, the Inuvialuit Game Council, the Fisheries Joint Management Committee, the Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission, the Association of Village Council Presidents, Environmental Law Institute, and advised by ICC Canada.

This Inuit-led work included focus groups, joint meetings, and many discussions. A summary report of each meeting and focus group was developed to reflect the unique discussions and positions of those attending. Each summary report illuminates the unique and rich Inuit values and management practices that have safeguarded the Arctic for thousands of years. The reports also share concerns and barriers to Inuit food sovereignty, food security, and the overall health of the Arctic.

The summary reports were used to inform the development of a collective Inuit-led report, Food Sovereignty and Self-Governance: Inuit Role in Managing Arctic Marine Resources (FSSG report). The report examines legal frameworks and elevates Inuit voices on what impedes and supports Inuit food sovereignty. The work is done through the lens of four case studies, beluga and char in the ISR and walrus and salmon in Alaska. However, an Inuit approach is much more holistic. As the report reflects the direct voices of Inuit, the discussions were much more holistic and reflective of all of life in the Arctic. The report further links Inuit Food Sovereignty to holistic and adaptive management strategies that can ensure Inuit food security, health, and well-being throughout the Arctic for generations to come. The full report can be accessed through this link, <https://tinyurl.com/Food-Sovereignty>.

While the FSSG report is invaluable, it is also valuable to reflect on the distinct discussions and wealth of Indigenous Knowledge shared within each summary report. ICC Alaska has compiled all the workshop summary reports to share through this single document. Each report is stand-alone and appears as it would if it was individually accessed, including recommendations shared within those discussions. We encourage readers to read through all the reports. And to also read the full FSSG report.

Quyana / Igamsiqanaghalek / Quyanainni / Koana / Quyanaq!

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Focus Group: Food Sovereignty and Self Governance – Inuit Role in Managing Arctic Marine Resources¹

Eskimo Walrus Commission Focus Group Summary



Photo: Julie Raymond-Yakoubian

Food sovereignty is the right of [All] 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. Within the Alaskan Inuit Food Security Conceptual Framework, food sovereignty is a necessity for supporting and maintaining the six dimensions of 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.



Photo: Maasingah Nakak

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. 2017. Eskimo Walrus Commission Food Sovereignty Workshop: *Food Sovereignty and Self Governance - Inuit Role in Managing Arctic Marine Resources*. Anchorage, Alaska.

The Focus Group meeting was facilitated by Carolina Behe, assisted by Shannon Williams. Report prepared by Carolina Behe and Shannon Williams.

Igamsiqanaghalek/Quyana!

Igamsiqanaghalek to Vera Metcalf for all of her hard work and assistance in organizing the Focus Group meeting!

About the Eskimo Walrus Commission Focus Group Meeting

On December 9, 2017, the Inuit Circumpolar Council Alaska (ICC AK) facilitated a Focus Group meeting as part of the Inuit led project, *Food Sovereignty and Self Governance - Inuit Role in Managing Arctic Marine Resources*. The meeting was held in Anchorage, Alaska.

The Focus Group participants included Indigenous Knowledge (IK) holders from the Eskimo Walrus Commission (EWC), the EWC Chair, and Executive Director. Through this workshop Indigenous Knowledge holders came together to explore the co-management structures, policies and decision making pathways surrounding the management of walrus (and other marine food sources), and ways of moving toward Inuit Food Sovereignty.

This report provides a summary of the information discussed during the Eskimo Walrus Commission Focus Group meeting.

Fourteen IK holders (referred to as participants within the report) attended the Focus Group meeting. In addition to Carolina and Shannon (ICC Alaska), Dylanne Nassuk attended as an assistant to the Natural Resources-Kawerak, Inc. and Julie Raymond-Yakoubian, with Kawerak, Inc. attended as an observer. Below is a list of the workshop participants:

Charles Brower – Barrow
Vera Metcaf – EWC Executive
Director / Savoonga
Mary Freytag - Unalakleet
William Igkurak - Kwigillingok
Kenneth Kingeekuk - Savoonga
Warren Lampe - Point Lay
Jacob Martin - Nome Eskimo
Community

Tommy Obruk - Shishmaref
Enoch Oktollik - Wainwright
Daniel T. Olrun, Sr. - Mekoryuk
Benjamin Payenna - King Island
Native Community
Andrew Seetook - Wales
Moses Toyukak, Sr. - Manokotak
Bruce Boolowan - Gambell

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 and improved 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 March 31, 2020.

Focus Group Structure

Through the FSSG project methodology development (developed in collaboration with the project partners), it was decided to hold the Focus Group meetings in conjunction with each partner's annual meeting. This approach is opportunistic and allows for the project team to observe the annual meeting in addition to meeting with the respective commissioners.

In line with the project methodology, this Focus Group meeting occurred in conjunction with the Eskimo Walrus Commission Annual meeting. Additional meetings, not associated with this project, also occurred in conjunction with the annual meeting.

This Focus Group meeting was successful and informative. However, we also recognized that participating in multiple back to back meetings is taxing and tiring. Keeping in line with our project Indigenous research methodologies we will adapt and have adapted the methodologies to ensure that discussions occur in a refreshed and comfortable environment.

Following the input from participants and in discussions with the project Advisory Committee, a second workshop was organized to ensure that participants had the time to focus only on the topics crucial to the discussion and to enlarge the group of participants. The follow-up workshop, *Inuit Past and Current Managers of Marine Resources Focus Group, report is being developed and will be accessible on the ICC AK website (iccalaska.org)*



Photo: Shannon Williams

The EWC Focus Group meeting was facilitated using guiding questions that were informed by the ICC Alaska food security report, *How to Assess Food Security from an Inuit Perspective: Building a Conceptual Framework on How to Assess Food Security in the Alaskan Arctic.* and further refined by the FSSG Advisory Committee.

Introduction

The below summary provides a general overview of the Focus Group meeting discussions and is not intended to be a complete review. This section is intended to provide a summary of some of the discussions that occurred during the Focus Group as opposed to a complete review. Though this section is broken into bolded headings, all headings are interrelated and interdependent. For example, when speaking about the need for adaptive management strategies, one must also consider traditional Inuit management practices.

Key Themes/Concepts Discussed

The meeting was facilitated using guiding questions under key themes/concepts:

- Personal Experiences in gathering food for you, your family, for your community
- Consultation processes as they relate to and impacts your food gathering activities
- Decision making pathways
- Indigenous Knowledge and Research questions
- Information accessibility and knowledge sharing
- Taking care of the Arctic and what tools are used
- Impacts of regulations on the wellbeing of animals, the waters, land, air, and Inuit

Key Workshop Findings

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:

- Impacts of management/regulations on the animals, culture, cultural sustainability, or overall ecosystem health
- Challenges associated with current co-management system
- Differences in management practices
- Conflict of interests

- Demoralization due to federal Law Enforcement actions
- Community based and Inuit lead management/rules/laws/practices
- Inuit laws/rules/practices
- Need for structural changes associated with government to government operations, dialogue and relationships
- Trust and respect
- Collectively working together and remaining united
- Lasting effects of broken governmental/legal agreements and the ignoring or diminishing Indigenous laws
- Cultural importance of harvesting
- Funding



Photo: Carolina Behe

Key Recommendations Raised

An objective of the Focus Group meeting was to consider ways in which existing governing frameworks could be modified to support our food sovereignty. Participants devoted time during the Focus Group to brainstorm and discuss ways that existing systems could be improved to better support Inuit food sovereignty. Throughout this discussion, participants repeatedly highlighted the importance of remaining united and working collectively. Central themes of this conversation included:

- Strong Inuit leadership
- Aspiring towards more community-based and Inuit-lead movements
- Develop our own national and international agreements
- Write down our own laws (i.e. rules, practices)
- Ensure our own distinct rights and that rights to cultural resources, such as walrus tusk, are not available to non-indigenous peoples
- Educate our youth on management systems and laws (i.e. our rules and practices, federal and state laws, and international instruments)
- Funding and processes to adequately support equitable involvement of Indigenous Knowledge within a co-management process
- Funding to support commissioner engagement with walrus hunters (i.e. community meetings, travel)
- Develop true co-management agreements with equitable decision making processes and veto power
- Review of broken agreements with the Federal government
- Need for adaptive management practices and policy that accounts for seasonality and abrupt changes
- Need for community driven research and monitoring programs
- Need for a review process of the management system
- Support tribal government management of infractions
- Federal government policies to support formal participation and equitable partnership with Tribal governments, upholding government-to-government agreements and recognizing Tribal sovereignty

On the Cultural Importance of Harvesting Arctic Marine Animals

Arctic marine animals play an integral role in our culture. Participants spent time highlighting the importance of walrus as a source of food, medicine, building materials, and art materials. One participant even commented that their entire community was based on walrus. However, participants made clear that Arctic marine animals have worth and cultural relevance far beyond their material value. The spiritual relationship held with the walrus and the rest of the environment is not something that can be replaced.

Participants explained that the act of harvesting marine resources, brings families and communities closer together. Many participants described their own experiences hunting walrus as children, and then their practice of passing knowledge and experiences on to their children and grandchildren. Through harvesting and preparing foods many core values are taught, such as sharing, responsibility, and the inter-generational importance of our foods for future generations – passing on Indigenous Knowledge. Participants also commented on the role that marine animals and the harvesting plays in bringing communities together and helps to create strong bonds between community members.



First photo - Walrus intestine used as a water proof material for Kavitaq (rain coats) and other clothing. Made by Edith Pinson. Second photo - Inupiaq doll with walrus intestine Kavitaq. Made by Edith Pinson. Photos: Vernae Ananabooak

General Challenges Associated with Current Co-Management

During the workshop, participants detailed some of the challenges and failings of current co-management systems in Alaska. Many examples were given on the disconnect and lack of understanding between Inuit and the governmental entities that are making management decisions.

Participants voiced frustration over a lack of decision-making power held by Inuit. Several participants noted that their communities have no say in management decisions that affect the food on which they depend - stating that "laws come already written: pieces of paper dictating how we must live." They explained that this system is problematic for a number of reasons, not the least of which is the idea that policy makers do not fully understand the impacts that certain management decisions have on the animals, our culture, cultural sustainability, or overall ecosystem health.



Photo: Carolina Behe

Lack of adaptability, inadequate follow up, and need for long-term monitoring was also mentioned by participants as a management flaw. They noted that once regulations or quotas are put into place, populations of certain resources sometimes grow out of hand (resulting in an imbalance in the ecosystem). Additionally, several examples were given of

ways in which climate change and the shifting of seasonal availability have not been accounted for by policy makers.

Participants described recent experiences in which they felt they are not taken seriously, or shown trust and respect for their knowledge. Examples, were provided of their information, knowledge, first hand observations, and suggested actions being 'cherry picked' by some scientists and some managers. Additional concerns were expressed that there is no platform or process for their voices and knowledge. A number of participants indicated that some meetings felt illusory or as if they were just for show.

Participants pointed out that interpretation of policies by both national and international policies and regulating bodies often lack a situational

understanding and approach. For example, at times management decisions have conflicted with our knowledge and way of life, leading to negative impacts to the animals, and our culture and our traditional economies.

Examples were given of regulations that interfere with the livelihood of individuals, unfair economic and racial disparities that have manifested as a result of certain regulations, as well as inappropriate power displays by law enforcement which have contributed to tenuous relationships between management bodies and individuals and communities.

Laws which regulate how portions of an animal may be used (e.g. you must cut off the tip of a muskox horn) and conflict with our understanding to use every part of an animal or age old practices, such as where to discard parts of an animal to give back to the ocean. Participants explained that laws which dictate that one must destroy a portion of an animal, especially when that part of the animal has potential economic value, seem particularly invasive and discriminatory despite exemption specific to Inuit.

Throughout this conversation many of the points raised stress the need for Trust and Respect to be worked upon and further developed to support our food sovereignty. Trust and respect will need to be reflected in policies and practices that support equitable partnerships.



Photo: Frances Ozenna

On Changes and the Need for Adaptable Co-Management

During the meeting, participants discussed many of the changes they have observed recently and over the course of their lives. Many participants commented on climate change observations. Examples were given of unpredictable sea ice and the difficulties that this dynamic pose in harvesting and processing walrus, beluga, and other marine mammals.

Two participants commented on the role that the federal government and government restrictions play on influencing a sense of loss, stating that because of the imposition of restrictions and outside management practices, Inuit youth struggle to keep traditional customs alive and thriving.



Photo: Carolina Behe

With all of the changes occurring in the Arctic, there is an urgent need for management that is adaptable. Participants commented that management practices and regulations must be revised and adapted to remain current and relevant under the changing climate.

For example, several participants noted that in 2017, 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.

On Funding

Participants agreed that a lack of funding is one of the biggest roadblocks to effective co-management. Discussion centered around the idea that a co-management system fails when only one of the managing bodies has the power to decide what is to be funded. Participants expressed frustration over the requirements that they must meet in order to receive funding, noting that requirements are formed without any consultation with them.

Additionally, only research, projects, and directives deemed necessary or important by the state or federal government are discussed or pursued. The Indigenous partners in the co-management structure are then forced to

comply or else receive no funding. In this way, there is no shared vision and no real co-management; federal and state governments are still managing and prescribing what Inuit can do and how they can do it. The result is a unilateral management system as oppose to a co-management system.

Participants went on to point out that it is extremely difficult for them to contest the current system of funding, because they cannot use government funding to fight governing bodies. This often leaves the Indigenous partners in a co-management structure with no financial means to bring these issues into the spotlight. Alternative routes to gaining greater equity of voice, such as lobbying or forming interest groups, are complicated by laws which prevent lobbying for groups that receive this funding.

On Competition / Conflict of Interests

Participants described the importance of using walrus ivory from both harvested walrus and also ivory from mammoth and mastodon. The ivory is an important source of material used in creating sculptures, jewelry, tools, and other items. The creation of this art is an important aspect of cultural expressions and relates directly to traditional practices that teach us to use all parts of the animals and to never waste.

Participants discussed how beach found walrus ivory regulations have interfered with the livelihood of Inuit individuals, especially those who sell walrus ivory art. They explained that competition for beach found ivory has widened a racial economic gap between Inuit and non-Native beach combers. Often, it is private pilots (both Inuit and non-Native, though overwhelmingly non-Native) who are able to most successfully scout for and salvage beach found tusks. Such competition makes it even more difficult for people living in a given Inuit community to salvage beach found tusks by boat or by foot. Participants indicated that there should be Inuit preference when it comes to the harvesting of beach found ivory (just as with the sale of ivory) due in part to the fact that ivory art is such an important economic asset for Inuit. It was felt that without having more control over walrus ivory, Inuit communities will not be able to benefit from the revenue associated with that cultural resource.

Participants also indicated that competition with non-Natives and the economic disparity between those living in Inuit communities and those travelling in from outside were factors impeding adequate moose and caribou harvests. Participants noted that anyone who is financially able to do so, can fly in and harvest moose from areas surrounding their communities. Those people often have easier access to the best hunting areas. In addition, each animal harvested by an “outsider” equals one less that is available to Inuit living in that community. Once a quota is filled, the season is over, regardless of how much of that resource stays in the community.

In addition to a competition for material, there is also a conflict of interest that arises due to competing interests or results from an entity using a single species approach within lobbying. For example, some environmental groups have lobbied for the up listing of Walrus under the Endangered Species Act. Participants shared that the argument to up list walrus is based on the loss of ice and an assumption that the walrus will not adapt.

In recent years, additional lobbying by some environmental groups, to stop the trade of elephant ivory, have included a desired ban on the sale of walrus and mammoth ivory within some states.

The lobbying to address walrus habitat loss and on the ban on sale of walrus and mammoth ivory by others takes a single species approach and does not consider that the harvesting of walrus is one of the strongest examples of Sustainable Harvesting by Inuit that the world could learn from.



Ring made of walrus and mammoth ivory.
Photo: Shannon Williams

On Relationship with Law Enforcement Officials

A number of participants described times when they felt demoralized or belittled by the law enforcement officials in charge of managing harvest regulations in their communities. They explained that in certain communities, law enforcement officials routinely wait on the beach to question and search hunters immediately as they exit their boats. This practice was described as

purposefully intimidating. A handful of Focus Group participants noted that law enforcement officials could be seen as threatening, employing such tactics as wearing their weapons in overtly visible locations.

Additionally, it was noted that the repercussions for infractions such as wasteful take (more commonly used word) can be particularly devastating to Inuit hunters who sometimes lose their boats or equipment due to fines or confiscation. One participant suggested that such infractions should be turned over to tribal governments first to be tried, rather than going directly to the federal government. Additionally, participants stressed the importance of educating those that are assigned to work within this important context (i.e. managers, law enforcement, scientists).



Photo: Carolina

On Traditional Inuit Laws and Practices

For thousands of years, Indigenous Knowledge alone was responsible for successful management of Arctic resources. And while we do not refer to our knowledge of how to live in harmony with the resources as “management,” we know that our Indigenous Knowledge is vital to the co-management and decision-making processes. Participants discussed many traditional laws, protocols, and practices during the Focus Group. Common themes in the discussion were:

- Harvest a resource when it is available
- Take no more than you need
- Sharing

Participants stressed the importance of being taught these practices from birth or as young children and of being taught by their parents,

grandparents, and uncles. Participants shared that Inuit practices/laws have been passed down by voice and oral record through families and enforced independently by communities forever and these practices continue even now when there are other laws being imposed. Participants agreed that their Inuit practices/laws are simple and effective and take into consideration Arctic environments in a more holistic way than laws coming from outside or external governing bodies.

On Community-Based and Inuit Lead Management/Rules/Laws/Practices

Indigenous laws were not traditionally written or recorded, but were passed down through families and communities. Indigenous laws are still followed by Inuit and continue to be handed down to the next generation. However, participants asserted that the lack of any formal records of these laws is a weakness because non-Inuit government entities simply do not recognize laws that are not in writing. A number of participants suggested that these laws as well as any inter-tribal agreements and tribal ordinances should be formally recorded.

Throughout the Focus Group, participants continually emphasized the value of walrus and other resources as tribal assets with important economic, social, cultural, political, and spiritual value. They noted that as state and federal governments have laid claim to these resources, sovereign rights and Indigenous management systems have too often been undervalued or ignored.

Participants agreed that more steps should be taken by Inuit to assert their sovereign rights. In this way, community-based action can lead to improvements in the equity of voice. One way of moving toward food sovereignty is through the collective observance of Indigenous Laws.

Participants highlighted recent successes in the establishment and re-establishment of Indigenous management systems in a handful of communities. Examples were given of self-imposed, voluntary quotas agreed upon within and between communities without any influence from outside governing entities such as Alaska Department of Fish and Game

or US Fish and Wildlife. Participants noted that these community-based regulations which are based on Indigenous Knowledge and Inuit understanding of the land and resources have successfully, sustainably, and efficiently managed resources.

One main example of Inuit management being put into practice comes from St. Lawrence Island. A participant explained that documents detailing St. Lawrence Island management practices were found at the Smithsonian and eventually returned to the island. These practices (ordinances) have been rigorously followed prior to writing them down and remained in practice to this day. When the document was returned to St. Lawrence Island, the people from the island formally adopted the written down ordinances and used the written document to demonstrate to federal officials that people from St. Lawrence Island hold their own practices/laws. The communities of Gambell and Savoonga determine the harvesting of walrus on their own terms.



Photo: Carolina Behe

On Suggested Structural Changes

Focus Group participants suggested changes and adjustments that could be made to current government to government operations and communications in order for them to be more effective and equitable. Such adjustments include:

- Utilizing regional corporations as governing bodies more often
- Gaining ownership of tribal lands and management authority of historical use areas (including coastal seas and water)
- Gaining veto power in decision making processes.

For example, one participant suggested relying more heavily on regional corporations as a platform for tribal agreements. It was suggested that this change would help to save money and facilitate more efficient cooperation between tribes. Additionally, it was suggested that tribal governments could leverage power through the Department of the Interior as they more fully recognize tribes already. Government to government agreements between tribes and the Department of the Interior could positively influence agreements between tribes and Alaska Department of Fish and Game and the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

Using St. Lawrence Island as a model, participants further indicated that greater land ownership and private tribal property could increase equity of voice and place power back into the hands of village corporations.

Lastly, participants discussed the critical importance of attaining veto power in decision making. They commented that without veto power, there cannot be equity of voice. Veto power changes the power dynamic from one in which Indigenous partners in a co-management structure must choose between very limited options presented to them by the government into one in which they are able to equitably shape decisions. A co-management system in which the Indigenous partners have no veto power forces them to follow the direction of the government, thereby greatly decreasing equity of voice and ultimately results in a scheme far from “co-management”.

On Working Collectively and Remaining United

A central theme raised repeatedly throughout the Focus Group was the importance of remaining united and working collectively to achieve common goals. Participants commented that acting together would increase equity of voice and that presenting a united front creates focus and facilitates change. They asserted that governmental agencies and decision-making bodies have a harder time ignoring entities as they

become larger and more focused. An example was given of the differences observed between the power of Qayassiq Walrus Commission acting alone and Qayassiq Walrus Commission working together with Bristol Bay Marine Mammal Council; the two entities working together were more powerful and more easily able to achieve common goals.

Additionally, it was suggested that localized planning (having meetings in communities rather than urban hubs) would lead to better synthesis of their voices. Community input and involvement will lead to greater understanding and better outcomes.

Conclusion

The Eskimo Walrus Commission Focus Group on food sovereignty and self-governance facilitated greater understanding of the Inuit role in current co-management systems and the tools needed to achieve greater equity of voice. The Focus Group was the first of four and provided an important foundational block in the Food Sovereignty and Self Governance project.



King Island Dancers at the Inuit Circumpolar Council General Assembly 2018. Photo: Jacki Cleveland



Inuit Past and Current Managers of Marine Resources Focus Group¹: Food Sovereignty and Self Governance – Inuit Role in Managing Arctic Marine Resources



Photo: Katirvik Cultural Center Staff

Food sovereignty is the right of [All] 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. Within the Alaskan Inuit Food Security Conceptual Framework, food sovereignty is a necessity for supporting and maintaining the six dimensions of food security.²

¹ This work is supported by the Ocean Conservancy and 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 or the Ocean Conservancy.

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. ² Access July 18, 2019 - https://iccalaska.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/1001_FSSG-SUMMARY-AND-UPDATE.pdf

Citation

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The meeting was facilitated by Carolina Behe, assisted by Shannon Williams. Dr. Dalee Sambo Dorough, as a member of the project team, also attended the meeting. Report prepared by Carolina Behe and Shannon Williams.

Igamsiqanaghalek/Quyana!

Quyana to Lisa Ellana and staff at the Katirvik Cultural Center for providing space for the meeting and for hosting a potluck for all the participants. Quyana to Mary David and Kawerak Inc. for supporting the preparatory sessions and the actual meeting. Igamsiqanaghalek to Vera Metcalf and the Eskimo Walrus Commission for welcoming us to Nome and her help with the meeting preparations.



Photos: Carolina Behe. Photos taken at the Potluck hosted by the Katirvik Cultural Center.

Introduction

On March 30, 2018, the Inuit Circumpolar Council Alaska hosted a meeting to bring together Inuit who have been or are currently engaged in management of marine resources to:

- Explore current co-management structures, policies related to our food sources and decision-making pathways, and
- Consider ways to improve and enhance the management and co-management of our food and related habitats in contrast to the existing ways.

Overall, discussions focused on our interpretation of traditional and federal management laws, how the laws are being implemented, and what may be missing from existing federal laws.

The discussions at this meeting will further inform the Inuit led project *Food Sovereignty and Self Governance – Inuit Role in Managing Arctic Marine Resources*³(FSSG). This report provides a summary of the topics discussed and information considered during the Inuit Past and Current Managers of Marine Resources Focus Group.



Photo: Shannon Williams

The meeting, which was held at the Katirvik Cultural Center in Nome, provided a strong opportunity to share thoughts and perspectives from across Inuit Nunaat. Twelve Indigenous Knowledge holders from throughout Alaska and one Indigenous Knowledge holder from the Inuvialuit Settlement Region (ISR) participated in the meeting.

While three Indigenous Knowledge holders from ISR had planned to attend, two had to cancel due to illness. Understandably, the resulting discussion largely reflects the perspectives and knowledge from Alaska.

James Nicori (Kwethluk)
Robert Lekander (Bethel)
Mary Sattler Peltola (Bethel)
Charles Brower (Utiqagvik)
Vera Metcalf (Savoonga)
Iver Campbell (Gambell)
Elmer Seetot, Jr. (Brevig)

John Lucas, Jr. (Sachs Harbor)
George Noongwook (Savoonga)
Kenneth Kingeekuk (Savoonga)
Willie Goodwin, Jr. (Kotzebue)
Orville Ahkinga, Sr. (Little Diomed)
Sylvester Ayek (King Island)

The Inuit Past and Current Managers of Marine Resources Focus Group meeting was facilitated using guiding questions that were informed by the ICC AK food security report, *How to Assess Food Security from an Inuit Perspective: Building a Conceptual Framework on How to Assess Food Security in the Alaskan Arctic* and further refined by the FSSG Advisory Committee.

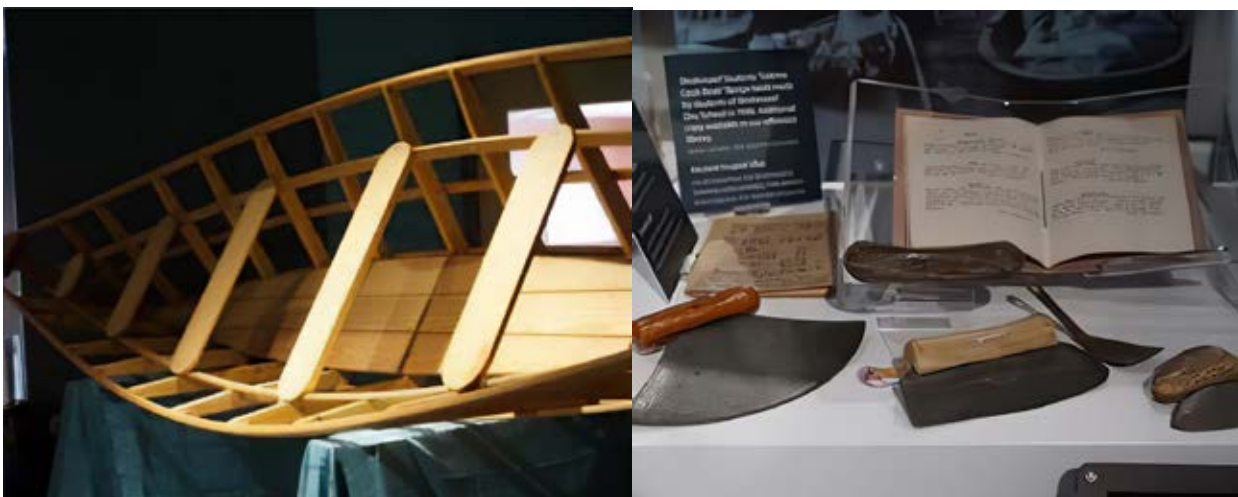


Photo: Shannon Williams

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 Committee, 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 March 31, 2020.

Key Meeting Findings

While the meeting was facilitated using guiding questions, the discussions were further focused and refined by the participants. Key themes that were discussed included:

- Inuit rules and traditional practices
- Language and self-governance
- Inuit Agreements
- Climate Change
- Adaptability
- Conflicts of interest
- Challenges with current co-management systems
- Power dynamics
- Perceptions of Indigenous Knowledge and Western Science
- Paternalism
- Inequality in co-management
- Impact of material bans (seal skin and walrus ivory)
- Steps toward improved co-management
- Indigenous human rights and international instruments



Photo: Shannon Williams

Meeting Summary

The below provides a brief summary and general overview of the discussion held throughout the meeting. Though this section is broken into bolded headings, all headings are interrelated and interdependent. For example, when speaking about the need for adaptive management strategies, one must also consider traditional Inuit management practices.

Inuit Rules and Traditional Practices

For thousands of years, Indigenous Knowledge alone was responsible for successful management of Arctic resources. And while we do not refer to our knowledge of how to live in harmony with the resources as “management,” we know that our Indigenous Knowledge is vital to all co-management and decision making processes.



Photo: Shannon Williams

Throughout the course of the meeting, many discussions revolved around the traditional Inuit rules and practices that have been handed down for generations. These rules and practices have allowed us to thrive in the Arctic since time immemorial as part of the ecosystem. Participants highlighted the fact that substantial bodies of Indigenous Knowledge have remained relevant and have proven adaptable and lasting, guiding us throughout the many changes that we have experienced in the Arctic.

Traditional rules and practices shared by participants throughout the day included the following (listed in no particular order):

- Never waste
- Only take what you need
- Follow the cycles of the animals
- Respect elders
- Take care of each other
- The more you give, the more you'll get back
- Never argue about the animals
- 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
- Take time - have patience
- Never brag about what you are going to catch
- Leave animals alone when they are having young ones
- If you take care of the land, it takes care of you
- Never count the fish coming into the river
- Use the resources that are given to you by the creator; if you use the resource, it will come back and multiply
- Pay attention to all of the pieces that make of the environment - Holistic management



Photo: Carolina Behe

Participants highlighted the fact that 'western' education has nothing to do with skill in the management of resources. Nor does formal education have anything to do with our relationship with the animals, plants, land, and water.



Photo: Shannon Williams

Participants stressed that there are many cases, in which federal and state recognized management structures are at odds with Inuit rules and practices. Under our rules and practices, the law is in the hands of the communities, rather than the federal or state government. "Infractions" are mainly dealt with through social pressures rather than legal penalties. As one participant explained, a main difference between our rules and practices and federal or state management is that the basis for compliance with the federal and state systems is the physical world, whereas the basis for compliance with our way is a sense of morality. The participant added that if people do not follow traditional rules and practices, they tend not to be as successful in their harvesting.

An example of traditional rules and practices working to benefit our resources is the role of Umialik (whaling captain) in North Slope whaling communities. The Umialik (boat owners and leaders) hold power in the communities. If someone does something unacceptable, they hold council with the Umialik who hears their case. This system is still practiced as a way to regulate bowhead whale harvests.

A key aspect to food sovereignty is being able to utilize our practices within a co-management system. This includes conflict resolution. Our ways of addressing conflict are rooted in cultural respect. Participants raised examples of conflict within management meetings that resulted in tension

and caused arguments over an animal. Indigenous knowledge tells us that if we argue about an animal, the animal will not make themselves available to us. This is a way of disrespecting the animal. So, for example, arguing about salmon can cause sporadic populations. Because of the conflict caused by commercial fishing and the impact that it has to fish stocks, Inuit in the ISR no longer allow commercial fishing to take place in their waters.

Language and Self Governance

Language is an integral part of our culture and speaks to our relationships and understandings. The use of our language in explaining complex concepts is important to supporting our food sovereignty.

Participants shared that miscommunications can occur in co management, highlighting that there are many management-related words which cannot be directly translated into our languages. There are also many English words that do not make sense within the context of Inuit culture.



Photo: Shannon Williams

Upon the recommendation of one participant, a number of participants took time to brainstorm ways in which the term food sovereignty could be translated from English into the various Inuit languages and dialects spoken by attendees. It was felt that having a series of Inuit language translations for food sovereignty would help to make the definition stronger and would empower Inuit.

Some participants elected not to translate the word, indicating that the concept is not translatable to their language because the concept of food sovereignty doesn't exist in Inuit language or culture. All participants agreed that there is no direct translation and terminology to describe food sovereignty (or management). However, some initial ideas included words and phrases which roughly translate to the following:

- Taking care of children/everything
- Caretaker or gatekeeper
- Taking care of living things
- Holding the responsibility to take care of

A few phrases were considered in different Inuit dialects:

Aflengakista, Aflengakistet (Saint Lawrence Island Yupik)

Aulukstai (Yup'ik)

Pikasiuq, Isamaloon, Isamalootit (Iñupiaq)

Ultimately, it was decided that it would be more appropriate to consult with elders in various communities to determine a working translation.

Examples of Inuit Agreements

Participants described several instances in which Inuit have acted independently of the state and federal government to implement their own management decisions. Main examples of independent management decisions provided by participants during the focus group include: the implementation of the Inuvialuit-Inupiat Polar Bear Agreement



Photo: Shannon Williams

and Inuvialuit-Inupiat Beluga Agreement (agreements between Inupiat in Alaska and the Inuvialuit in Canada), the implementation of wildlife ordinances on Saint Lawrence Island, and the self-imposed moratorium on beluga whale hunting in the Kotzebue area.

Participants described the long process that eventually led to the land conveyance after which the people of Saint Lawrence Island own the land outright. Participants from Saint Lawrence Island explained that they are able to own the land because they followed the advice of their elders who told them to never accept money from the federal government or anyone else. The elders of Saint Lawrence Island stressed that once money is gone, it's gone—but land is forever. The communities of Gambell and Savoonga opted out of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act and as such they have never had a regional or village corporation. Because they own the land, they are now able to practice their own management for the most part. And while federal laws still exist, they have formed their own ordinances based upon their Indigenous Knowledge and traditional rules.



"We are not dooming and glooming, we are looking for opportunities, we're observing. That's how we adapt. That's how our ancestors adapted.

- Workshop Participant

Photo: Carolina Behre

Climate Change

Climate change and food sovereignty are strongly interlinked. As the world looks for ways to adapt to and mitigate impacts of climate change, we are on the forefront of the changes occurring. Our communities have quick, adaptive, and holistic approaches based on Indigenous Knowledge. At the same time, we strongly want partnerships with scientists to further address arising questions. Such partnerships aid in enhancing our collective understanding of changes occurring and contribute to the development of the most holistic responses.



Photo: Shannon Williams

Throughout our discussions, many of the changes occurring were highlighted, including:

- later freeze up
- shorter and milder winters
- increased frequency of storms
- warmer water temperatures
- unpredictable winds, snow and ice conditions
- increased presence of invasive species
- harmful algae blooms
- change in animal behavior
- shifts in animal migration

These changes can drastically impact lifestyles and pose many safety risks. For example, later freeze up times and reduced sea ice can shorten hunting seasons for marine mammals due to access issues. Changes in sea and river ice formation can cause travel hazards, such as unstable ice. Low water levels decrease salmon spawning habitat and can prevent access due to shallower channels.

Over the past years, some animal migration, health, and behavior has changed. Changes are attributed, in part, to climate change, impacts of

regulations, and increased industry activities such as shipping. The changes in water temperatures, salt levels, oxygen levels, water and wind currents are all understood to contribute to cumulative impacts that affect the entire food chain.

Participants shared observations of marine mammal health concerns, including skin issues, excessive sea lice, unhealthy livers and kidneys, and behavior-indicated stress. Animal health is directly linked to our food security. An example of such marine mammal health concerns is the case of the large walrus die off in the summer of 2017 possibly due to an Unusual Mortality Event.

Warmer water temperatures can also cause changes in salmon behavior, and has caused them to congregate in lower, cooler areas making them harder to harvest. And warmer temperatures and other factors can cause changes in their routes of travel. Participants noted that they have seen far fewer king salmon, but have noticed more red salmon coming into areas where kings used to be.

Changes to typical weather patterns can also cause issues with food preparation. Additionally, late salmon runs do not coincide with the best drying weather. At this time, smoking fish can be challenging due to dampness affecting the quality.

Inuit Adaptability Versus Rigid Government Management

Several participants noted that many of the specific changes listed above, particularly climate change, was predicted by elders. Elders predicted shorter, milder winters, long stretches of warm weather, changes in weather, and rising sea levels. We know that these changes have occurred historically and that changes are going to continue to happen. Participants highlighted the fact that adaptability has always been a great strength of our culture. Participants further stressed that Inuit are prepared to adapt alongside the fish and animals. As one participant commented, "our people will face that challenge and live through it."

Many participants commented that western science and government management structures are less adaptable. For example, changes in the seasons and the weather requires innovation in terms of food preservation. Because drying fish spoils quickly in bad weather, our Indigenous Knowledge tells us to follow the fish and to harvest when the weather is right.



Photo: Shannon Williams

However, due to rigid regulations, that is not a possibility. Some changes in management are achievable, such as a shifting of the whaling season into winter. However, processes like that often take a long time as laws and regulations hamper the rate of innovation and adaptation that is possible within traditional Inuit management practices.

Participants commented that the general attitude towards climate change exhibited by western scientists, wildlife managers, and the media tends to be far more negative and alarmist than the Inuit attitude towards climate change. While climate change intimately and profoundly affects Inuit ways of life, participants indicated that a faith in our ability to adapt is ultimately stronger than a fear of the coming changes. As one participant commented, “we are not dooming and glooming, we are looking for opportunities, we’re observing. That’s how we adapt. That’s how our ancestors adapted.” At the same time, the federal governments, within both Canada and the United States, have a responsibility to respond with urgency to address the negative impacts occurring.

Conflict of Interests



Photo: Mary Peltola

Participants shared the impact of 'competing for resources' with outside entities that often have high finance backing for lobbying. Inuit food sovereignty is often impeded by these competitors which include large-scale fisheries, animal rights groups, sports hunters, the research and tourism industries, and those using aircraft to collect beach-found walrus and mammoth ivory.

For example, sports hunting and fishing regulations, which are set by the state, were implemented over 40 years ago. Because the state does not comprehensively recognize Tribes as governing bodies, Inuit had very little involvement in the decision making process that went into the setting of those outdated regulations. Participants noted that even in the present day, there is just one Alaska Native representative on the Board of Game and that person is more often than not, out-voted or out-numbered by agency people. During the focus group, participants commented on the need for those regulations to be revisited, noting that due to climate change the seasons that were put in place so long ago are no longer appropriate. For example, there have been issues with sports hunters hunting too early and altering the migration of the caribou herds. As a few participants shared, the increased popularity in sports hunting has put extra stress on easily-accessible areas like Bethel or the Dalton Highway.

Participants discussed the problems associated with sport hunting tourists who fly in from far away to catch the biggest bull moose or biggest king salmon that they can. As one participant noted, "We know that the big bulls are breeding stock... We are not after trophy animals." The meat from larger animals is not the best meat to eat – it is not tender. Indigenous Knowledge tells us that taking smaller animals allows the fittest animals to reproduce.

It was noted that these issues with sports hunting and fishing largely do not exist in the ISR. Due to the Northwest Territories Wildlife Act⁴, continual consultation with communities must take place and recommendations must be observed when it comes to sports hunting, fishing, and outfitting.

Challenges with Current Co-Management System

Participants discussed some of the difficulties we face in the current co management system. Through discussions, participants identified several ways that our food sovereignty is impeded during the processes of government consultation, scientific research, and in dealing with regulations that are already in place. Such challenges, obstacles, and frustrations included:

- Rules and regulations that conflict with our Indigenous Knowledge
- Challenges in communicating with others who hold different values, do not understand our way of life, and/or do not understand or value our Indigenous Knowledge
- Challenges and frustration with holding the burden of proof (having to prove our positions and knowledge)
- Challenges with always having to operate under western management rules without our rules and practices being respected
- Manipulation or lack of upholding laws meant to protect our rights
- Miscommunication due to difference in languages and cultural practices
- Inequity in funding and decision-making
- Inequity in representation on co-management boards or advisory groups

Participants indicated that accepting regulations and management decisions which conflict with Indigenous Knowledge is often an emotional experience. One participant commented that it is particularly hard to know that there are resources that we are not allowed to take—such as minke whales, humpback

⁴ Wildlife Act for the Northwest Territories. 2018. Accessed July 18, 2019.

https://www.enr.gov.nt.ca/sites/enr/files/resources/wildlife_act_plain_language_summary_january_2018.pdf

whales, and gray whales—even though our ancestors made use of these animals for thousands of years. To be barred from all of those things separates us from an aspect of our culture and causes inevitable loss of Indigenous Knowledge. Participants described the feeling as having their hands tied.

Participants also shared frustration that at times we have been held to blame for declining populations of some animals. For example, migratory birds have always been the first resources that would come into the



Photo: Mary Peltola

area in spring. The birds we harvested in Alaska are a tiny fraction of the birds that are being taken. Many non-Indigenous Peoples were taking much larger numbers of birds for commercial sales in other parts of the United States. One participant described the feeling of distress that resulted from that situation: “it still hurts me that they said the Natives up here were taking the eggs, that’s how come the birds were disappearing and there wasn’t enough.”

Participants also expressed frustration that our practices and input are often not taken seriously until they are adjusted to be more westernized. One example of this is the land conveyance of Saint Lawrence Island. Participants commented that the people of Saint Lawrence Island held knowledge of their land ownership. The ownership was not recognized by the federal government until it was formalized in a western way. One participant who attended the land conveyance signing commented, “It was a big signing ceremony. And all of us said gosh, wow, if you put it on a piece of paper, it makes it real.”

However, putting things in writing does not always have the same effect. Participants shared that concepts and laws that are in place to support Inuit often only exist on paper. One participant explained that food sovereignty is one such concept, noting even though food sovereignty is a term that we have been hearing for several years now, it is not often seen in practice: “When we try to utilize it [in speaking with] people who manage our food sources, like Fish and Wildlife, they don’t recognize it. So, I think it is just on paper, that’s all.”

Participants highlighted the unequal representation of Alaska Natives in co management bodies. Often, the number of government representatives far exceed the number of tribal representatives. An example was given by one participant of the Migratory Bird Council, which has 11 members who act as Alaska Native representatives, but those 11 individuals are only allowed one vote between them. Another example provided was the Federal Subsistence Board, on which there are three Alaska Native representatives and five representatives of the Federal government. The participant who provided this example went on to note that the agency people are often individuals who know very little about Alaska and were just transferred here to work. In contrast, Indigenous Knowledge holders have a “continuum of knowledge and perspective” but are still generally outvoted. Additional examples were provided of management councils, such as the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council, which do not have a tribal or Indigenous seat at all.

Power Dynamics - Control, Intimidation, and Power

Participants commented on the undertones—and sometimes overtones—of intimidation that they feel from wildlife managers and law enforcement, highlighting the imbalance of power that often pervades the co management and consultation process. Overall, participants agreed that within Alaska the government (both state and federal) is reluctant to give up any control to move toward an equitable relationship or genuine partnership.

It was noted that game wardens and law enforcement often arrive with little information and a misguided attempt to treat everyone the same, no matter where they are stationed. One participant also identified pride as a factor

that drives continued mismanagement of certain resources. The participant noted that although the Alaska Department of Fish and Game has seen our management work, they continue to be reluctant to amend their management systems. For example, the state has seen that fishing from the first salmon run and allowing the second run to pass is an effective strategy but they refuse to change regulations which allow early fishing. Regarding that example, the participant commented, "I started thinking that maybe they don't want to admit that we are right and they are wrong."

Perceptions of Indigenous Knowledge and Western Science

Participants commented that our Indigenous Knowledge is often misunderstood and undervalued compared to western credentials like academic degrees. This lack of value for our knowledge has caused managers and researchers to discount or undervalue our contributions. Participants feel that, in the end, the words of scientists are perceived as stronger than Indigenous Knowledge in the eyes of the government.



Photo: Shannon Williams

As one participant commented, "for years, our testimony before the various boards and commissions that do regulation was taken as anecdotal—because we didn't have a college degree, what we said wasn't the gospel's truth." Participants noted that they often did not feel decision-making entities view them as being on the same level. They discussed that it is difficult to "prove" that they know just as much or more than scientists. In such scenarios, we often feel pressured to step out of our own culture and behave in a way that is more like the outside managers: bragging or listing accomplishments or credentials.

Participants additionally stressed that researchers often do not create space for Inuit to feel comfortable sharing our knowledge. Noting that at times the discussion of traditional rules does not seem appropriate in the context of consultation or co-management meetings. They explained



Photo: Carolina Behe

that some outside regulators are often dismissive when Inuit co-managers bring up Indigenous Knowledge that conflicts with what the researchers are doing.

Participants further explained that the very basis of western science and western wildlife management sometimes goes against Inuit values. For example, traditional rules such as never count fish and never argue about the resources were disregarded when scientists installed weirs in the river. The scientific analysis of information is often singular in focus (focusing only on one aspect). While the information and analysis are important, it lacks a holistic understanding. Participants indicated that scientific findings often only show part of the story.

To improve and move toward equitable relationships, participants felt that there is a need for greater respect for and recognition of our Indigenous Knowledge and pathways for the involvement of our knowledge in co management decision making processes.

Walrus Ivory Bans

Participants discussed how bans on selling handicraft items with animal materials such as walrus ivory, fossilized ivory, and seal skin have negatively affected Inuit artists and communities and overall food sovereignty.

It was agreed that the ivory ban has caused unnecessary stress on our communities. Artists are now limited in which materials they can use and, in some cases, can no longer make certain types of art or handicrafts. This diminishes the ability to earn income within communities within communities with few to no job prospects.

Participants highlighted that the income brought in by arts and handicrafts is not supplemental for most, but is instead used to buy basics and necessities. While many artists have tried to find ways around using marine mammal products, instead using muskox horns in place of ivory, for example, participants commented that it is disheartening to see the loss of certain artistic skills. One participant also noted that to not use walrus ivory is wasteful. This goes against Inuit rules and practices.

Indigenous Human Rights

One of the Principal Investigators, Dr. Dalee Sambo Dorough, took time during the focus group to describe and explain many of the international developments that affirm and support Indigenous human rights.



Participants discussed how these developments can be used as tools to further Inuit food sovereignty and self-governance. Many of the declarations and international covenants that were reviewed during the focus group contain clear language that directly addresses barriers to self-

determination that Inuit face. A number of participants agreed that more knowledge of the international instruments and developments will empower our communities and provide tools to counter laws and policies that stifle our management and co-management, and advances our human rights. This discussion was closely tied to the discussion about the impacts of

international interests and campaigns that impact our way of life (i.e. campaigns to stop the sale of walrus ivory and ban on seal fur sales in some places). At the request of the participants, a list of international instruments was distributed for them to share with their communities and to further explore ways for them to be used.

Steps Towards Better Co Management

During the focus group, participants discussed some of the various steps that Inuit have taken towards improving co-management and consultation processes. Many of these improvements involve the employment of researchers locally or the implementation of research guidelines.



Photo: Shannon Williams

One participant shared the following example of a system developed by Inuit in Kotzebue where all researchers are asked to include an Indigenous Knowledge component in their studies. If a researcher doesn't agree, the study can be denied. Another participant shared that a similar system has been implemented in Utqiagvik, where visiting scientists are asked to sign a protocol agreement before conducting their study. The agreement states that a presentation on findings must be provided for the community. And within the ISR, communities are able to approve or deny every study that takes place in their region and have opportunities to provide feedback throughout the lifespan of projects. It was also noted that many Inuit-run entities, such as the North Slope Borough and Kawerak Inc., employ biologists and other scientists which allows Inuit to guide research and creates direct access to information.

These systems not only work to ensure the inclusion of Indigenous Knowledge in research, but can also help to lessen survey fatigue and give our communities more opportunities to define and influence the research that is occurring.

Participants agreed that the Inuvialuit Final Agreement and the government structure in the ISR in Canada is an advancement towards Inuit food sovereignty and self-governance. In accordance with the IFA, consultation regularly takes place between the Canadian Government and Inuvialuit management bodies. The local Hunters and Trappers Committees and the regional Inuvialuit Game Council are the main co-management bodies which represent Inuvialuit perspectives in wildlife management.

Delving deeper into the discussion about what it will take to develop a true co-management structure that supports Inuit food sovereignty, participants identified issues with funding. Funding, lack of funding, and who controls funding can often further exacerbate the lack of balance within a co-management system. For example, if the government controls the budget, they are able to control how, when, and why that budget is used. Participants stressed that a true co management structure would need to have adequate funding to support activities and information gathering that is directed by us.

Conclusion

This meeting provided an opportunity for in depth discussions about co-management, Inuit food sovereignty, challenges and obstacles, and ways to move forward. This report provides a brief summary of the many rich discussions held. These discussions will continue on throughout the project and will be shared in the final FSSG report. The final FSSG report is scheduled to be completed by March 31, 2020.



Photo: Carolina Behe. Members of the FSSG Advisory Committee meet the day before the Focus Group Meeting – Inuit Past and Current Managers of Marine Resources.



Yup'ik and Cup'ik Past and Current Managers of Salmon Focus Group: Food Sovereignty and Self Governance – Inuit Role in Managing Arctic Marine Resources¹

FOCUS GROUP MEETING SUMMARY REPORT

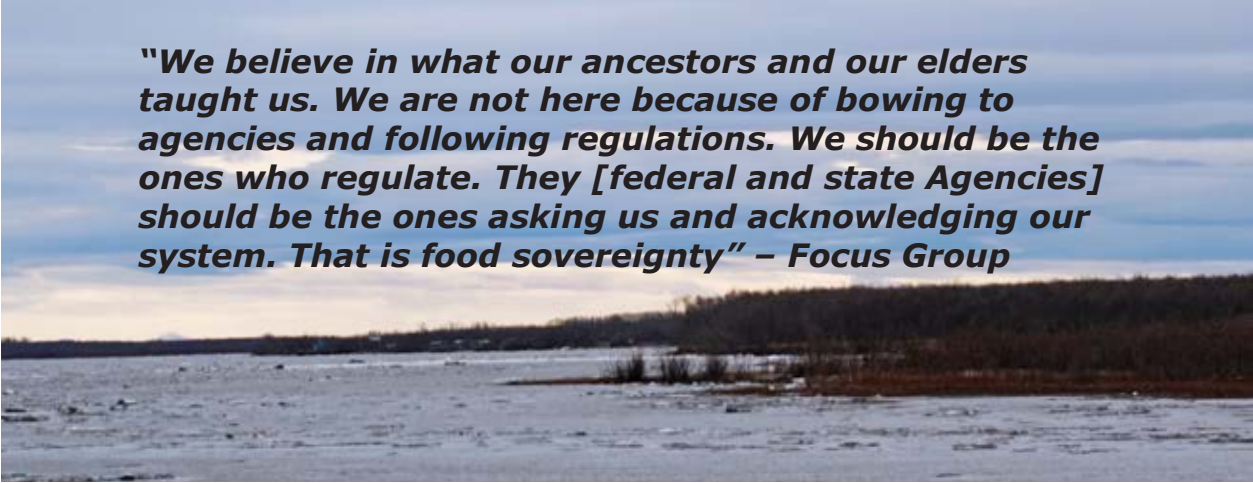


People in photo listed on page two. Photo: Inuit Circumpolar Council

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. Within the Alaskan Inuit Food Security Conceptual Framework, food sovereignty is a necessity for supporting and maintaining the six dimensions of food security.²

¹ This work is supported through a National Science Foundation grant (grant no. 1732373). No opinions, findings, conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation. Additional travel support was provided by the Ocean Conservancy.

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.



"We believe in what our ancestors and our elders taught us. We are not here because of bowing to agencies and following regulations. We should be the ones who regulate. They [federal and state Agencies] should be the ones asking us and acknowledging our system. That is food sovereignty" – Focus Group

Photo: Carolina Behe

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. Yup'ik and Cup'ik Past and Current Managers of Salmon Focus Group: *Food Sovereignty and Self Governance - Inuit Role in Managing Arctic Marine Resources*. Anchorage, Alaska.

The focus group meeting was facilitated by Carolina Behe, assisted by Shannon Williams. Dr. Dalee Sambo Dorough, as a member of the project team, also attended the focus group. This report has been prepared by Carolina Behe and Shannon Williams.

Quyana!

Quyana to the Association of Village Council Presidents (AVCP) and the Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (KRITFC) – specifically Quyana Jennifer Hooper and Mary Peltola for all of your support and assistance in the organizations and implementation of this workshop. Quyana to Sarah Mutter (AVCP Staff), for taking notes throughout the entire workshop. Quyana to Joann Andrew and Charlie Charlie for providing translation between Yup'ik and English and for your valuable contributions. Quyana to the Orutsaramiut Native Council for providing meeting space, administrative support, and for welcoming us to Bethel. Quyana to all of the participants for your time and valuable contributions to this important project.

Front Page Photo: From Left to Right. Top Row – Tim Andrew, Charlie R. Charlie, Benjamin Lazano, Golga Fredrick, Ralph Nelson, Walter Morgan, Baylen Toots, Yago Jacob. Second Row – Carolina Behe, Shannon Williams, Joann Andrew, Vera Metcalf, Mary Peltola, Lucy Post, Charlene Erik, Alice Grace Julius, Natalia Brink, Sara Mutter, Dalee Sambo Dorough. Third Row – Robert Lekander, Mike Williams Sr., James Aiagiak Charles, Arthur Lake, Phillip K. Peter, James Nicori, Moses Owen, William Charlie Brown.

About the Focus Group Meeting

On May 9, 2018, the Inuit Circumpolar Council Alaska hosted a focus group meeting as part of the Inuit-lead project, *Food Sovereignty and Self Governance: Inuit Role in Managing Arctic Marine Resources (FSSG)*. The goal of the focus group was to bring together Inuit who have been, or are currently, engaged in management of salmon (or other marine life), to:

- Explore current co-management structures, policies related to our food sources and decision-making pathways, and
- Consider ways to improve and enhance the management and co-management of our food and related habitats in contrast to the existing ways.

The discussions at this meeting will further inform the Inuit led project *Food Sovereignty and Self Governance – Inuit Role in Managing Arctic Marine Resources*³ (FSSG). This report provides a summary of the topics discussed and information considered during the focus group meeting.

The meeting, which was held at the Orutsaramiut Native Council multi-purpose building in Bethel, Alaska, was attended by 23 Indigenous Knowledge (IK) holders (referred to as participants throughout the report). Quyanana to all of those who were able to attend:

- Alice Grace Julius (Goodnews Bay)
- Arthur Lake (Kwigillingok)
- Baylen Toots (Mekoryuk)
- Benjamin Lazano (Kongiganak)
- Charlene Erik (Chefornak)
- Charlie R. Charlie (Tuntutuliak)
- Golga Fredericks (Nunapitchuk)
- James Aiagiak Charles (Tuntutuliak)
- James Nicori (Kwethluk)
- Joann S. Andrew (Bethel)
- Lucy Post (Kongiganak)
- Mary Sattler Peltola (Bethel)
- Mike Williams, Sr. (Akiak)
- Moses Owen (Akiak)
- Natalia Brink (Kasigluk)
- Phillip K. Peter (Akiachak)
- Ralph Nelson (Napakiak)
- Robert Lekander (Bethel)
- Timothy Andrew (Bethel)
- Vera Metcalf (Nome)
- Walter Morgan (Lower Kalskag)
- William Charlie Brown (Eek)
- Yago Jacob (Napaskiak)

³ Information on this project can be found on the ICC Alaska web page or through the following link (access July 18, 2019) - https://iccalaska.org/wp-icc/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/1001_FSSG-SUMMARY-AND-UPDATE.pdf

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 and improved 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 March 31, 2020.



Chinook Salmon in the Smokehouse. 2010. Photo: Mary Peltola.

Focus Group Structure

Through the FSSG project methodology development (developed in collaboration with the project partners), it was decided to hold the focus group meetings in conjunction with each partner's annual meeting.

In line with the project methodology, this focus group meeting occurred in conjunction with the Kuskokwim River Intertribal Fisheries Commission (KRITFC) 2018 Annual meeting. The focus group meeting was planned and organized with two of the project partners, the KRITFC and the Association of Village Council Presidents (AVCP).

Yupik members of the KRITFC attended the meeting. The members of the KRITFC have been selected by their respective tribal councils to represent their communities within the KRITFC. The KRITFC and AVCP aided in identifying additional Yup'ik and Cup'ik Indigenous Knowledge holders who have been strongly engaged in harvesting and/or preparing salmon. In expanding the attendance of the meeting additional people from a larger geographic scope within the Yukon-Kuskokwim region were able to add voice and important perspectives to the discussion.

Throughout the day we promoted a flexible and relaxed environment. Discussions were held through both collective and small break out groups. Breaking into smaller groups provided an opportunity to have in-depth discussions and provided support for some who felt less comfortable contributing within a larger group. For example, during one of the smaller breaks out groups, all women attending the meeting gathered in a distinct group. This supported women to speak specifically about points that they are most knowledgeable and to go into deeper discussion on those points.

The meeting was facilitated using guiding questions that were informed by the ICC Alaska food security report, [*How to Assess Food Security from an Inuit Perspective: Building a Conceptual Framework on How to Assess Food Security in the Alaskan Arctic.*](#) and further refined by the FSSG Advisory Committee.

As with all gatherings, we had lots of food and laughter throughout the day!

"We want our people to continue to exercise the way they have lived for thousands of years. We should be the ones to regulate. They are the ones that should be asking, pleading, for co-management"
– Focus Group Participants



Photo: Carolina Behe

Report Summary

The below provides a brief summary and general overview of the discussion held throughout the meeting. Though this section is broken into bolded headings, all headings are interrelated. For example, when speaking about the need for adaptive management strategies, one must also consider traditional Inuit management practices, the health and well-being of people and animals, variability in weather, and many other related components.

Key Themes/Concepts Discussed

The meeting was facilitated using guiding questions under key themes/concepts:

- Personal Experiences in gathering food for you, your family, for your community
- Consultation processes as it relates to and impacts your food gathering activities
- Decision-making pathways
- Indigenous Knowledge and Research questions
- Information accessibility and knowledge sharing
- 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)

Key Focus Group Meeting Findings

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:

- The rapid rate of changes
- Relationships with law enforcement and other government officials
- Challenges with the co-management system and regulations
- Positive changes occurring within the co-management system
- Holistic approach to management
- Inuit traditional rules and roles
- Women-specific rules, roles, and traditions
- Recommendations to move towards Inuit Food Sovereignty



Photo: Jacki Cleveland

On Personal Experiences

To begin the discussions, participants were asked to share their experiences over the past year in gathering food for themselves, their families, and for their communities. Much of this discussion naturally leads into the other topics to be discussed and holds strong references to changes that go back fifty plus years and to changes associated with climate change.

Over the past 50 years many changes have occurred within the interconnecting topics of food security, culture, politics, economics, technology, infrastructure, education systems, and the environment. Many of the changes discussed during the meeting came from forced changes and assimilation policies, such as children being sent to boarding schools and imposed regulations. Participants stressed the negative impacts of many of these changes, including impacts to health and on the passing of Indigenous Knowledge to younger generations about the harvesting and preparation of traditional foods.

Additionally, participants stressed that “climate change is impacting us”. The concerns shared are not just because things have changed or are changing – in this environment, change has been constant and we have always adapted. Today, the associated concern centers on the rapid changes occurring and lack of adaptability of federal and state policies and regulations.

Below is a brief listing of changes that participants shared. It is important to note that all of these changes are interconnected and require deeper discussion to fully understand the cumulative impacts and potential decisions that Inuit must make to adapt.

- Unpredictable weather patterns
- Increasing air and water temperatures
- Increased frequency of storms and storm surges
- Loss of permafrost
- Changes in wind and water currents
- Changes in timing of river and sea ice formation and break up
- Changes in salinity levels
- Changes in precipitation (increase in rain and less snow in some areas)

- Changes in animal behavior, timing, migration, and related patterns
- Decrease of some animal populations in some areas (i.e. ptarmigan, tom cod)
- Change in migration and placement of some plants and animals to new areas (i.e. moose and bears moving toward the coast and berries moving inward)
- Shifts and adaptations in harvesting activities in relation to following the weather and animals – related to seasonality changes

In response to many of these changes, it is necessary for people to adapt. As one participant shared, “Our way has changed, our system has changed...”. Participants further shared that in light of the changes occurring, “...the regulations don’t make sense.” For example, it is important to dry fish when the weather is conducive for drying fish. Participants further stressed that, “...the animals have seasons. All of the fish have their schedule, they are not going to wait for us. They have tributaries to spawn [in]”.

Participants further shared concern with changes that highlighted human behavior and activities –

- shipping activities
- large scale commercial fishing and associated by-catch
- increasing human population
- increase in pollution/waste management

“Our ancestors used to talk about June as a drying month for the fish that are gathered for the food that will sustain [us] for the whole winter. Another thing that June doesn’t have is flies. [Begin drying] just before the flies start flying around. That was our lesson what we were taught...If we are going to go fishing all the fishes have their schedules these four species are all scheduled to arrive on these rivers and these four species are not going to wait for us. I was told they will not wait for us to get them because the time to get them is their season...And again these fish have tributaries and a place to spawn.” – Workshop Participant



Salmon drying. Photo: Jacki Cleveland

Consultation and Decision-making pathways

Upon reflection of consultation and decision-making pathways, participants focused on the deep connection that we have to the environment that we are a part of. Participants stressed that Indigenous Knowledge has worked for thousands of years to place humans in harmony with the environment and resources. The value of this knowledge is not adequately acknowledged or supported within policies or utilized to inform adaptive decision-making. As one participant shared, there is a need for "...us as Indigenous and original peoples of this land to have an equal say in the regulatory language and not always [be] restrictive from practicing our way of life".

Participants identified several ways that our food sovereignty is impeded by the state and federal government consultation processes; what information is used to inform decision-making; and within current regulations.

Such challenges, obstacles, and frustrations include:

- Need for stronger consultation processes that treat us as partners with a voting say in the decision-making
- Some regulators do not acknowledge the fact that we have been successful in managing our resources for thousands of years
- Dismissive behavior and disrespect toward Indigenous Knowledge
- Laws and most scientific research reflect western values, not Yup'ik and Cup'ik (Inuit) values
- Federal and state laws and regulations that govern our harvesting activities to feed our families is confusing and hard to navigate
- Imbalance in representation on federal and state management boards and advisory groups
- Lack of equity in state and federal government processes, decision-making, and research activities
- Lack processes and mechanisms for true involvement of Indigenous Knowledge
- Discrimination against our way of life and culture

Participants explained that these concerns demonstrate disrespect toward them, the animals, land, and waters. This concern is reflected in consultation processes described as people being told what is going to happen, decisions

made prior to meetings, science valued above our knowledge, being limited to an advisory role or to giving a testimony to those that lack knowledge of our culture. Participants described examples of presenting Indigenous Knowledge to a federal or state management boards, and being met by disrespectful body language (rolling eyes, slouching in chair, closed eyes, as if they were asleep), huffing in frustration, or being interrupted.

The need for communication, with efforts to building relationships and partnerships are needed within the consultation processes. It was emphasized that communication is part of respect.

In thinking specifically about decision-making pathways, participants shared feelings of being controlled by the federal and state government and stressed that lack of processes for the inclusion of our Indigenous Knowledge and values contributes to limiting their equitable involvement in decision-making. Further, involvement in the decision-making process is hampered by unequal representation on management bodies at both the state and federal level.

Often, there are very few Alaska Native representatives on any given decision-making board and they are easily out-voted by other representatives - examples include the State Board of Fish or the Federal

"I think they are at a point right now the state and federal government, I hope, are finally realizing that we are here for good, they are not going to get us to go away."- Focus Group Participant

"Our resources are the same. We all want to save the resources. If we work together, we can do it."- Focus Group Participant



Photo: Carolina Behe

Subsistence Board. There is a need for processes that provide equitable voice and weight to Native caucuses and peoples. Additionally, these boards are operated under a system and culture that differs from our own. Participants noted that many decisions are ultimately driven by commercial industries which have representation and funding to put them in a place of power. Examples were provided of people being restricted in taking salmon to feed their families and asked "...to sacrifice much of our [cultural] ways, while the [large scale] commercial fishing industry is legally able to waste salmon (disrespecting the animal)...", as reflected by the large amount of salmon taken through by-catch.

"Our ancestors provided all of the information, the path, and all of the things necessary for our people to survive to continue."- Focus Group Participant



From left to right – Phillip K. Peter, Sr., Moses Owen, Walter Morgan. Photo: Carolina Behe

Also, in relation to decision-making pathways, participants voiced frustration about the confusing nature of the federal and state management systems - noting that the policies and management processes are often hard to navigate. It is often challenging to know who to direct our concerns to and at what level. This issue is further exasperated by lack of communication between federal and/or state agencies and within the agencies. Of equal concern, are the challenges of keeping track of multiple policies and regulations that are imposed and/or conflict with our knowledge.

Overall, in considering consultation and decision-making, participants emphasized the need to share our knowledge and values to inform decision-making and policy. In order for the sharing to be meaningful, managers/regulators, policy makers and those making decisions have to listen and work hard to understand the complexities of our Indigenous Knowledge.

Indigenous Knowledge and Equity

As shared above, participants heavily stressed the importance of our knowledge. As one participant shared, "...We all know the weather, we all know our rivers around us. We are the experts. Our knowledge of oceans and ice [and] of the animals - the mistakes our ancestors have taught us. All of these teachings have not changed from our ancestors." While another participant shared, "We have credibility. We have faith in our Indigenous Knowledge. Our knowledge goes way back. We know what pieces to look for..."



From left to right – Golga Fredrick, Sarah ?, Arthur Lake, James Aiagiak Charles, William Charlie Brown, Baylon Toots. Photo: Carolina Behe

Participants described concerns about the impact on the environment when not using our knowledge. Our knowledge holds a holistic understanding of the world – an understanding of the interconnectedness (relationships between) between humans, the water, air, and land, all animals and plants are central to our knowledge. Participants described the importance of a holistic approach to management, commenting that western scientists and managers often do not consider the connections between all species.

Within the discussion about what knowledge is used to inform decision-making and research, participants identified single species approaches as one of the main shortcomings of western science and federal and state management. One participant described single species management, commenting: "We are compartmentalizing everything; putting lines where they don't belong. Lines don't belong in the natural world. They don't allow freedom of movement so that everything will survive." Another participant shared, "...It should be talked about as one environment. Salmon does not know who is regulating or what boundaries are".

Participants further observed shortcomings of western science data collection techniques and knowledge of the animals. For example, in relying on fish counting data from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, participants have discovered that there is a large amount of guesswork that goes into their counting (through estimates). It was stressed that much more information is needed to understand animals. One participant also indicated that weirs (used to count fish) disrupting water flow can negatively impact the fish.

Participants noted that scientists and lawmakers do not want to accept Indigenous Knowledge as legitimate or true information because it is unwritten and does not follow the same methodologies as western science. Participants described encounters of being dismissed and asked if they, "have science to support that..." (Workshop Participant. 2018) when trying to share their Indigenous knowledge.

Participants also shared a few positive changes and success stories that are occurring in the co-management world. Some participants described a shift in the way that agencies are responding to Indigenous Knowledge – these changes were closely tied to individual scientists and/or agency representatives.

Participants described some advances within the development of the Kuskokwim River Intertribal Fishery Commission (KRITFC). For example, as opposed to holding a meeting where agency representatives and scientists provide a series of western science oriented presentations in a classroom type of delivery, the commission now determines who the presenters are

and hold meetings sitting in a circle. A less structured agenda with a more holistic approach is also used.

KRITFC is also building partnerships with specific scientists and managers. As one participant shared, "A positive example is the influence that five Native fishermen have on the federal management of Chinook subsistence fishing. Within the KRITFC there are 33 commissioners. Four of the commissioners are elected annually to serve as in-season managers. The KRITFC's Elder Advisor and the four in-season managers consult weekly, and often multiple times a week before and during the Chinook salmon run to advise U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) on escapement goals, harvest targets, gear-type, and times of closures and openings. Indigenous Knowledge is shared, respected and incorporated into management decisions".

A representative from the Eskimo Walrus Commission (EWC) shared a successful example on potential listing of walrus on the Endangered Species list. The representative shared that after working tirelessly to advocate for inclusion of Indigenous Knowledge within the USFWS' reports, and guiding the agency to include Inuit hunters in the research and sampling process, that they have seen some progress.

"We are supposed to know about all of that system [federal/ state government and western science] and how to deal with it, but then they don't come and look at ours" – Focus Group Participant

"There is a lot of faith and confidence that we have in our knowledge because we are here, we live here. We see it year after year. That is the hypothesis of science: you test over time. That is how come their data series go way back. Our data series too, go way back. Because we live here." – Focus Group Participant



Nora Nelson (10 years old), cutting salmon belly strips to dry. Photo: Mary Peltola

While there are some examples of partnerships between researchers and Indigenous communities, there is a feeling that these examples are too few and need to become the norm. A lot of work is needed to move to equitable partnerships. Participants shared the need for community driven research and being willing to aid scientists in advancing their work and understanding through collaboration. Participants felt that there is a need for processes that support the equitable inclusion of their Indigenous Knowledge, for a co-production of knowledge, and for trust and respect.

Existing Regulations, Impacts, and Adaptation

Many participants described how difficult, disheartening, and emotional it has been to go from a life relatively free of restrictions to one that is excessively restricted by both state and federal entities. These difficulties are compounded by the fact that the regulations put in place by state and federal agencies do not reflect Indigenous Knowledge or our values. For example, the regulations are rigid and inflexible.

Our communities have adapted through centuries of change. Specifically, participants shared that through following the animals and the weather, they have adapted changes in animals timing, weather, influx of house flies, etc. As one participant explained: "when the decisions are not being made locally when that system allows for waste to occur... My fish [the] last couple of summers spoiled because of timing allowed to fish." The regulated time to fish was not conducive to weather needed for processing the fish.

Participants indicated that existing regulations stop people from living the life they were born to live. Participants highlighted the fact that rigid regulations which limit hunting and fishing to just a few days each summer limits the passing down of Indigenous Knowledge to the younger generations. Children are not able to participate as often or as much in meaningful traditions. As one participant put it "If we could only fish two days in the month of June, for a young kid, one summer is a long time. That is a huge lesson that is lost."

Participants further shared concerns that the young people today think of the restrictions as normal because they have known nothing else. They feared that the normalizing restrictions will create generational disconnect and challenges for youth in understanding their cultural identity and their connections/relationships with the environment. As one participant commented: "I see our children are in a state of confusion right now. I have been telling my kids, my grandkids and my children we hunt and live off the land. And yet when it comes time to fish, who is saying I can't fish?"

Participants further discussed other values demonstrated within the decision-making pathway, that feels in conflict and harmful to the environment. For example, there is concern about management decisions and regulations that often emphasize individualism (a western value) which devalues tribal and community rights. One participant shared, "They say we are supposed to focus on ourselves, but we were not brought up that way. Further within the discussion about regulations participants shared concerns about the tenuous, and at times, paternalistic relationship that communities have with game wardens. They noted that there is often a deep cultural rift between law enforcement officials and communities.

A few participants compared their relationships with law enforcement and the feeling of being heavily regulated to being tied up like a dog, being blocked, or being fenced in. They described a history of holding fear at hearing law enforcement or game warden planes flying into a community or area where harvesting is occurring.



Van Kapsner. First catch ptarmigan. 2013.
Photo: Mary Peltola

Participants further shared that the terminology often used to describe their activities as hurtful. For example, using the term 'overharvest' to describe harvesting activities to feed families is disrespectful, dismissive of the relationship that people hold with the salmon, and the Yup'ik and Cup'ik laws that people live by. One participant commented: "We do not waste or overharvest and if we do, it weighs on us."

Women's Traditions

During the focus group meeting, participants were asked to organize into small break out groups. While most of the break out groups focused on the same themes that were discussed in the larger discussion group, one group was comprised of only women who were asked to discuss some of the traditional rules and roles that applied specifically to women. The focus was on the special role that women have in our traditions and our communities.



From left to right – Mary Peltola, Joann Andrew, Dalee Sambo Dorough, Vera Metcalf, Lucy Post, Charlene Erik, Natalia Brink, Alice Grace Julius. Photo: Carolina Behe.

While the women agreed that the specifics of many traditions varied from village to village, participants shared a common understanding of the meaningfulness of these rules and roles. Traditions specific to women that were discussed by participants in the women's break out group include the following:

- Women's role in the preparation and sharing of harvested animals
- The handling of hunting equipment
- Women have to respect themselves and respect the power that they have
- Fasting when a mother passes away
- Avoid using harsh tones with children
- Avoid defending their children, let them learn to defend themselves
- People take on the characteristics of their namesakes
- Traditions surround pregnancy and miscarriages
- Sharing

- Women are equal to men – both skills of men and women are needed for both balance and survival



Margaret Dillon Fitka with seal oil being cold rendered. Photo: Mary Peltola

Participants noted that some of these traditions are being forgotten, ignored, or written off as superstition. However, the rules have stood the test of time and participants explained that elders taught them that following rules and traditions affects personal health as well as environmental and community health and well-being. One participant explained: "I will be affected by how I listen or how I don't abide by them [traditions and customs] ... my actions will affect the land and to the water and to the sky...We can affect the fish, make them disappear. The berries, the weather." For example, if an animal is

disrespected during processing, the animal will not carry messages for other animals to give themselves to the hunter. In this way the women's actions impacts if a hunter is a good hunter.

Importantly, participants shared that, "...settlers taught women that they are beneath men. But that is not the Yup'ik [or Cup'ik] way. Women play a strong and equitable role within taking care and respecting all within the environment."

Yup'ik and Cup'ik Rules/Practices/Protocols

Participants shared that they do not traditionally use the word management to describe caretaking and stewardship of life, land, water, and air around them. It was explained that these rules/practices are deeply engrained. As one participant shared, "The rules are not just your way of being...it is the relationship with everything." These rules/practices/protocols emphasize a strong sense of community, responsibility, and respect.

In discussing Yup'ik and Cup'ik rules/practices/protocols it was shared that there are no hunting and fishing seasons - there is hunting and fishing in all

seasons: "We have a season with fish four times a year: spring, summer, fall, and winter. That is what we depended on, year after year. It never changed. And that is what the people lived on, no matter what part of the year it is."

Below is a summarized list of the rules/practices/protocols discussed:

- Be respectful to what is available to you and it will come back to you
- Do not disrespect the land, water, air, plants, or the animals
- Do not waste; use all parts of the animal; be conservative
- Fasting helps create abundance
- Animals do not wait for you; do not sit around while food passes by
- Share; Share your first catch with elders; share with widows; make sure that all are provided for
- 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
- Do not try to make money from subsistence
- Be quiet and humble and live in harmony;
- Respect yourself, your neighbor, and your enemy
- Focus on caretaking, not fighting; Do not argue or fight over the animals
- Let the elders eat first
- Elders should share their knowledge; youth should take their knowledge from them
- Have patience and listen
- Follow the seasons, follow the animals
- Take animals when they give themselves to you
- It is important to take animals at the right time



Association of Village Council Presidents Yupiit Piciryarait Museum. Right Picture - Noel Polty, Pilot Station, Plaque Mask, Circa 1960's. Left Picture - Ellam Yua Hanging Ornament, Unknown, original collection, Circa 1950's. Photo: Carolina Behe.

Recommendations

Throughout the course of the day, participants shared recommendations and ways they feel we can move towards Inuit food sovereignty. Key recommendations discussed include:

- Work together; be unified
- Continue to gather collectively; meetings with all Inuit
- Place focus on educating the younger generations and include youth in meetings
- State of Alaska and federal government policies to support formal participation and equitable partnership with Tribal governments
- Move beyond Indigenous input through advisory councils/committees and focus on equitable partnership through true co-management
- Enhanced capacity and authority of Indigenous regional organizations
- Document and sharing positive stories
- Increase communications
- Community developed consultation practices and policies
- For state and federal management practices and western science to move away from single species approaches
- Need for community driven research and monitoring
- Need for pathways for the equitable inclusion of Indigenous Knowledge
- Adequate funding support needed for equitable inclusion of Indigenous Knowledge
- Educate policy makers, scientists, managers, and regulators about our way of life
- Publish information for our people (about our own rules/policies and positive stories)
- Be drivers of communication efforts
- Embrace our sovereignty

Participants repeatedly noted the need to collectively work together to create a united front in order to take step towards Inuit food sovereignty. As one participant commented: "Look how powerful they [all of the tribes in the region] are if only they would put their minds together and work together to get something that we want." Additionally, participants recommended that we continue to gather collectively as a way to build relationships and share

ideas: "This is part of what builds us up by identifying who we are and connecting us to our land and our way of life."

Several participants discussed the importance of educating youth, further recommending that youth be invited to meetings such as these. Born from this recommendation, ICC Alaska facilitated a Youth, Elders, and Active Hunters and Gatherers workshop in Bethel in February 2019. The Youth, Elders, and Active Hunters and Gatherers workshop provided a space for Inuit youth, elders, and adults from Alaska and Canada to learn from each other and have meaningful discussions about Inuit traditional values.

Participants recommended increased regional and tribal authority. They recommended increasing our knowledge of the existing tools and pathways that can help to increase our sovereignty: "when we start to understand them, we start to exercise our rights."

Many participants recommended that success stories like those shared from the EWC and KRITFC should be shared widely amongst Inuit. Participants indicated that those stories help to spread hope and happiness and re-invigorate and inspire our people.

Finally, participants stressed the need to take ownership of our sovereignty. Noting that we are sovereign, we need to act sovereign.

...give freely. Because in return, the tundra will come back at you ten-fold, it will come back in abundance. - Workshop Participant



Photo: Carolina Behe

Conclusion

This focus group provided an opportunity for in depth discussions about the co-management system, Inuit food sovereignty, challenges and obstacles to achieving food sovereignty, and ways to move forward. This report provides a brief summary of the many rich discussions that took place. These discussions will continue throughout the project and will be shared in the final Food Sovereignty and Self Governance report. The final report is scheduled to be completed by March 31, 2020.



Sockeye Salmon in the smoke house. 2014. Photo: Mary Peltola



Aklavik 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. Within the Alaskan Inuit Food Security Conceptual Framework, food sovereignty is a necessity for supporting and maintaining the six dimensions of 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. Aklavik Hunters and Trappers Committee Focus Group: *Food Sovereignty and Self Governance – Inuit Role in Managing Arctic Marine Resources*. Anchorage, Alaska.

The focus group meeting was facilitated by Carolina Behe with assistance from Courtney Charlie. This report was prepared by Shannon Williams with support provided by Carolina Behe.

Quyanainni/Koana

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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 Aklavik Hunters and Trappers Committee Focus Group Meeting

On March 6, 2018, the Inuit Circumpolar Council – Alaska (ICC AK) facilitated a focus group meeting with the Aklavik 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.



Photo: Carolina Behr

The Focus group participants included the appointed members of the Aklavik HTC as well as the Aklavik HTC resource person. Through this focus group, Indigenous Knowledge (IK) 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 Aklavik Hunters and Trappers Committee Focus Group Meeting.

Five IK experts (referred to as participants within the report) attended the focus group. Carolina Behe (project lead for ICC –Alaska) facilitated the focus group meeting with research assistance provided by Courtney Charlie. Quyanainni to those who were able to attend:

Brandon McLeod
Dean Arey
Michelle Gruben

Patrick Gordon
Renie Arey

Meeting Structure

The focus group was structured around methodologies developed in conjunction with the project partners and FSSG Advisory Committee. Throughout the day, we promoted a flexible and relaxed environment. Focus was placed on exchange of information through deep discussion as a group. During the workshop, participants were encouraged to talk and express themselves in any way they felt they needed to.



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, one must also consider youth education and involvement in co-management.

Key Themes/Concepts Discussed

The Aklavik Hunters and Trappers Committee Focus Group Meeting was facilitated using the guiding questions that were informed by the ICC – Alaska food security report, *How to Assess Food Security from an Inuit Perspective: Building a Conceptual Framework on How to Assess Food Security in the Alaskan Arctic*, and further refined by the FSSG Advisory Committee. The guiding questions revolved around the following key themes:

- Personal experiences in gathering food
- Consultation processes as they relate to or impact to food gathering activities
- Decision-making pathways
- Indigenous Knowledge and research questions
- Information accessibility and knowledge sharing
- Taking care of the Arctic and what tools are used
- Impacts of regulations on the wellbeing of animals, land and water, and Inuit

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:

- History and implementation of the Inuvialuit Final Agreement (IFA)
- Changes in the weather, climate, and ice
- Cost of living in ISR communities and associated issues
- Sharing
- Youth involvement
- Education
- Equity in management
- Inuit language
- A need for more adaptive and quicker management

On Personal Experiences on the Land

During the focus group, participants discussed resources that are of central importance to Aklavik hunters and trappers. Animals such as moose, caribou, musk oxen, sheep, grizzly bears, polar bears, belugas, ringed seals, muskrats, geese, char, dolly varden, and arctic herring were listed as main resources as were many species of berries including blackberries, cranberries, akpiks (salmonberries), and blueberries. Participants indicated

people in the community harvest less fish than they used to, mainly because they no longer keep dog teams and therefore don't need as much fish to feed the dogs. They also noted that wild bird eggs, specifically sea gull eggs and the mature sea gulls themselves are resources that were important to past Aklavik-based harvesters but are no longer harvested by community members at this time.



Photo: Carolina Behe

Participants discussed the central importance of two main resources: belugas and caribou. Belugas are an important summer resource, harvested during June or July. Belugas are not only harvested for food, but for medicine as well. Participants shared some of the medical uses of beluga oil, noting that it can be used as an ointment to heal cuts or can be used to ease or cure ear aches.

It was noted that there are only a small number of community members who actively hunt beluga compared to the past. Participants recalled a time when almost all community members were involved in beluga hunting and processing. They indicated that it is more difficult to harvest whale because of factors associated with the changing social and environmental climate. They also described changes in beluga populations and behavior patterns. Participants commented that, overall, beluga populations are healthy, noting that many females and calves can be observed in shallow waters each year.

However, the males that hunters are looking for seem to be coming through much earlier. They indicated that hunters are just lucky to catch the few stragglers or the few that turn back. Additionally, participants commented that other nearby ISR communities such as Ulukhaktok and Sachs Harbour have, largely, not been successful in harvesting beluga in several years due to the fact that beluga pods are no longer travelling through their hunting areas.

In the fall and winter, and especially in August and September, caribou becomes a focus for many Aklavik hunters. The caribou that usually pass through Aklavik are part of the Porcupine Herd. Participants noted that while the Porcupine Herd is at record size, their migration patterns have become somewhat erratic and they can be difficult to harvest some years. Total harvest numbers have been different from year to year. Some harvesters have started relying more on moose due to the unpredictable caribou numbers. Participants also noted that the Blue Nose Caribou Herd—which travels through other ISR communities, such as Tuktoyaktuk and Inuvik—are on a decline and communities have had to instate a tag system. Additionally, one focus group participant drew attention to the fact that some traditional food preparation is being forgotten over time, including how to prepare and cook caribou stomach.

On Changes in the Weather and Climate

Participants described changes that have been observed in weather and climate. Changes included the following:

- Recently, storms have been more severe and winters have been milder.
- Freeze up has been happening over a month late, in late October rather than September.
- Temperatures have been notably warmer in what used to be the coldest months: December, January, and February.
- Spring, and the breakup of ice, has been earlier.

The changes in the ice make coastal hunting and travelling on the ice more difficult and often times impossible. Ice formation has become unpredictable. Participants shared that there are places where people at one time would be able to travel 40 miles on the ice, where now there is no ice at all. Changing ice creates safety issues for hunters. Participants shared concern that some young hunters may not be able to adequately judge the quality of the ice. Falling through ice or getting stuck in slush is a regular concern.

One participant had observed additional changes in the natural world, including changes in the precise locations of sun sets; changes in positioning of the stars in the sky; changes in the color of meltwater; changes in the

quality and consistency of snow as well as the ice that forms on top of snow; changes in the characteristics of daylight and winter darkness. The participant commented that all of these changes in the weather, the seasons, the climate, and the natural world have left a wake of unpredictability and uncertainty.

On the Cost of Living

During the focus group, participants stressed that cost of living in the ISR is an important factor in considering food sovereignty. The high costs associated with the shipping, groceries, fuel, and equipment create a high burden. It was noted that hunters and would-be hunters experience a lot of difficulties navigating through those high costs when attempting to hunt and collect food for their family and community. Participants noted that prices at the local grocery store are extremely high due in large part to the high cost of shipping groceries and supplies into the community. Shipping in country foods and sharing between other communities in ISR can also be cost prohibitive. While communities have come up with ideas to trade or share resources, there is rarely enough funding to cover the cost of shipping to and from the respective communities.

Participants discussed the complexity and difficulty in choosing between a hunting trip or a trip to the grocery store. While still expensive, a trip to the grocery store doesn't involve the risk of coming home empty handed. But it is not just the food that a hunter takes from a trip out on the land. Hunting, harvesting, and being out on the land is an experience, an opportunity to educate another generation of hunters, and a way to practice culture, rights, and skills.

Because of the difficulties and high costs associated with hunting and harvesting on the land, community organizations such as HTC and Community Corps have developed programs such as Inuvialuit Harvester Assistance Program (IHAT). Through IHAT and other programs, harvesters can receive some financial support to help cover the cost of gas or shells. Community hunts are further funded through the Community Corp and the HTC, providing hunters an opportunity to harvested foods with the community on a larger scale. Funds are also set aside so that resources that are difficult to harvest in the area, such as beluga, can be purchased from Inuvik and distributed around the community.

On Sharing

The relevance of sharing was highlighted often and was incorporated into nearly

"That is what we do: we try to help one another. We're not one person, we always come together as a family and we always hunt for others and we share a lot of food." -Meeting Participant

every facet of the overall conversation. Participants called attention to the fact that sharing is, and has always been, central to Inuit culture. When food is shared so are the experiences of harvesting and processing foods. Participants commented that elders speak of the importance of working together for the future.

On Youth Involvement

Participants agreed that youth engagement and involvement is an integral aspect of achieving food sovereignty and self governance. Participants pointed out some of the many obstacles that exist in ensuring that IK is not lost generationally. A few obstacles mentioned were residential schools and increased interest in new technologies, such as cell phones and video games.

Finding ways to teach IK to the youth is a focus of the whole community. Programs have been developed that aim to involve youth in activities such as muskrat trapping, bird hunting, moose hunting, caribou hunting, and beaver trapping. Hunters are able to bring harvested caribou to the school to be processed. Beyond hunters bringing their own children along with them, these programs give additional youth opportunities to get out on the land. One participant also commented on a recently developed class offered in Inuvik that aims to help educate youth or adults on country food processing.

Passing down food preparation and recipes was a recommendation made by another participant who noted that certain traditional preparation methods need to be shared.

Overall, participants expressed pride in the youth of Aklavik today, noting that the young people are learning the knowledge that is being passed down to them and are starting to get out onto the land more and more. Participants also commended the forming of an Inuit Youth Council as well as the involvement of young adults in baseline research taking place in the community.

"I think that residential school really got in the traditional knowledge's way, because they were brought up in a traditional lifestyle but when they went to school they might have forgot some of those things. But then the generation now, they are starting to go back out on the land and they are lucky to do those on the land programs and there are other people that will teach you those important values and culture for your future."

-Meeting Participant

On The Inuvialuit Final Agreement and Co-Management Structure

The Inuvialuit Final Agreement (IFA, also known as the land claims) is a land claims agreement between the Inuvialuit people and the Federal Government of Canada. The IFA was negotiated throughout the 1970s and

finalized in 1984. Participants expressed gratitude for the negotiators who were willing to spend ten years countering government offers until the agreement reflected what they wanted. The negotiators intended for the IFA to help preserve Inuvialuit cultural identity and values by creating room for Inuvialuit to have an equal and meaningful voice in decision-making processes, including the management of natural resources.

Inuit have always managed their natural resources in ways that have not only served the needs of the people, but also conserved the resources and the environment. Participants shared examples of how traditional management has facilitated balance in the ecosystem and how Indigenous values, such as never taking more than is needed, have dictated decision-making since time immemorial. The IFA is meant to safeguard the rights of Inuvialuit to continue to make their own management decisions. The agreement further provides Inuvialuit with the power to influence decisions that are developed through co-management structures with the Canadian government.

Participants shared that in accordance with the IFA, consultation regularly takes place between the Canadian Government and Inuvialuit management bodies. The local HTC and the regional Inuvialuit Game Council (IGC) are the main co-management bodies which represent Inuvialuit perspectives in wildlife management. The HTC and the IGC regularly communicate with Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO). Community Corporations in each of the six communities in ISR and the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation (IRC) also exist to represent Inuvialuit perspectives in decision-making processes.

Participants explained that the consultation process gives Inuvialuit a chance to give recommendations, comments, or directives at a number of points in the decision-making process. This includes being involved in decisions regarding research or development taking place in the area.

On Direct Involvement in Resource Management Decisions

Participants emphasized that their communities—through the HTCs— are responsible for making wildlife management decisions such as total allowable harvests or legal mesh size for fishing. Additionally, the HTCs have been able to reverse management decisions that have been in place since before the IFA. A main example given was the re-opening of the Big Fish River for harvesting. Participants explained that the Big Fish River, near Aklavik, was closed to harvesting before the land claims agreement was signed. The plan to re-open the river was led by an elder who sat on the HTC. In pointing out that the Inuvialuit people were never consulted in the river closure, the HTC was able to convince the DFO to re-open the river, despite initial resistance. Participants underlined the fact that under the IFA, Inuvialuit must be consulted in such management decisions. A monitoring program was put into

place that showed that population growth in the char population after the river was reopened.



Photos: Carolina Behre

On Management Plans Developed Through Co-Management

Focus group participants explained that, for most resources, Inuvialuit don't have harvest limits. However, there are voluntary quotas for certain species. Participants provided the example of char, for which there are total allowable harvest numbers put in place for certain rivers. Participants indicated that community members are good about reporting numbers and pulling their nets when total allowable harvest numbers are reached because they know that the stock is healthier that way. Participants noted that voluntary management systems put in place for the Porcupine caribou herd over the past several years have helped the herd to reach record size.

Resource management plans are developed through co-management processes for all main food resources and all species that may need to be monitored for other reasons. If the numbers of a particular resource are low, the management plan is put into action to conserve that resource. There are just a few animals, including grizzly bear and polar bear, for which a stricter quota system is currently in place. For those animals, community members can subsistence harvest them if they obtain a tag, but tags are limited and the harvester is not permitted to sell the meat or fur.

Participants noted that IK is taken into account in the development of management systems. The management plans are developed in partnership with the HTC's and harvest numbers are based not only on scientific counting methods, but also on IK. A number of participants commented on how the use of science and IK together can lead to more accurate estimates.

On the Consultation Process

Overall, participants agreed that the consultation processes put in place by the IFA has greatly increased the equity in decision-making processes. Participants largely felt that the IFA creates and protects an equal space for Inuvialuit at the decision-making table.

They noted several times that their opinions and IK must be taken into account, so there is never a question of whether or not they will have an opportunity to be heard. Many participants expressed pride in the IFA and gratitude towards its negotiators, indicating that the IFA is seen by other Canadian Inuit as a benchmark of a uniquely successful agreement. Finally, they noted that over the course of the 30 years that have passed since the IFA was put into place, the level of inclusion and respect felt by Inuvialuit people who attend co-management meetings has increased and continues to increase.

“Even at the [co-management] meetings they say ‘Inuvialuit, do you have anything to say?’ or ‘what are your thoughts?’ They give them the time to speak what might be valuable to them or important to them. They are given time to talk. The IFA is looked up to from other agreements in Canada. They look at the IFA one because it is a unique... the elders before us negotiated some good stuff. We can be proud to be Inuvialuit.” -Meeting Participant

On Language and culture connections to food sovereignty

A few participants commented on how the loss of language threatens not only Inuit culture, but also Inuit food sovereignty. The participants pointed out that the use of English in official co-management meetings can directly influence the management decisions that are made. The main example given by participants was regarding beluga whales. In Inuvialuktun, there are four or five words which describe the animals known simply as belugas in English. Participants noted that distinct words exist to describe whales at different stages of their lives. And because there are distinct management decisions to be made for those different kinds of whales, a conversation in English about beluga management does not fully capture the extent of Inuvialuit Indigenous knowledge or traditional management structures.

On Barriers to Food Sovereignty

Although participants were generally happy with the consultation process as it is structured by the IFA, they identified parts of the process which could be improved. Barriers identified include the following

- Lack of knowledge and understanding of the IFA by outside entities;
- Limited decision-making power when it comes to selling processed country foods;

- Markedly slow decision-making process which can hinder adaptive management.

Participants shared stories of working on co-management tasks with governmental officials who did not fully understand the IFA, noting that some government employees they have worked with in the past barely had knowledge of the IFA's existence. This lack of knowledge and understanding of the IFA can slow down or halt processes and prevent Inuvialuit managers from being able to make headway during meetings.

Participants additionally noted that many of the leaders of co-management bodies are not Inuvialuit, which has sometimes caused Inuvialuit issues and concerns to take a back burner during decision-making. Participants have also noticed non-governmental entities, such as scientific researchers, struggling to understand the submission process for research studies or development projects. One participant recommended that Inuvialuit find a way to make the process clearer for outsiders, especially through online platforms.

A participant also noted that keeping an understanding of the IFA and how it works at the forefront of Inuvialuit minds through education is of utmost importance. Currently, there is a class offered in Inuvik called IFA 101.

Participants commented that the permitting processes that is now required for purchase or sale of country foods can prohibit Inuvialuit from sharing their food and from making processing decisions themselves. Participants would like to see country food become more readily available for purchase, sale, or use at large scale events. But the permitting process takes too long and can be cost prohibitive. However, as one participant commented "as Inuvialuit people, we know what is healthy."

Participants also commented that the co-management and consultation process tends to be long and drawn out. One example given was the changing of the lynx trapping season. What started as harvesters in Aklavik wanting to change the lynx trapping season turned into a year-long process of writing letters, and looping in all co-management bodies, waiting for commentary from the five other communities, etc. And while participants did not recommend changing the processes to speed things up, noting that things rarely need to change overnight, some participants did express concern over how the process would work if there was ever a management decision which needed more immediate attention. Participants listed, global warming and its effects on animals, erosions, landslides, and other changes in the terrain, and extreme weather as issues which could potentially require faster adaptive management.



Photo: Carolina Behr

Recommendations

Throughout the meeting, five main recommendations or action items were identified by participants.

- Educate co-management bodies on the IFA
- Educate Inuit youth on the IFA
- Make the consultation process more clear and information more easily available
- Allow for quicker, more adaptable decision-making in response to an ever-changing environment
- Support the use of Inuit language in co-management settings

Conclusion

During the Aklavik 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 IFA looks like in Aklavik. 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 May 1, 2020.



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



Photo: Carolina Behe

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. Within the Alaskan Inuit Food Security Conceptual Framework, food sovereignty is a necessity for supporting and maintaining the six dimensions of 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. Olokhaktomiut Hunters and Trappers Committee Focus Group: *Food Sovereignty and Self Governance – Inuit Role in Managing Arctic Marine Resources*. Anchorage, Alaska.

The focus group meeting was facilitated by Carolina Behe. This report was prepared by Shannon Williams and Carolina Behe.

Quyanainni/Koana

Quyanainni to Bessie Inuktalik for assisting with coordination and communication prior to the focus group and to Donna Akhiatak for providing delicious food. Quyanainni to Lucy Ann Okheena for providing research assistances throughout our visit to Ulukhaktok. Quyanainni to the Olokhaktomiut Hunters and Trappers Committee for participating in the focus group, providing the meeting space, providing support, and for welcoming us to Ulukhaktok. And quyanainni to the Inuvialuit Game Council staff for assisting in communications, logistics, and in setting up our visit to Ulukhaktok.



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 Olokhaktomiut Hunters and Trappers Committee Focus Group Meeting

On Friday March 9, 2018, the Inuit Circumpolar Council – Alaska (ICC AK) facilitated a focus group meeting with the Olokhaktomiut 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 Olokhaktomiut 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 held with the appointed members of the Olokhaktomiut HTC. Through this focus group, Indigenous Knowledge (IK) 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 Olokhaktomiut Hunters and Trappers Committee Focus Group Meeting.



Photo: Carolina Behe

Five IK experts (referred to as participants within the report) attended the focus group. Carolina Behe of ICC Alaska, facilitated the discussion. Quyanainni to those who were able to attend:

Annie Goose
John Alikamik

Gilbert Olifie Alikamik
Adam Inuktalik

Joseph Haluksit

Meeting Structure

The focus group was structured around methodologies developed in conjunction with the project partners and the FSSG Advisory Committee. Throughout the day, we promoted a flexible and relaxed environment. Focus was placed on exchange of information through deep discussion as a group. During the workshop, participants were encouraged to talk and express themselves in any way they felt they needed to.

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 traditional Inuit management of resources, one must also consider food processing.

Key Themes/Concepts Discussed

The Olokhatomiut HTC Focus Group Meeting was facilitated using the guiding questions that were informed by the ICC – Alaska food security report (How to Assess Food Security from an Inuit Perspective: Building a Conceptual Framework on How to Assess Food Security in the Alaskan Arctic) and further refined by the FSSG Advisory Committee. The guiding questions revolved around the following key themes:

- Personal experiences in gathering food
- Consultation processes as they relate to or impact to food gathering activities
- Decision-making pathways
- IK and research questions
- Information accessibility and knowledge sharing
- Taking care of the Arctic and what tools are used
- Impacts of regulations on the wellbeing of animals, land and water, and Inuit

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:

- Changes in the animals, weather, sea ice, and the overall environment
- Changes in animal processing due to climate change
- Traditional Inuit management practices
- Co management structures that support Inuit food sovereignty
- Barriers in current co-management structures
- Cultural irrelevance in current subsidy programs
- The relationship between IK and western science

On Changes in the Animals, Land, and Ice

During the focus group, participants identified animals often harvested for food by community members in Ulukhaktok and discussed the timing and associated activities related to harvesting.



Photo: Carolina Beha

The animals discussed included cod, char, ringed seal, beluga, bearded seal, and caribou. Beluga whales are harvested by the community whenever they are available, although participants shared that beluga whale availability tends to vary widely from year to year. For instance, during the 2018 season, only a few whales had been harvested at the time of the focus group meeting. But a few years prior, around 34 whales were harvested by the community as a whole. Participants shared that part of the reason for low harvest years is because beluga whales can be difficult to find in the clear, deep water which surrounds the community of Ulukhaktok.

Other animals and food sources discussed include the white fox, cranberries, and blueberries. Participants shared that new species, such as salmon are showing up in increasing numbers. Salmon are not native to the area and have never been seen in great numbers until the last several years; now there is an abundance of them throughout the summer and fall. Participants explained that, initially, all of the salmon that was caught by Ulukhaktok residents was shipped to friends and relatives in British Columbia, where it could be enjoyed by people who have always had a relationship with

salmon. In recent years, even though many residents still consider the taste of salmon to be foreign, some people have started to eat them.

Participants shared that many recent changes in harvested foods have been observed in recent years. For example, the stomach contents of beluga whales have revealed changes to their diet. Participants explained that beluga whales used to mainly eat cod, but more recently they have been eating smaller fish like sand lance or capelin. Participants also commented on the declining health of some seals - noting that they are too thin, have less fat on them, and at times have poor quality meat.

Participants shared that the timing of animal migrations are shifting. For example, char have been arriving to Ulukhaktok later than usual—into the middle of summer rather than in early summer. The char shift in timing was attributed to climate change. Participants shared that climate change has also affected the berries which have been unpredictable for several years. Participants described the 2017 season as the first time in ten years that berries have been found in any great abundance, mainly due to dry weather. Lastly, participants noted that red foxes and cross foxes are no longer found in the area and that only white foxes remain. Participants did not speculate on why that change has occurred.



Photo: Carolina Behe

During the focus group, participants commented on the rapid change in the quality, timing, and formation of ice in Ulukhaktok and the surrounding area. Participants shared the following key changes in ice:

- There is overall less ice
- The ice that does exist is of a different quality - not as thick, including on lakes and other standing bodies of water
- Ice is forming later in the season
- There has been a persistent problem with thin top layers or slush forming on the ice due to warm weather conditions and stronger sunlight

These rapid changes in ice formation and ice quality are affecting the community of Ulukhaktok in a variety of ways. Participants described ice cover that looks thick, but has holes and open spots. The holes are difficult to see during travel and can prove dangerous, even life threatening. Participants shared that overall, it has become harder for people to judge safe conditions, especially young people who have not been able to learn what safe conditions look like due to all of the rapid change and warm winters. Slush has also become an issue as many community members have become stuck in the slush. Additionally, changes in the ice timing of formation and quality also relates to hunting and fishing activities. Participants noted that in the previous spring (2017 season), the ice went out on the lake so fast that there was barely any time for ice fishing.

On Changes In Food Processing and a Changing Climate

Along with the changes shared in the previous section and climate change participants shared that there have been changes in the way the harvested foods are prepared for storing and eating. Some of these changes are directly related to climate change. Participants shared, that recently, "hot weather" and a "stronger sun" can make preparations of some foods a challenge. For example, when hot temperatures can make drying fish difficult. Participants shared that the fish has to be watched closely and brought indoors, to a shady area, or covered with some sort of canvas, cardboard, or plywood to keep it out of direct sunlight. If the fish is left in direct sun, it runs the risk of cooking rather than drying. Additionally, participants commented that the warmer weather has changed the process of rendering and storing dipping oil from seals, noting that people have to be more careful about where they store the oil. They explained that, in general,

people are more nervous about bacteria growing during the aging process due to changes in the weather and the timing of the weather.



Photo: Carolina Behe

On Traditional Inuit Management

During the focus group, participants described traditional Inuit management as a way of putting wildlife first to make sure that there is enough for the future. Participants shared that the community follows the “old time rules” and continues to practice traditional management, looking to elders for guidance just as they always have. Participants further stressed that they intended to continue following traditional management. As one participant commented: “We have always managed our wildlife regardless of what the feds or the territorial government have said. We always did what we thought was right for us.”



Photo: Carolina Behe

Participants explained that the community of Ulukhaktok has always worked towards the preservation of their resources, even outside of the requirements of federal management systems. Currently and in the past, there have been several voluntary moratoriums placed on resources which have led to eventual increased numbers. For instance, in the 90s, the community voluntarily “shut down” the main fishing lake for five years with the understanding that the closure would help rebuild fish stocks. Additionally, participants explained

that the community members no longer harvest caribou from the herd on the north side of Ulukhaktok River. The decision to stop harvesting from this area has been observed for about 20 years and was made independent of the federal government.



Photo: Carolina Behe

Participants stressed the deep importance of strong relationships held between Inuit communities. They emphasized that communication is one of the main factors in the success of traditional Inuit management. There have always been close bonds between communities, who share food, land, ice, and information with each other. As one participant commented: "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. So we always have no problem talking to each other." Strong linguistic connections also help to unite Inuit. Participants noted that even though Inuit languages and dialects have many differences, it is usually possible to communicate across communities and across borders.



Photo: Carolina Behe

Participants shared that springtime gatherings, specifically, are central to traditional Inuit management. Those interactions not only strengthen bonds with neighbors, they also give people a chance to tell stories about the hunting season and allow for the circulation of important information regarding the animals, plants, water, ice, land - everything.

On Positive Improvements to Co-Management Structures

Participants discussed the many improvements they have observed in the consultation processes with federal and territorial governments, industry, and researchers. The improvements are attributed to the Inuvialuit Final Agreement (IFA), also called the land claims settlement or just land claims. The IFA gives Inuvialuit living in the ISR the legal right to equity in the co-

management process and calls for the inclusion of IK in decision-making processes. As one participant explains: "it states in our land claim that we have to be consulted, we have to be involved. So that is why the land claim is so important. They have no choice but to hear us out now."



Photo: Carolina Behe

Participants shared the large strides that have been made in terms of equity in the co-management process with the federal and territorial government since the approval of IFA. They explained that before the IFA, Inuvialuit rarely felt that their voices were heard, noting that the government agencies did not care about their input, ideas, or IK. Now, over 30

years after the signing of the IFA, participants are starting to observe real improvements. They indicated that efforts have been made by the government to understand Inuit practices and traditional management. The government is now obligated to include IK in co-management decisions and Inuvialuit are involved in the decision-making process at many different points along the decision-making path way.

The same goes for involvement in research that takes place in the ISR. The rules set forth in the IFA create a pathway for more frequent and more meaningful dialogue with researchers. Participants explained that Inuvialuit are able to shape the research studies in their area, providing input in deciding what the research questions should be, what information is needed, and what the priorities of the project should be. Inuvialuit also have the ability to reject research proposals that they do not feel will benefit the community, the resources, or the land.



Photo: Carolina Behe

Participants also noted that because of the IFA, oil and mining companies (as well as other industries which use the land), must consult with Inuvialuit. Before the IFA, there were many examples of industry misusing the land, not cleaning up properly, not restoring the land after large scale projects, disrupting harvesting, and not consulting with Inuvialuit. Participants further shared that today, Inuvialuit have greater control over what industrial

activities take place in their region and have the tools to ensure that industry continues to follow their rules.

Participants described a movement towards a stronger insistence on the upholding of the IFA by people and communities within the ISR. One participant explained: “historically, we are a nice people, we always just went along. We are starting to use our land claim more and more. That is why our co-management boards are starting to work pretty good. Because we are starting to say look, this is the claim—if you keep going against the claim, then we have no choice but to go to court.” Participants expressed that this change in approach was born out of impatience after years of being ignored. Now, as Inuvialuit focus on asserting their rights more, government, industry, and researchers are responding.

“Today, it is more meaningful to us. We want to be involved more because we are being consulted.” -Meeting Participant

Overall, participants shared that people in the communities have a greater voice now and a more equitable seat at the table during decision-making. Individuals are represented mainly through the HTC. And, participants explained, the HTC memberships are strong and active and unified and ready to speak out. Participants indicated that this shift has inspired even more confidence and more meaningful engagement by Inuvialuit.



Photo: Carolina Behe

On Barriers Within the Co-Management System

While the land claims agreement is seen as very strong, participants noted that it is not always followed. Participants emphasized that improvement is a

continuous process and while participants feel that their voices are now heard, they do not feel that there is true equity of voice.

Participants stressed that although Inuvialuit rights are supposed to be ensured, written into law by the IFA, the government doesn't always adhere to the agreement. Participants commented on feeling "overrun" several times throughout the discussion and described a constant resistance from the government. They indicated that the federal and territorial governments need to work on their approach to the consultation process. One participant also noted that often, the voices of environmental groups and NGOs are considered over the voices of Inuvialuit.



Photo: Carolina Behe

During this discussion, participants identified ways in which the co-management and consultation process could be improved. They recommended that Inuvialuit, and people within the federal and territorial governments, prioritize becoming more familiar with the IFA. Participants commented that greater knowledge of the IFA is empowering for Inuvialuit and crucial for federal and territorial government workers (who need to stay within their legal bounds), to be effective co-management partners.

Participants also indicated that the government needs to make an effort to release some of their sense of control over Inuvialuit people and to make an effort to understand that Inuit have always know what they are doing when it comes to wildlife management. They noted that more cooperation from government and less resistance is needed overall.

On The Cultural Irrelevance of Current Subsidy Programs

During the focus group, participants discussed the high cost of living in Ulukhaktok and other communities in the ISR. They expressed frustration regarding government subsidies in the ISR. As one participant commented, the Canadian Government subsidizes what "works for them; it doesn't work for us." Participants provided the example of fresh

produce, currently subsidized by the Canadian government, often arrives in the community already in bad shape. People in the community try to make due, cutting off ends of vegetables or picking out the best parts, but participants agreed that subsidizing produce does not work for the people of the ISR. They noted the need for subsidies to be helpful and to stimulate the economy. Participants expressed that current subsidies do not accomplish either of those goals.

One participant also pointed out the inequity of the distribution of subsidies, noting that everyone from farmers to car manufacturers receive billions of dollars in subsidies that are helpful to them. “The government needs to start helping us out too because we are citizens just like the citizens in Toronto and Montreal. So those inequalities...need to [be] balanced.”

Participants commented that subsidies which are more culturally relevant would be far more beneficial to communities within the ISR. It was suggested by several participants that gas and or ammunition could be subsidized by the Canadian government instead of things like produce and milk. Participants further explained that the high cost of gas and ammunition can be prohibitive for harvesting. Young people in particular have a hard time getting out on the land because they often cannot afford gas. Increased availability to gas and ammunition would be far more meaningful and beneficial.



Photo: Carolina Behe

On The Relationship Between IK and Western Science

Another barrier to food sovereignty, identified by focus group participants, is when scientific methodologies and/or findings conflict with IK. Participants listed making decisions based solely on animal counting as an area of conflict. They explained that science is typically intent upon charting numbers in order to try to project increasing or declining populations. While

Western scientists and the government agencies they work for often understand declining populations to be indicative of a problem, participants stressed that because of their IK they understand that animals vary from year to year, sometime experiencing unpredictable cycles. One participant commented: “science would say that it is disappearing, but when you have the traditional knowledge and you look at the animals, you will know... it has happened before and it is going to happen again.” They explained that oftentimes declining numbers can be attributed to changes in migration habits, noting that animals such as beluga and caribou often change their habits even after an extended period of time migrating along a set route.

Additional issues arise when the methodology of Western science conflicts with IK. Under the IFA, the HTC members are involved in the shaping of research questions and have ongoing opportunities throughout a project’s lifespan to provide commentary or make recommendations to scientists and researchers. The system



Photo: Carolina Behe

set in place aims to achieve a coproduction of knowledge approach. Participants pointed out that although they have opportunities to provide input and voice their IK, some scientists and other outside entities don’t always take it seriously. One example discussed by participants involved a proposal to install scratching posts meant to collect muskox fur. This research project, like all projects involving animals, was scrutinized by the HTC. The HTC members knew through their IK that the project was destined to fail—that muskox would not rub against posts because they do not behave that way. They explained that although the HTC sometimes disallows projects like this in favor of leaving the animals alone, this particular project was allowed to take place.

Recommendations

Through discussion of the above themes and concepts, the following three key recommendations were gathered from the Olokhaktomiut HTC Focus Group:

- The Canadian government should work with Inuit to create culturally relevant subsidy programs
- There should be more knowledge and understanding of the Inuvialuit Final Agreement by outside entities
- The Canadian government should make a concerted effort to let go of the desire to control Inuvialuit management practices

Conclusion

The Olokhaktomiut HTC Focus Group Meeting was a necessary step in the process of evaluating and understanding the Inuit role in managing Arctic resources. Participants shared their experiences with consultation and co-management processes and described their interactions with government, industry, and science. They identified ways in which the IFA has enhanced their lives and experiences with co-management and they cited ways in which the process could be improved. This focus group provided an important building block in the FSSG project.

This report provides a 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 May 1, 2020.

**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 June 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.



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's.

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 HTC's 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

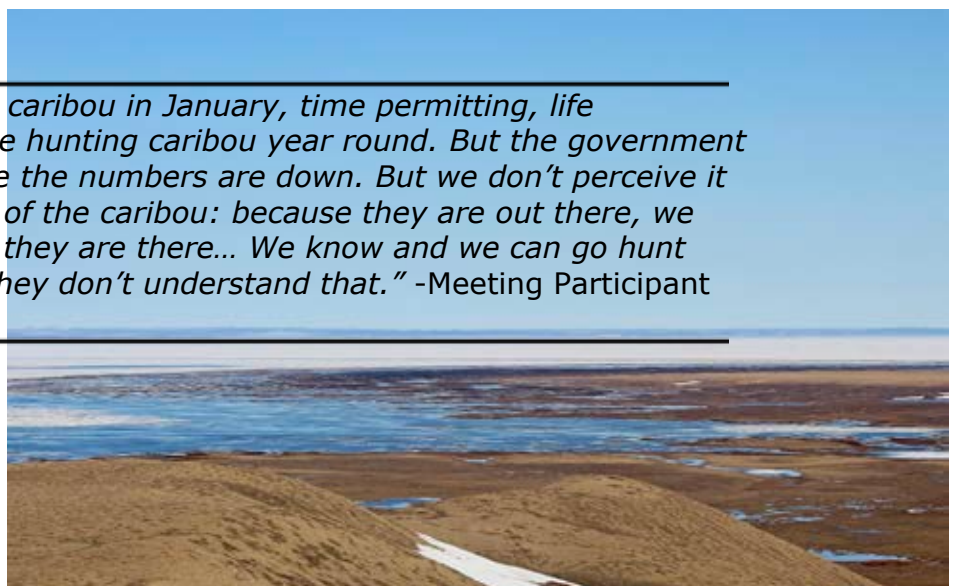


Photo: Carolina Behe

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 HTCs 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 Behre

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 a 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 involved 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 Behé

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.

Inuvialuit Game Council Focus Group Meeting Summary Report Food Sovereignty and Self Governance – Inuit Role in Managing Arctic Marine Resources¹



Photo: Chanda Turner; Not Pictured: John Lucas, Jr.

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. Within the Alaskan Inuit Food Security Conceptual Framework, food sovereignty is a necessity for supporting and maintaining the six dimensions of 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. Inuvialuit Game Council Focus Group: *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. This report was prepared by Shannon Williams with support provided by Carolina Behe and Dr. Dalee Sambo Dorough.

Quyanainni/Koana

Thank you to Jennifer Lam and Chanda Turner of the Inuvialuit Game Council for providing logistical and meeting support. Quyanainni to Eileen Gruben for providing the delicious food. And Quyanainni to the Inuvialuit Game Council members for participating in the focus group, and for welcoming us to the Inuvialuit Settlement Region.



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 Inuvialuit Game Council Focus Group Meeting

On June 19, 2018, the Inuit Circumpolar Council – Alaska (ICC AK) facilitated a focus group meeting with the Inuvialuit Game Council (IGC) as part of the Inuit led project, *Food Sovereignty and Self Governance – Inuit Role in Managing Arctic Marine Resources* (FSSG). The goal of IGC 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 participants included the appointed members of the IGC at the time of the meeting. Through this focus group, Indigenous Knowledge (IK) 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 IGC Focus Group Meeting.

Six IK experts (referred to as participants within the report) made up the focus group. Due to weather, one IGC member was unable to attend the meeting. Carolina Behe (project lead for ICC – Alaska) and Dr. Dalee Sambo Dorough (international chair of ICC and co-principal investigator for the FSSG project) facilitated the focus group meeting. Quyanainni to those who were able to attend:

Hans Lennie
Vernon Amos
Charles Gruben
Lawrence Ruben
John Lucas, Jr.
Jordan McLeod



Photo: Carolina Behe



Photo: Carolina Behe

Meeting Structure

The focus group was structured around methodologies developed in conjunction with the project partners and FSSG Advisory Committee. Throughout the day, we promoted a flexible and relaxed environment. Focus was placed on exchange of information through deep discussion as a group. During the workshop, participants were encouraged to talk and express themselves in any way they felt they needed to.

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, one must also consider youth education and involvement in co-management.

Key Themes/Concepts Discussed

The IGC Focus Group Meeting was facilitated using the guiding questions that were informed by the ICC Alaska food security report (How to Assess Food Security from an Inuit Perspective: Building a Conceptual Framework on How to Assess Food Security in the Alaskan Arctic) and further refined by the FSSG Advisory Committee. The guiding questions revolved around the following key themes:

- Personal experiences in gathering food
- Consultation processes as they relate to or impact to food gathering activities
- Decision-making pathways
- IK and research questions
- Information accessibility and knowledge sharing
- Taking care of the Arctic and what tools are used

- Impacts of regulations on the wellbeing of animals, land and water, and Inuit

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:

- Community hunting programs sponsored by HTC's
- Media relationships and cultural misunderstandings
- Interpretation of the Inuvialuit Final Agreement
- Challenges related to shipping
- Barriers to Food Sovereignty
- Challenges with adaptability and speed in the decision-making process
- The importance of Inuit languages
- Equity of funding
- IK Reflected in Management

On Personal Experiences

To begin the IGC Focus Group, participants were asked about their personal experiences in gathering food for their families and communities. One participant described some of the many changes that have occurred within living memory. Participants noted that many people are still adapting to the many changes that have occurred within their lifetimes.

Participants went on to describe the previous harvesting season. They noted that, over the past several years, harvesters have felt rushed by the seasons to get everything done on time due to weather unpredictability.

However, it was agreed that the previous season (2018 spring) had been a lot more similar to what they used to expect, before the climate started to rapidly change. As one participant commented, "We are so rushed by the seasons to get everything done and now that it's back to how it was before the climate change really hit us; it's nice to go out there and not have to rush to do everything. You get everything you need and there's still time... but that's the instability of the thing—I wouldn't



Photo: Carolina Behe

trust my instincts to this year to say it's going to happen next year. I mean, it's all different."

The participants indicated that sharing of food was strong with the return to a more easily predictable and longer hunting season with better snow conditions. Participants noted that the practice of sharing is so central to Inuit ways, it will never disappear. But people are able to share more when there is more food available.

When discussing personal experiences, participants also commented on the Community Harvesting Assistance Program which allows Hunters and Trappers Committees (HTCs) to help community members get out on the land. For example, communities have put funding towards caribou hunts in the fall time, distributed shotgun shells to hunters, and provided money for gas. These programs have helped to ease the economic difficulties of having to travel farther to harvest food. Participants indicated that another benefit of these programs is that they encourage community members to share: "It's a good way to keep the community working together."



Photo: Carolina Behre

On Consultation Processes

The Consultation process was a main focus of the IGC Focus group discussion. Participants were asked how the consultation process made them feel and whether or not consultation or the goals of consultation differs dependent on which agency is consulting. Participants indicated that although they are generally happy with the overall process and the decision-making pathways that are currently in place, the feeling during and after consultation occurs is not always positive.

Negatives feelings are due in part to sometimes strained relationships with representatives of federal or territorial governments involved in the co-management processes. Participants identified federal and territorial

leadership turnover as a major problem when it comes to forging positive working relationships with co-managers. It was shared that as representatives of these governments (both scientists and decisions makers) learn about the co-management process that has been agreed upon and become intimately familiar with the IFA, the consultation process runs more smoothly and becomes more meaningful.

One participant indicated that they have noticed an increasing amount of representation that lacks decision-making authority attending consultation meetings, commenting "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."

Participants also noted that they are sometimes completely ignored during decision-making processes that should include meaningful consultation. One example provided was the decision-making process regarding an oil and gas moratorium. Participants indicated that that decision was made by the federal government with no engagement with Inuvialuit:



Photo: Carolina Behr

"when we did formulate a response, we got a letter back from Prime Minister Harper thanking us for our interest and that was the last we heard of it. We have heard nothing from the current government about that. No consultation, none."

Participants also pointed out that bad media or misunderstandings with the broader public can cause hasty decisions to be made which interrupt the consultation process. Participants discussed an example of media coverage that wrongly portrayed Inuvialuit as wasting beaver meat as part of their beaver culling program. Inuvialuit understand that in using beavers, you can

either collect the hides or use the meat, but cannot use both. They noted that quick decisions were made by agency people in an attempt to appease the media audiences and Inuvialuit were not adequately or meaningfully consulted. As one participant explained: "As soon as they started finding beaver carcasses in the dump, someone contacted CBC and all of a sudden the program just stopped. But they were still doing something with the hides so there was nothing wrong."



Photo: Carolina Behe

Participants noted that meaningful participation is a term that they are trying to take ownership of. They noted that the term meaningful participation does not mean the same thing that it did in the past. Meaningful participation is Inuit engaged in decision-making, leading to decisions that are meaningful to us and to them rather than just including Inuit at

the table. It is also important that consultation take place in the ISR, and that Inuvialuit should not always be expected to travel to outside agencies.

It was additionally highlighted that consultation should be face to face. One participant explained why face to face consultation is integral to meaningful consultation commenting: "In my eyes or in my opinion, consultation is face to face. That way, I get to tell just by looking at you whether you're lying or you're submitting or you're going to comply. I get to see the reaction of your face or the people that you're with. Through the phone I can't. I can imply something by the sound of their voices but that's it. But face to face meetings are where I get to express myself, I get to see where they are coming from. I have a better feeling as to what decision to make after that."

Participants described the frustration of consultation that has not felt meaningful. For example, at times it feels that federal or territorial representatives have already made up their minds. As one participant put it: "They take all of your data that you've given them and they make up their

minds and then sometimes it comes back really against what you wanted or the information that you gave them .” One participant commented that the federal government (as well as international governments) are particularly guilty of this. International climate change policy was used as an example, and it was noted that federal governments are not making smart decisions. It was further stressed that there is a need to take a strong bottom up approach, with direction and solutions coming from Inuit communities.

Participants also commented that cultural misunderstandings can hinder meaningful consultation. For example, when Inuvialuit are quiet or don't speak a lot during meetings, that does not mean that they are complying or agreeing with what is being said. As one participant put it: “We have a lot of good people that sit in meetings that don't really say much, but I know that their engines are turning, their wheels are turning and they're coming up with an answer. ...it's not that they're afraid to talk, they just have a different way of expressing themselves. Some are silent and strong.”

Cultural misunderstandings and prejudices can greatly affect morale and cause Inuit to feel disrespected. One participant recalled when a federal agency representative made a televised statement regarding the decline of caribou populations, suggesting that Inuvialuit learn to eat moose. The participant commented: “They said the caribou were in decline, we argued about it. A month later on TV... [the representative], states to us, the Inuvialuit, you have to learn how to eat moose...Learn how to eat moose? We don't get moose in [all of our communities]”

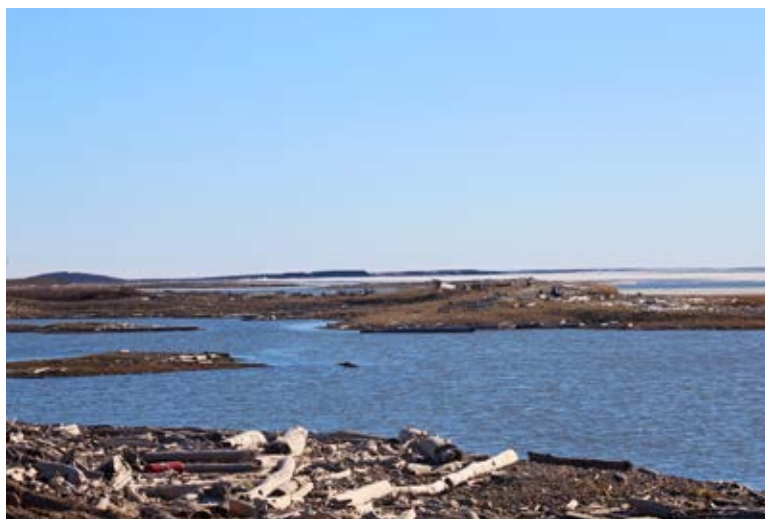


Photo: Carolina Behe

During the Focus Group, participants were asked whether differences in consultation process exist among different federal and territorial agencies. Additionally, participants were asked to reflect on if the territorial and federal government typically have the same goals and objectives. Participants

commented that consultation processes and outcomes can differ depending on which federal or territorial government agency or manager they are working with. One participant reflected on ease of consultation with Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) versus federal representative, noting that the federal government (and to a lesser extent, the territorial government) seems to always be resisting standards agreed upon in the IFA.

Participants further identified that individual managers and decision makers can change the process and outcomes of consultation. Sometimes satisfaction with the consultation process can depend on who, specifically, you are working with. One participant commented: "Some people have a bone to pick with the Inuvialuit, it's not the government or a branch of the government or a department or even a section. Sometimes it just comes down to the individual that you're working with."

Participants agreed that an ideal management situation would be full Inuit food sovereignty. As one participant commented: "Simply put if the governments could just leave us alone, let us oversee our traditional way of living without any regulations, policies, or bylaws. Anything to impede us in terms of living our life, life would be so much simpler. But there's the government. Federal, Local, regional, they're there. So we have to somehow live with those regulations in place. But in this case food sovereignty means that we get to have not a say, but we are the decision makers in terms of quotas on bow head, beluga, walrus, polar bears, muskox, caribou. We get to set a direction for our way of living."

On Barriers to Food Sovereignty

Participants were asked to identify what is supporting or impeding self-determination and food sovereignty and, further, to identify what is needed on a national and international level to support food sovereignty. While this concept recurred throughout most of the discussion during the IGC Focus Group, participants also specifically identified additional factors that impede food sovereignty including poor representation, difficulties with the process of reversing older decisions, dealing with bureaucracy, and dealing with the effects of negative media.

Participants indicated that because the IFA supports food sovereignty from a management standpoint, people are now able to focus on some of the political aspects of consultation that impede food sovereignty. Examples given were when ill-informed members who do not have enough IK of hunting, fishing, and harvesting get involved in politics and try to make decisions about hunting, fishing, and harvesting. Participants also noted that navigating through the process of reversing formerly agreed-upon decisions that no longer work for Inuvialuit can be cumbersome and slow.

Several participants described how dealing with “red tape”, bureaucracy, and non-management agencies when trying to practice Inuit ways of life can impede food sovereignty. The example identified here was trying to build an ice house in Ulukhaktok. One participant described this situation how the permitting for building an ice house complicated the process to such an extent that the community decided to back off from the idea. The participant described, “They needed a mining permit. They needed all of this different confined spaces and mining training, and then it just got so cumbersome they just backed away from that idea. But that is a traditional practice that we had always used, and now it seems that that’s being chipped away it.”

Participants identified negative media and misplaced pressures from the outside world as a factor that impedes food sovereignty. It was emphasized that the outside world often does not understand Inuit management practices. As further discussed in the above “On Consultation” section, negative press can impede food sovereignty by spurring outside entities to make decisions without consulting IGC. Another example provided by participants was the

“We have learned there's so much hurdles to go past to do something simple, that just, I don't know, to me it's out of hand sometimes. Just to dig a little hole, you've got to go get the five different permits, and people think about stuff... I'll just stay away from that. It doesn't make you move forward.”

-Meeting Participant

changing of northern and southern boundaries and lowering of the quota for polar bear. Participants indicated that this was a decision that was born out of pressures from the U.S. federal government, and international “conservation/animals rights” movements. As one participant commented, “us being conservationists, we wanted the world to see us that way, [so] we

accepted that. And that's where we're at right now. Everybody lost a few tags and so everybody accepted that for conservation efforts." This further stress the need to understand that Inuit practices are rooted in conservation that focus on conservation through use and respect for all of life.

On Decision-Making Pathways

During the Focus Group, participants spent time describing the many decision-making pathways that exist in the ISR. Participants highlighted the strengths of the IFA and described some of the successes that the ISR has had in furthering Inuit food sovereignty through the IFA, "The IFA is a pretty strong claim that other places are trying to catch up to. We broke a lot of trail." Participants outlined the structure of the co-management bodies in the ISR, making special note to discuss the fact that not all community needs are the same across the board. As one participant commented, "Something to keep in mind too, and as different as the Inupiat and Inuvialuit are in their management for marine species, that there are major differences even amongst the communities in the ISR too. Where I'm from, there's no development. There are no major projects. There's no tourism. A lot of the pressure is what they have to deal with here and then work around." Participants commented that each HTC does their part to address the needs and the resources of their community, but that ultimately the HTCs work together and that support is provided to other HTCs, particularly in decision-making for issues which affect one community over others.

While discussing decision-making pathways, participants were asked if the federal and territorial representatives that they work are familiar with and understand the IFA, whether or not they are implementing the IFA in the same way Inuvialuit are, and whether or not they are willing to take direction from Inuvialuit in order to better understand the IFA. Participants commented that many of the people they work with do not understand the process of the IFA. They noted that this can hinder the process and slow things down. Participants described the frustration of working with people who do not understand the agreements and



Photo: Carolina Behre

processes. As one participant commented, "It's really frustrating sometimes. Trying to deal with people who know absolutely nothing. And they are the people that are supposed to be your partner. It's not just our land claim, the government signed it too... How are you supposed to implement something that only one side knows what's going on?"



Photo: Carolina Behe

Participants also discussed how the interpretation of the IFA is flexible and can shift dependent on needs. Participants noted that this flexibility is a great strength of the IFA but also identified dangers and drawbacks. The strength of the IFA's flexibility is that it can be treated as a living document that is able to adapt with the times. One participant explained: "We're always

looking at our own bylaws within ourselves that we make. We need to update them. It has to be moving forward all the time. Because a lot of the time, some of that stuff is handcuffing us. Which is not good. The right intent was there back in the day. But the world evolved, we got evolved with it. That's the only way." However, noted that due to the flexibility in interpretation, it is very important that Inuvialuit remain firm in their own interpretation: "If I interpret it one way and the government officials, be it federal or territorial or even NGO's, interpret it another way, I am going to have to be more forceful in the way that I interpret it as opposed to the person sitting across from me. I have to make sure that my interpretation would stand on firm ground. And that's how I feel, I have to interpret the IFA in my eyes and stand firm on it. I can't waiver. If I do, it means I'm accepting another person's interpretation of the IFA, which makes it weaker. For myself and for everyone."

Participants also recognized the challenge and importance of educating the younger generation and the new generation of leaders on how to understand and interpret the IFA. Education on the IFA and decision-making pathways within the ISR is crucial to the continued success of IFA implementation.

On Equity of Funding

Participants were asked to reflect on the equity of distribution of monetary resources and to discuss whether Inuvialuit entities are provided with enough

money to gather all of the information needed for the decisions that they want to make. Participants commented that the money that is made available to IGC from the Canadian government for implementation of the IFA is limited and less than what other First Nations groups receive. In order to gather the information needed to co-manage the resources, Inuvialuit have to be strategic in trying to make a little go a long way. One participant commented: "the big guys versus the little guys in some cases; it is whoever carries the biggest stick with the amount of money you have."

As a result of limited funding certain aspects of management can fall by the wayside. For example there is a lack of funding for law enforcement systems that would help Inuvialuit to regulate hunting activities. In communities, there are patrol people who can take information, but they are not able to make any



Photo: Carolina Behe

charges. One participant commented: "I've yet to come across an RCMP that knows anything about the Wildlife Act. So really there's no enforcement in the smaller communities. And we were setting up the Land Claim that's really the way we wanted it, we didn't want to be convicting or charging our own people, so we left that to the government."

Participants commented that Inuvialuit should also have greater control over how monies are allocated or spent. Participants described routinely butting heads with the governments over whether IFA monies should be spent on research projects which Inuvialuit people do not prioritize. As one participant stated: "They want to do some study on some insect or a study on some songbird or some shorebird that we don't really harvest, that we don't really feel is a priority right now and for whatever reason, they feel it's a priority. It starts the process over again where we butt heads with them again. Sometimes it comes out in our favor, sometimes it doesn't but if it's money to implement a land claim we feel that they should be giving us a greater say or more control over how those monies are spent."

On Indigenous Knowledge and Research questions

During the Focus Group, participants were asked if IK is given the same weight and attention as science when it comes to research. Participants explained that the IFA lays out strong pathways to promote the inclusion of, and focus on, IK. For example, if a researcher has a thesis, they must bring it to the community first to ensure that it complies with the community's evaluation before submitting it to their universities. In this way, Inuvialuit have an opportunity to review research proposals and results before a report is released.



Photo: Carolina Behe

This is also true for management-related research. Participants used the example of a shipping guidelines draft which they had recently reviewed prior to a shipping conference. The guidelines were proposing allowing for tourists to come on shore to go fishing, even though the shores were private lands. Because Inuvialuit were able to review the guidelines prior to submission,

they were able to make recommendations which were then used to amend the guidelines.

However, participants noted that there are challenges that come along with the research review process. For example, the expectation to wade through and interpret thick legal or academic documents. Due to time and funding limitations, this often means that IGC can only skim rather than fully read and analyze presented findings. An additional obstacle arises in working with people who do not understand Inuvialuit systems or lands.

As a result of the direction of this discussion, participants were also asked whether or not they felt that they have to spend a lot of time reacting to what researchers are proposing rather than putting forward and focusing on what they want to prioritize. Participants indicated that having to constantly react to research ideas that are put forward by the federal or territorial governments, (and non-government entities), slows and hinders the advancement of meaningful research projects. However, participants highlighted that progress has been made as Inuvialuit have taken more

control. Notably, Inuvialuit have put their foot down on projects that are “research for research’s sake.” One example of this is a small bird study proposed by the government. Inuvialuit determined that it didn’t make sense to research small birds, pointing out that the government was willing to spend hundreds or thousands of dollars to discover that there are small bird nests in certain areas that Inuit already know of.

One participant explained that reacting to government proposals is not always a negative experience. They used the example of the implementation of a harvest monitoring survey that was put in place following the Macondo incident (also known as the Deepwater Horizon explosion in the Gulf of Mexico). The participant commented: “we have a really healthy and robust harvest monitoring survey that's done in each community every month...we have enough data to go on now, where if anything did happen, we could prove how we were affected by disasters like Macondo.”

Participants identified an additional challenge in implementing their own research plans. For example, Inuvialuit have proposed monitoring ice year round within a marine protected area—a concept which MPA managers had not considered. However, there is no funding mechanism in place to support the collection of this agreed upon important baseline information.

On Indigenous Knowledge Reflected in Management



Photo: Carolina Behe

During the Focus Group, participants were asked to discuss if Inuvialuit traditional practices and rules are reflected in the co-management process and decision-making. Participants highlighted the fact that IGC exists to ensure that a high importance is placed on IK. Strong efforts are put toward bringing IK forward and including this knowledge systems within baseline data.

Participants explained that—as with research—management policy decisions must be accepted by IGC. There is a process of back and forth that allows Inuvialuit to review and ensure that decisions are acceptable: “If they say they

are done their report and we don't think so then it comes back to the table. If we don't accept it as a final report, then they have to review it again. We make sure that happens, because if we don't feel that we are benefiting from it then it has to come back to the table."

However, participants also identified obstacles that exist within this process, noting that governments, particularly the federal government, have ways of overriding or skirting around IK and Inuvialuit input. Participants provided examples of federal bodies that they feel are not taking IK seriously and/or making decision far from the Inuvialuit Settlement Region (lacking situational awareness). Participants indicated that far away decision-making goes against the process laid out in the IFA and impedes food sovereignty.

Participants described a pathway to address such concerns as they come up. An example was provided when a federal agency was making decisions without consultation, the IGC invited the agency to consult with them and recommended that they include an IGC member on decisions that will affect Inuvialuit. At the time of the focus group meeting, IGC was awaiting a response from the agency. Due to these challenges, one participant commented that, overall, there is work to be done on achieving greater focus on IK in research and management: "Almost every project it's either or—it's either science or TK. It's never an equal combination of both. It's always either or and I don't know how to change that but that's something we have to figure out."

"They make a decision without getting their feet wet. Without coming up here and looking at or even discussing with us the situation They get to make the decisions on our way of living...I couldn't accept that. So I spoke out in one of the meetings that you have to take the social aspect of it has to be taken into effect. If you make a decision then you have to see how you're restricting our lifestyle. And I hope they do that in the future. And that's a part of food sovereignty."

-Meeting Participant

On Impacts of Regulations

During the Focus Group, participants were asked if regulations that were made by the territorial or federal government have produced any unforeseen impacts. Participants commented that past regulations and law enforcement

practices vastly interrupted the Inuit way of life that had been freely practiced before. This has negatively impacted animals and animal populations and has had long-lasting effects on subsistence hunters, traditional Inuit laws, and the mentality of hunters surrounding what is legal or safe. Participants provided examples of such impacts, including the following:

- When the federal and territorial governments decided that snow geese were declining so created regulations that prevented Inuit from harvesting snow geese. After a time, the geese became incredibly overpopulated to the point where their population was out of control. Now, the governments are asking Inuvialuit to shoot the geese to help control the population. Participants stressed that if Inuvialuit had been allowed to practice their normal traditions, there would be no population issue. Regarding the negative impacts that government regulations have had, one participant commented “What they're thinking is they're helping us, but really they're hindering our way of living.”
- When oil and gas was booming (before the implementation of the IFA), Inuvialuit lacked legal pathways to have a say in the high amount of activities associated with extractive industry. Participants shared that related activities were a constant interference with harvesting.

Many examples were provided which highlighted the repression that was felt by the previous generation, before the creation of the IFA. Participants described the following regulations as both stifling and fear-inducing:

- After reindeer were introduced, Inuvialuit were barred from hunting caribou or trapping in the area. A large swath of land was turned into, for all intents and purposes, a reindeer reserve. Inuvialuit were forced to go outside of the “reserve” boundary in order to hunt caribou, which meant up to 100 miles or more of travel to the Anderson River area. If a hunter harvested a caribou, they were forced to identify it as a caribou rather than a reindeer and if a person accidentally shot a reindeer that had strayed from the reserve, they would be charged by the game wardens regardless of where the reindeer was shot. Hunters became afraid to hunt caribou because the boundaries of the “reserve” were not clearly defined and because it was difficult to tell a reindeer from a caribou.

- Regulations existed which barred Inuvialuit from hunting swans and beavers. So people would gather at a secret spot on the river to pluck swans and skin beaver, trying to hide from the game wardens: "There's a secret spot where they would pluck swans and skin their beaver there only. That was it. Because they were so scared of the system. That's how it was then, back in the day."



Photo: Carolina Behe

Participants emphasized that these past hardships are what inspired the creation of the IFA. They credit the IFA with greatly increasing the level of food sovereignty and self-determination that Inuvialuit now have when it comes to their resources. However, some limitations still exist and participants identified areas where work is still needed in order to move towards

increased food sovereignty. A main example used by participants to explain this situation were the regulations surrounding caribou harvesting. Participants commented that one time, Inuvialuit were able to practice subsistence freely, using their traditional rules and laws. Now, Inuvialuit have to consider such regulations as legal hunting seasons, management zones, tag zones, obtaining tags, and avoiding traditional harvesting areas that are now off limits. One participant noted: "At one time, you could hunt caribou any time. Through the whole year...Now we've got a management zone, we've got a tag zone...Stuff like that we try to work with or get used to but it creates hardship for people with regards to harvesting food."

"Now, you have to look at the book and wonder, okay, what am I hunting, allowed to hunt at this time of the year without having to get permits or follow the book?"

-Meeting Participant

On Adaptability

During the Focus Group, participants indicated that the process of decision-making can often take a long time. Adaptability and quick decision-making are present in Inuit traditional management, but that adaptability is often not present in co-management processes. To further this discussion, participants were asked to identify some of the challenges that are faced in navigating a slow-moving decision-making process in a quickly changing world.

Participants emphasized that the co-management process in place, while sometimes slow-moving, is favorable because there are many points at which Inuvialuit are able to make their recommendations and bring the focus back to IK. However, participants noted that there is room for improvement,



Photo: Carolina Behe

particularly when it comes to adaptability and speed of decision-making. One participant commented: "In the bigger scheme of things, co-management works. But when you get down to micromanaging... It's just that the micromanaging and co-management sometimes it slows things down."

Participants noted that it can be frustrating to witness quick decision-making occurring when it comes to issues that the territorial or federal government prioritize. As one participant commented: "[if] we wanted to reverse it, it could take forever... there is a process with the territorial and federal governments, but it happens quicker if they want to change things." Quick decision-making by the government without adequate input from Inuit can also negatively impact animals and communities.

Participants indicated that government sees adaptation in a different light than do Inuvialuit, often lacking a holistic view of the environment. Participants provided the example of the government making a "knee-jerk" decision which result in the shutdown of caribou hunting based solely on information given to them by Environment and Natural Resources (ENR). One participant described the decision, stating "We accepted that they shut down sport hunting, but the point is that they made that decision based only on their

numbers, without taking into account our perspective. We didn't have a way to get our point across." Participants noted that such decisions, made by the government without Inuvialuit input, feel very uncomfortable. They emphasized that sport hunting bans are relevant to Inuvialuit economies and affect Inuvialuit people. After the caribou sport hunting ban, economies within the ISR did suffer due to the disappearance of guiding-related revenue.

The overall feeling of such decisions is that the government expects quick or even immediate adaptation from Inuvialuit (i.e. regarding issues which they prioritize). But when Inuvialuit see a need for adaptation, those decisions can be slow or tedious. As one participant commented: "The government may imply that we adapt to this immediately... It doesn't work that way... it takes time to adapt to those. It's not automatic."



Photo: Carolina Behe

Further frustration lies in the fact that many decision-making processes appear to be driven by money and can additionally be slowed by difficulties in getting the territorial or federal government departments to take responsibility for specific issues. Participants pointed out that certain programs and projects that would benefit communities (for example, ideas of how

to deal with beaver over population), are halted or slowed due to funding issues and/or the government's lack of clarity and commitment regarding which department should take on co-management responsibility.

On Language

Throughout the FSSG project, the importance of Inuit languages in traditional management and co-management has been stressed. During the Focus Group, participants were asked to reflect on language and food sovereignty.

The freedom to use Inuvialuit in management settings is important because it is such a descriptive and expressive language. Participants emphasized that Inuvialuktun speakers are often able to describe resources and IK in richer detail and more concisely in their Native tongue. Speaking in our language

can also create a more comfortable management environment. One participant stated: "Language plays a big, important role in the consultation... maybe all of us don't understand our language but that should still be made available whenever there's consultation. Just speak to these people in their own language. A lot of them, they feel more comfortable. A lot of them, that's the only language they know."

Participants noted that a challenge faced in including Inuit languages in consultation lies in the fact that a great many management and development related words have no direct translation into Inuvialuktun or other Inuit languages (for example, such terms as "consultation" and "traditional knowledge" have no direct translation). Participants commented that there are sometimes gatherings of elders who come together to try to come up with new Inuvialuktun words to describe English words or concepts.

Participants also commented that even getting people to use the name Inuvialuit and to understand that Inuvialuit are an individual group, not just Inuit and not just First Nations, has been a challenge.

Conclusion

During the IGC 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 ISR. 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 May 1, 2020.



Savoonga Marine Mammal Advisory Committee Focus Group: Food Sovereignty and Self Governance – Inuit Role in Managing Arctic Marine Resources¹

Focus Group Meeting Summary Report

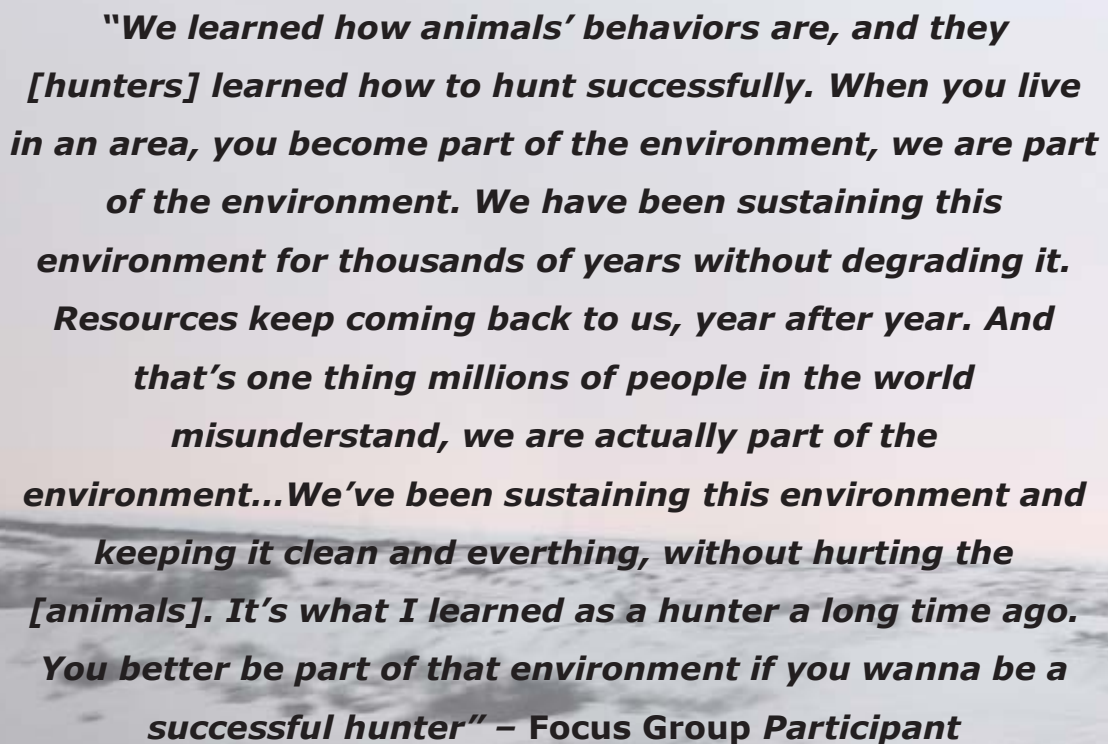


Photo: Savoonga Tribal Council Staff

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. Within the Alaskan Inuit Food Security Conceptual Framework, food sovereignty is a necessity for supporting and maintaining the six dimensions of 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.



"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 everthing, 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 wanna be a successful hunter" – Focus Group Participant

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. 2019. Savoonga Marine Mammal Advisory Committee Focus Group: *Food Sovereignty and Self Governance - Inuit Role in Managing Arctic Marine Resources*. Anchorage, Alaska.

The focus group meeting was facilitated by Caylan Behe, assisted by Sharfous Williams. Report was prepared by Caylan Behe.

Igamsiqanaghalek!

Igamsiqanaghalek to Vera Metcalf for all of her hard work and assistance in organizing the focus group meeting! Igamsiqanaghalek to the Tribal Council for providing meeting space, support, and for welcoming us to Savoonga!

About the Savoonga Marine Mammal Advisory Committee Focus Group Meeting

On January 22, 2019, the Inuit Circumpolar Council Alaska (ICC AK) facilitated a focus group meeting with the Savoonga Marine Mammal Advisory Committee as part of the Inuit led project, *Food Sovereignty and Self Governance - Inuit Role in Managing Arctic Marine Resources* (FSSG).

The focus group participants included Indigenous Knowledge (IK) holders from the Savoonga Marine Mammal Advisory Committee, the EWC Director, and the Savoonga Tribal Council President. Through this workshop Indigenous Knowledge holders discussed co-management structures, policies and decision making pathways surrounding the management of walrus (and other food sources), and ways of moving toward Inuit Food Sovereignty.

This report provides a summary of the information discussed during the Savoonga Marine Mammal Advisory Committee focus group meeting.

Eight Indigenous Knowledge holders (referred to as participants within the report) attended the focus group meeting. Carolina Behe (project lead for ICC Alaska) facilitated the focus group meeting. Below is a list of the workshop participants:

Vera Metcalf – EWC Director
Paul Rookok, Sr.
Roy Waghiyi
George Noongwook

Chester Noongwook
Larry Kava
Mitchell Kiyuklook
Delbert Pungowiyi



Photo: Maasingah Nakak

The focus group meeting was facilitated using guiding questions that were informed by the ICC Alaska food security report, *How to Assess Food Security from an Inuit Perspective: Building a Conceptual Framework on How to Assess Food Security in the Alaskan Arctic.* and further refined by the FSSG Advisory Committee.

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 and improved 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 March 31, 2020.

Introduction

This brief summary provides a general overview of the focus group meeting discussions and is not intended to be a complete review. Though this section is broken into bolded headings, all headings are interrelated, interdependent, and indivisible. For example, when speaking about the need for adaptive management strategies, one must also consider traditional Inuit rules/laws/practices.

Key Themes/Concepts Discussed

The meeting was facilitated using guiding questions under key themes/concepts:

- Personal Experiences in gathering food for you, your family, for your community
- Consultation processes as it relates to and impacts your food gathering activities
- Decision-making pathways
- Indigenous Knowledge and Research questions
- Information accessibility and knowledge sharing
- Taking care of the Arctic and what tools are used
- Impacts of regulations on the wellbeing of animals, coastal seas and water, Inuit



Photo: Carolina Behe

Key Meeting Findings

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:

- Changes occurring
- Legal reviews, understanding the history, and accountability
- Politics and lobbying across scales
- Inuit laws/practices
- Values
- Language
- Enforcement
- Indigenous Knowledge
- Sources of Indigenous knowledge
- Pollution and Shipping

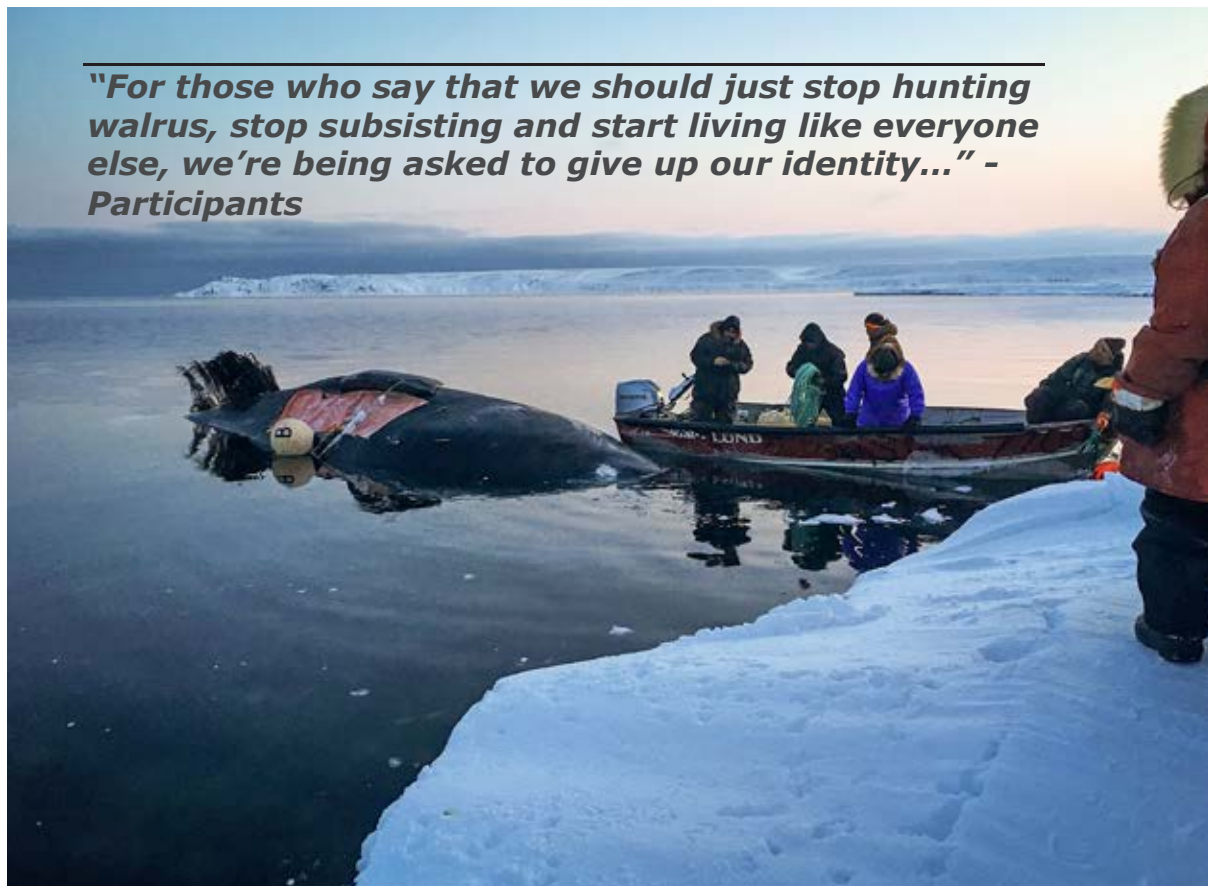


Photo: Cerene J Seppilu

On Personal Experiences

To begin the discussions, participants are asked to share about their experiences of the past year in gathering food for themselves, their families, and for their communities. Much of this discussion naturally leads into the other topics to be discussed and holds strong reference to climate changes and overall changes being experienced.

Through this discussion participants stressed the importance of marine life for food, for clothing, and, as one participant expressed, "...to make you happy when you get a marine mammal." The happiness felt is related to the hunter's relationship with the animal, to the animal giving itself to the hunter, and to providing for the community. Participants further shared the importance of never wasting any part of the animal, because it is so important as "...it takes care of a lot of people" (Focus Group Participant. 2019).

Below is a brief summary of changes that participants shared in the brief discussion. It is important to note that all of these changes are interconnected and require deeper discussion to fully understand the cumulative or compounded impacts and potential Inuit decision-making to adapt to the changes.

- No ice or very thin ice
- Change in frequency of storms (related to sea ice coverage)
- Last year (2018), there was no shore fast ice
- Shorter winter (sixty years ago, people relied on nine months of nice cold winters with lots of ice, now winters last 3 to 3.5 months)
- For a few years, there was no shore fast ice. This resulted in walrus staying in the water and some calving in the water.
- Arctic cod are not around (normally under the shore fast ice)
- Toxic Algal Blooms affecting food webs
- Change in animal migrations (associated with change in ice, water temperatures, change in wind and ocean currents)
- Increase in shipping and impacts of shipping on the marine environment
- Increase in pollution

Participants noted that this year was the first year they were had shore fast ice in a couple of years. One participant underscored that the ice is important for the safety of people and for the marine life and it influences the animal's migration patterns. A participant explained,

“When the ice began to retreat, the migrations [animals] started going north. The water currents started flowing south to north during April. All these marine mammals catch a ride on the current. Then all the ice that we're losing is ending up in the Atlantic Ocean side because of the NW Passage is open [from lack of ice coverage]. That is where the polar ice is ending up and melting. That affects our own lack of ice too. Then the earth rotates and the water starts flowing south in September and then the animals begin to migrate south.”



Photo: Cerene J Seppilu

With regards to changes in sea ice, it is important to note that the participants also stressed that the walrus population is healthy, (perhaps becoming too abundant in some areas), and that the walrus does adapt.

As noted in the list above, participants also shared concern about the increase in shipping activity and the impacts that vessels have on the marine environment. Key concerns associated with shipping are:

- Affecting the migration of marine mammals
- Impact of noise pollution on marine mammals
- Ship strikes to walrus and whales
- Harassment of marine mammals
- Disturbance of marine mammals' areas of rest

On Legal Reviews, Understanding the History, and Accountability

Upon reflection of this project, decision making pathways, and consultation, participants offered many benefits to conduct legal reviews and being

familiar with the laws. Within this discussion it was offered that many laws exist that do support Indigenous Peoples rights and hunting rights. However, the system for using and upholding these laws is often flawed and lacks equitable processes for true partnership with Indigenous Peoples – specifically with consideration of supporting Inuit food sovereignty.

One participant offered the importance of the following in order to get to “...the idea of proper management of resources” –

- What in the law is going to support Indigenous Peoples’ argument (way of life)?
- The need to understand where the laws came from – “what are the laws [that] perpetuated the laws and policies that are used today?”
- The importance of getting to the beginning of when the processes were established.
- Know the history of the co-management bodies, such as the history of the Eskimo Walrus Commission – how did EWC begin; what were the policies defined and implemented to form the EWC; who was involved in the decision making?

Participants further expressed that reviews and understanding of the history are needed because many resource managers and regulators are unaware of the actual laws or the interpretations of the law. By pointing out to the managers and regulators what the laws are can aid in achieving a better result and pointing them in the right direction.

Within this discussion, participants also identified the importance of holding the state and federal government accountable to their own laws. Examples were given of the federal government not following the Environmental Protection Act when opening up the ocean and coastal seas to oil and gas operations.

It is also important for St. Lawrence Island Yupik (and all Inuit) to understand these policies, regulations, and history – to stand up for their rights. One participant offered the examples of using the Marine Mammal Protection Act and Endangered Species Act to “...protect our rights” (Focus

Group Participant. 2019). Knowing this information can help form process today and what steps need to be taken to advance Inuit food sovereignty.



Photo: Carolina Behe

Politics and Lobbying Across scales

Upon further reflection on decision-making pathways, participants highlighted the negative impacts of politics on the environment (inclusive of St. Lawrence Island (SLI) Yupik culture and all of the animals).

Both nationally and internationally there are entities, and some governments, opposed to hunting marine mammals; groups using a single species approach in making arguments to address habitat changes; groups opposed to the use of parts of animals, such as walrus tusk. Often these groups and/or governments lack an understanding of SLI Yupik (and all Inuit) way of life. There is often a misunderstanding or lack of knowledge of the sustainable hunting practices that have been used from time and immemorial and that people here, are part of the ecosystem.

The participants stressed that politics is one of the greatest threats impacting their food security and sovereignty. The lobbying power of well-funded governments and non-government organizations continues to grow as they are afforded the time and means to attend numerous meetings, initiate law suits and legal petitions, campaign to the general public, and influence where information comes from (i.e. research, published papers) which are all used to inform and influence decision-making.

One example provided was a lawsuit filed by an environmental non-profit organization to list walrus under the Endangered Species Act. The Eskimo Walrus Commission learned of the subsequent proceedings immediately before a judge was to hear the case. The Eskimo Walrus Commission and hunters rushed to go through and digest an immense amount of information. There was inadequate time afforded to them in order to prepare and provide expert information as well as culturally relevant arguments needed for a court to make an informed decision that would adversely impact the people most intimately concerned.

On Inuit Laws/Practices

In regard to taking care of the Arctic and management, participants stressed that they have had their own laws/practices from time immemorial. For thousands of years, Indigenous Knowledge alone was responsible for successful use and management of all Arctic resources.

Participants stressed that they have demonstrated the ability to protect and live with respect for all of life around them and hold an "...interconnected system view" (Focus Group Participant. 2019). Taking care of the environment - taking care of each other, of the water, land, animals, and plants, is with an understanding that there is a relationship between everything, that everything is interconnected.

Participants further stressed that their hunting practices are sustainable and done with respect for the walrus. As one participant said, "...we are not hurting the environment...we are not hurting anything by harvesting some [of the animals] ..." (Focus Group Participant. 2019).

In thinking about potential negative impacts of regulations, it is important to understand that there is a lasting impact of the colonization that has occurred throughout history and in recent history.

Participants talked of the impact of being forced to abide by another culture's rules and laws. It is felt that these laws and ways of management lacked an understanding of the walrus, of the SLI Yupik culture, of the whole Arctic environment. As one participant shared, "We can manage marine resources better than anyone, we've had thousands and thousands of years of managing. Except when these people started coming and said you just can't do that anymore. You're gonna have somebody else looking at your hunts and manage your hunts for you."

Participants shared that in 1934 Savoonga leaders wrote down their laws/practices through an agreed upon ordinance. The ordinance includes voluntary trip limits and local monitoring activities.

A participant shared that SLI Yupik have demonstrated an ability to be part of the environment and to protect it. Stressing the need to cooperate and share with the rest of the world their knowledge and ways of life.

Key Values

Throughout the discussion concerning Inuit care of the Arctic and tools that are used, a few key values were highlighted.

Nearly every participant stressed the need for **cooperation and sharing**. One participant stated that cooperation and sharing "has enabled us to survive this long". There is a strong sense that the world needs to take a step back from politics and learn how to cooperate and share. This would allow for greater trust and respect, for people to truly communicate, and to have adaptive and holistic management.

Honesty was also stressed as an important tool for survival. Participants shared that knowledge is transmitted to younger generations. If the truth is not spoken, younger generations are put at risk.

Respect for all of life around you, for the land, water, and air, for the animals and plants, and for each other encompasses an understanding that everything is connected. There is a strong relationship between everything within this environment. Participants often raised the importance of respect and that people are part of the environment.

On Languages

In considering decision-making pathways and decision-making, it is important to recognize the role that language plays. People in St. Lawrence Island speak SLI Yupik. The SLI Yupik language holds complex concepts and knowledge. Participants shared that people in Savoonga have had a lot to say and to share. But if the only language being used is English, then there is not a path way for them to contribute, to be heard.

One participant described people as being powerless if the discussion is only in English. Politics play out and policies are formed from these dominant, English-speaking only discussions. This limits equitable engagement, the crucial element of Indigenous Knowledge and direct participation in management and co-management.

On Enforcement

On further reflection about potential negative effects of regulations, participants shared the lasting impacts of being harassed, in the past, by US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) law enforcement assigned to ensure that hunters followed the imposed rules.

Some participants expressed the frustration and degrading feeling of law enforcement intimidation approaches and going through a hunter's things to check on what had been taken. It was felt that this behavior showed a disregard for the hunters' own rules/laws in terms of protecting the animals.

However, within the last couple of years the relationship with USFWS law enforcement has improved. Participants shared that they have not seen a law enforcer for a while. One participant felt that the law enforcement

had backed off since the federal government officially signed the title of SLI over to the people of Savoonga and Gambell (the two communities on SLI).

“I’ve never been a criminal...ever before in my...but that’s the way I feel when these people come. I didn’t do anything wrong. And yet, they’re there with their guns and they’re going through my stuff.” - Focus Group Participants



Photo: Cerene J Seppilu

On Indigenous Knowledge

In discussing Indigenous Knowledge within decision making and research, participants shared that it depends on who the people are that they are working with. However, in general it was agreed that there is an increasing respect for what Indigenous Knowledge holders have to offer. People have seen a distinct change in the respect that people hold for Indigenous Knowledge in contrast to a couple of years ago.

Participants provided the example of the USFWS, in feeling that the people they work with today are beginning to view the hunters

(Indigenous Knowledge holders) with authority, understanding that they are speaking a “...powerful truth” (Focus Group Participant. 2019).

Although, there are some researchers and decision makers that are showing respect for Indigenous Knowledge, it was also shared that there continues to be individuals, agencies, and governments, that disregard this important knowledge source and demonstrates a lack of trust and respect. Participants stressed that there is still a lot of work that needs to be done and the importance of educating those that do not understand the SLI Yupik culture and knowledge.

Because Indigenous Knowledge is often not written down, it was felt that it is not taken as seriously as other forms of knowledge and at times treated as anecdotal. Some participants expressed the need to have Indigenous Knowledge captured in writing. There is also a need for adequate and funded processes for the equitable involvement of Indigenous Knowledge holders in federal and state decision-making.

Participants shared the importance of the living memory that their Indigenous Knowledge is carried in. Indigenous Knowledge holders have powerful and reliable memories. This knowledge is passed on and built upon in many different forms (see selection below) and reaches back thousands of years.



Photo: Cerene J Seppilu

Sources of Indigenous Knowledge

In considering the need for a co-management agreement and processes to support a co-production of knowledge approach and equitable space

for Indigenous Knowledge to inform and make decisions, it is important to understand the different forms in which Indigenous Knowledge is held.

Participants shared the importance of recognizing that much of their Indigenous Knowledge is not written down. This knowledge is held and shared in many different forms, such as in carvings, dance, songs, stories, art.

Participants shared the importance of hearing stories, that often the stories “encouraged you to go hunting. Some of those stories reaching back since the beginning and thousands of years old. All the stories have morals of how to live our lives and what the consequences of doing bad and hunting and respecting the animals” (Focus Group Participant. 2019).

Another participant shared the importance of songs. Songs and stories memorialize significant events, such as harvesting a whale, walrus, or a bear. It was further shared that songs are often focused on relationships - relationships between families and groups, between people and the animals. They hold history and knowledge of family and clans. These songs teach children where they came from, geography, their origin. The songs teach how “significant the marine mammals are for your well-being and health” (Focus Group Participant. 2019).

On Pollution

Pollution has been a high point of concern for some time. Participants underlined concern over pollutants released into the water and the air from across the globe that is now polluting the water of the Bering Sea. Shipping is a large part of the discussion about pollution and includes noise, light, and chemical pollution.

Participants shared the importance of the health of the environment. Stressing that the pollution of this environment has dire, adverse impacts the health and cultural integrity of the people living on SLI. Here, people are part of the environment, people rely on the ocean as ‘their grocery store’.

Recommendations

Throughout the discussion with the Savoonga Marine Mammal Advisory Committee many recommendations naturally surfaced. Below is a bulleted listing of these recommendations:

- Cooperation and Sharing - this includes SLI Yupik sharing their knowledge and the world learning how to cooperate and share, for everyone to work together (for the world to adapt to this approach)
- Know the laws, the history of the policies, the co-management bodies, and of the communities
- Educate about SLI Yupik (and all of Inuit) way of life - through inviting people (governments and non-government organizations) to communities, making and sharing videos and presentations
- Need for long term monitoring
- Need for research questions driven by communities (for example there is a need for research on the impact of harmful algal blooms on marine life)
- Need to be recognized as the experts
- Adopt accountability processes for federal and state agencies (this may include reviews and evaluations)

Conclusion

The Savoonga Marine Mammal Advisory Committee focus group on food sovereignty and self-governance facilitated greater understanding of the Inuit role in current co-management systems and the tools needed to achieve greater equity of voice.



Photo: Cerene J Seppilu

Food Sovereignty and Self Governance – Inuit Role in Managing Arctic Marine Resources.¹

Collective Meeting Summary Report



Photo: Shannon Williams

Food sovereignty is the right of [all] Inuit to define their own hunting, gathering, fishing, land and water policies; the right to define what is sustainable and 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. Within the Alaskan Inuit Food Security Conceptual Framework, food sovereignty is a necessity for supporting and maintaining the six dimensions of food security: Accessibility, Availability, Inuit Culture, Decision-Making Power and Management, Health and Wellness, and Stability.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 Collective Meeting. The report should be cited as: Inuit Circumpolar Council Alaska. 2019. Food Sovereignty and Self Governance Collective Meeting: *Food Sovereignty and Self Governance - Inuit Role in Managing Arctic Marine Resources*. Anchorage, Alaska.

The meeting was facilitated by Carolina Behe with assistance from Shannon Williams and Eilene Adams of ICC Alaska. Vanessa Cunningham of the Fisheries Joint Management Committee also provided support and assistance throughout the meeting. Dr. Dalee Sambo Dorough, a member of the project team, also participated in the Collective Meeting. This report was compiled by Carolina Behe and Shannon Williams, with edits provided by Dr. Dalee Sambo Dorough and David Roche. The report has been reviewed and edited by the workshop participants.



Photo: Carolina Behe

Quyanainni/Koana/Quyana/Igamsiganaghalek/Quyanaq!

We are grateful to the many people whose help and support made the Collective Meeting possible.

Quyana to the community of Bethel for hosting us, with special thanks to Vivian Korthuis and Jennifer Hooper with the Association of Village Council Presidents and Mary Sattler Peltola with the Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission for all of your support and assistance in the preparation, organization, and implementation of the meeting and associated events.

Quyanainni/Koana to Michelle Gruben, Bridget Wolki, Diane Ruben, Glenna Emaghok, Anita Gruben, Bessi Inuktalik, and the Aklavik, Inuvik, Tuktoyaktuk, Paulatuk, Olokhaktomiut, and Sachs Harbour Hunters & Trappers Committee's for assisting with the coordinating and communication with potential participants, the organization of travel from the Inuvialuit Settlement Region to Alaska, and for being wonderful to work with.

Igamsiganaghalek to Vera Metcalf for all of your invaluable contributions and support throughout the planning and organization of the meeting.

Thank you to Vanessa Cunningham of Fisheries Joint Management Committee and Chanda Turner of the Inuvialuit Game Council for all of your assistance and support throughout the planning, coordination, and organization of the Collective Meeting.

Quyana to Mary K. Henry, Jennifer Hooper, Doris T. Mute, Charlene Wuya, and Crystal Samuelson for preparing food and making our potluck event possible. Quyana to Kuskokwim Campus dancers and their leader Ben Agimuk for sharing songs and dances at our potluck, and especially your flexibility in being able to join us on short notice. Quyana to Benjamin Charles with the Association of Village Council Presidents Yupiit Piciyarait Museum, for welcoming us into the museum, for sharing your knowledge and time, and for providing a lunch time discussion about Yup'ik mask making.

Quyana to all of the participants for your time and valuable contributions to this project!

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 March 31, 2020.

About the Collective Meeting

On February 28 and March 1, 2019, the Inuit Circumpolar Council Alaska convened the Collective Meeting as part of the Inuit-led project, *Food Sovereignty and Self Governance: Inuit Role in Managing Arctic Marine Resources* (FSSG). The goal of the Collective Meeting was to bring together the Partners of the FSSG project and key people identified by those partners that hold unique knowledge and will further advance discussions on food sovereignty and self-governance. Over the two-day meeting, participants and representatives of the Eskimo Walrus Commission, Fisheries Joint Management Committee, Inuvialuit Game Council, Kuskokwim River Intertribal Fisheries Commission, and the Association of Village Council Presidents discussed key themes that have been identified thus far, from information gathered through focus group meetings and individual interviews.

In addition, meeting participants elaborated upon decision making pathways within their own management structures, Inuit management processes, and international processes; explored what supports or impedes food sovereignty; and began to identify key actions or recommendations needed to move toward Inuit food sovereignty and self-governance across the Arctic. The meeting, which was held at the Yupiit Piciryarait Cultural Center in Bethel, Alaska, was attended by 24 Indigenous Knowledge (IK) holders (referred to as participants throughout the report). Quyanainni / Koana / Quyana / Igamsiganaghalek / Quyanaq to all of those who were able to attend:

Alecia Lennie
Anita Pokiak
Anna Ashenfelter
Charlie R. Charlie
Eli Nasogaluak
Darrel John
Dean Arey
Donovan Arey
Fred Phillip
Hans Lennie
James Charles
James Nicori

Janelle Carl
Jennifer Hooper
Jerry Inglangasuk
Lorna Storr
Mary Sattler Peltola
Mike Williams, Sr.
Moses Owen
Phillip K. Peter
Richard Binder
Robert Lekander
Vera Metcalf
Vivian Korthuis

Meeting Structure

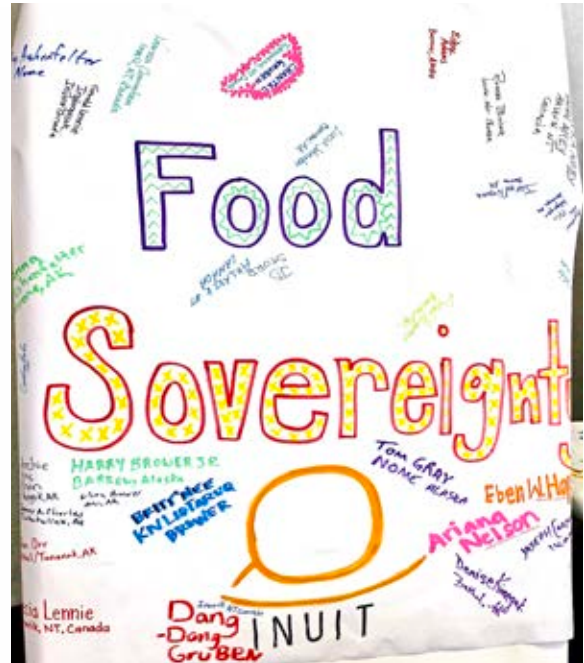
The FSSG Collective Meeting was organized with a goal of expanding on the discussions that occurred through focus group meetings, workshops, and individual interviews within Alaska and the Inuvialuit Settlement Region (ISR). Meeting participants were selected by or in collaboration with the Project Partners. Participants were selected for their Indigenous Knowledge, expertise, and experience within management.

Project Partners - As shared above, the Project Partners are the Eskimo Walrus Commission (EWC), Fisheries Joint Management Committee (FJMC), Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (KRITFC), Inuvialuit Game Council (IGC), Association of Village Council Presidents (AVCP), and ICC Ottawa.

Within Alaska, there are 97 Tribal Councils within the four regions that ICC Alaska advocates on behalf of. The KRITFC is made up of 33 Tribes along the Kuskokwim River (both Yup'ik and Athabascan Tribes). This project works with the Yup'ik members of the KRITFC and some Cup'ik communities. AVCP is the regional non-profit for 56 Tribes within the Yukon-Kuskokwim Region.

EWC is made up of commissioners from 19 villages, including from Kwigillingok (Yup'ik) in southwest Alaska to Gambell and Savoonga (St. Lawrence Yupik) in the Bering Straits to Wainwright and Utqiagvik on the north slope (Inupiat).

The ISR includes six communities. The IGC is made up of Hunters and Trappers Committee representatives from the six villages within the ISR, for a total of six representatives and one elected chair. FJMC includes two



Drawing created by Participants attending the FSSG Collective meeting and a meeting held directly prior, the Youth, Elder, Active Hunter and Gatherer Workshop

Inuvialuit members and two members appointed by the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

Collective Meeting Representation - Unfortunately, due to severe weather throughout Alaska, only one of the seven intended EWC representatives were able to attend. Additionally, last minute scheduling conflicts, illness, and weather delays prevented a few people from the Yukon Kuskokwim region and Inuvialuit Settlement Region (ISR) from attending the meeting. In some cases, a few new participants were nominated to attend the meeting in place of those that were unavailable.

This changed the dynamic of the conversations held. The resulting discussions reflected a mixture of participants that had been involved in the project from the beginning and some that were new to the dialogue. Bringing in new voices while exploring the themes more deeply provided rich perspectives and strong contributions to the overall project.

Meeting Set-up - The meeting was structured around methodologies developed in conjunction with the project partners and the FSSG Advisory Committee. Throughout the day, we promoted a flexible and relaxed environment. Focus was placed on exchange of information and knowledge through deep discussions between participants. Discussions were held in both small “break out groups” and collectively as one group. The smaller groups provided an opportunity to have in-depth discussions and created a supportive environment for some who feel less comfortable contributing in the larger group setting. As shared above, this meeting was about Inuit coming together from diverse regions. The smaller groups also encouraged a good exchange and intermix from different areas across Inuit Nunaat. For example, groups had individuals from different areas of Alaska and different areas of the ISR.

During the workshop, participants were encouraged to talk and express



Photo: Eilene Adams

themselves in any way that they felt they needed to. For some this meant standing and walking around freely. For others it meant sitting and taking notes. To further encourage people to express themselves in a way that is culturally appropriate for them, art supplies were provided.

Participants were provided with pieces of paper and markers to draw or sketch throughout the day. Additionally, a large canvas and paint pens were placed to the side of the room. Participants drew and wrote on the canvas throughout the workshop.

As with all of our project gatherings, we shared lots of food and laughter throughout the day, including a potluck as well as drumming and dancing!



Photo: Carolina Behe

Different Management Structures

A key component to FSSG is Inuit coming together to share their knowledge and experiences and to learn about and from the different co-management systems within different areas of Inuit Nunaat. The Collective meeting provided a good opportunity to hear a brief description of the co-management systems directly from those involved on a day-to-day basis.

There are many differences among the management structures that can be noted in the brief descriptions offered. Dr. Dalee Sambo Dorrough noted that a key difference "...between the management structures in the ISR and

Alaska is that through the Inuvialuit Final Agreement (IFA) there is recognition of Aboriginal right and title to their land as distinct people.” The IFA recognizes that the Inuvialuit hold rights to the lands, territory and resources. She highlighted that IFA provisions explicitly “...recognize and respect their [Inuvialuit] right to hunting, fishing and gathering. In, Alaska the system is completely different. The Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act in a few words purportedly extinguished aboriginal hunting and fishing rights.” While another person further stressed, during the meeting, that the IFA ensures that they have the right to harvest any animal for food (personal/community use). While another participant stressed how over-regulated Indigenous peoples are in Alaska.

Dr. Dorough also underscored the difference in the type of agreement that the IFA and ANCSA offer. While the IFA is a living agreement, the ANCSA is regarded as a settlement. “The term settlement from the point of view of the United States government was that it [the ANCSA] was resolved. It's not a living agreement...” (Dorough. 2019).

In reflection of all the management systems, participants agreed that there is room to make all of them better and much more responsive to all of our people.



Mural on the Yupiit Picirvarait Cultural Center. Photo: Shannon Williams

Report Summary

The below provides a brief summary and general overview of the discussion held throughout the meeting. Though this section is broken into bolded headings, all headings are interrelated, interdependent, and indivisible. For example, when speaking about the need for adaptive management strategies,

one must also consider traditional Inuit management practices, the health and well-being of people and animals, variability in weather, and many other related components.

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 and the information gathered throughout the project.

- Personal Experiences in gathering food for you, your family, for your community
- Consultation processes as they relate to and impact your food gathering activities
- Decision-making pathways
- Indigenous Knowledge and Research questions
- Information accessibility and knowledge sharing
- 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)

Key concepts that have emerged, to date, throughout the focus groups, workshops, and individual interviews held during the FSSG project were highlighted and supported deeper discussions:

- Equity
- Language
- Inuit rules/protocols/processes
- Inuit Ways of Life Reflected in Management
- Climate Change
- Impacts of national and international regulations
- Competition of resources
- Funding
- Sharing
- Inuit Management Practices
- Inuit Ways of Self-enforcement or Self-Regulation
- Land Ownership
- Education
- Outside perspectives
- Research
- Working under someone else's management system
- Power Dynamics

The Collective meeting participants raised the following additional key points:

- Communications
- Observation/monitoring
- Power dynamics
- Relationships with Non-Government Organizations (NGOs)
- Self-determination
- Sharing
- Decision making abilities / veto power
- Using Inuit concepts, approaches
- Shipping
- Biases in decision-making
- Knowledge of laws that support Inuit rights
- Impacts of borders
- Availability and accessibility of food sources
- Inuit Circumpolar initiatives and economy



Photo: Carolina Behe

On Personal Experiences and Climate Change

To begin the discussions, participants were asked to share their experiences over the past year in gathering food for themselves, their families, and for their communities, while considering what is supporting or impeding our food sovereignty. Throughout the discussions there was a strong focus on climate change and many other interconnecting facets of food security, such as changes in weather, animals, infrastructure, economy, accessibility, and availability.

Below is a brief list of climate, weather, water, air, and animal-related changes and concerns that participants emphasized during the discussion:

- Unpredictable weather patterns and changes in seasonal timing
- Large animal die offs and animals with unusual hair loss and sores in Alaska (i.e. birds, walrus, salmon)
- Changes in snow type and coverage
- Increase in rain and storm surges
- Change in timing of ice formation and break-up and change in the way that the ice forms and melts
- Change in movement of ice
- Changes in air and water currents and temperatures
- Decreasing health of water and air
- Harmful algal blooms
- Pollution
- Change in availability and accessibility to food sources
- Changes in animal behavior, health, and migration timing and patterns
- New species in some areas (such as bears, grasshoppers, bison, salmon, and frogs, walrus, whales)
- Declining populations of certain species (ptarmigan, king salmon, muskrats)
- Overabundance of certain species in some areas (geese, moose, wolves, beavers, lynx)
- Ocean acidification
- Negative impacts of shipping on animal health and migration patterns
- Negative impacts of planes on animal health (i.e. walrus haul outs)
- Erosion

Through this discussion, participants underlined the change and increasingly unpredictable weather patterns and how this affects hunting and harvesting activities. For example, known hunting trails have become unsafe with increased open water; some are facing new challenges in food preparation and preservation as temperatures increase and there is a loss of permafrost (requiring new storage techniques). In addition to changes in weather, people are facing increasing erosion, causing the need for some communities to make plans to or consider relocation, loss of hunting cabins, and changes in the visibility and taste of water.



Photo: Eilene Adams

Many examples were provided of weather conditions not aligning with traditional harvesting times. For example, it is important to harvest salmon when the weather is conducive to drying the meat and before flies have arrived. Recently, there is an increase in precipitation during a time that was once known to be

dry - requiring people to adapt to the time of harvesting. In other examples, people choose not to harvest because it was not possible to process the catch without wasting. For example, in one community a decision was made not to harvest beluga because the animal could not be processed fast enough in the high temperatures.

Participants also shared the impact of decreasing accessibility to food sources due to climate change. In one year, four Alaska communities declared harvest disasters because they were unable to access walrus due to sea ice conditions. Other participants shared how their accessibility to food sources has decreased due to erosion (unable to access or loss of hunting camps, loss of ground, and relocation), late ice freeze-up, early ice break-up, change in movement of ice, and unsafe weather conditions.

Participants noted that even with the change it is important to understand that animals go in cycles. As one participant shared, "Some years, we had



Photo: Carolina Behe

pretty good season. And some years, look like everything is gone.” Other participants noted the importance of understanding and using our knowledge and rules. For example, when animals offer themselves and they are not taken the animal numbers will decrease. Or when animals are disrespected, they will not offer themselves.

In talking about changes in animal migration patterns, participants noted that animals are migrating at different times, to different areas, and in new patterns. A few participants offered that a few animals are moving toward the coast. Some participants offered that the animals are following the food and others shared that the animal migration toward water is associated with the coming of a great famine and lack of respect that has been given to the animals.

Throughout the discussion, participants reiterated that animals are adaptive. For example, Ayveq³ (walrus) have adapted to decreased sea ice and are known to give birth in the water. Discussions also covered some of the ways that communities are dealing with animal overabundance. Participants from the ISR shared that incentives to hunt beavers and wolves have helped to keep those populations in check. Participants also offered other ways that they are adapting. For example, in one community people are hunting more moose when there is fewer caribou available.



Photo: Eilene Adams

³ From the St. Lawrence Island Yupik dialect

Participants raised additional concerns about the impact of increased shipping activities on the disruption of animal migration, impact on animal health, and as a source of pollution; increase in low flying planes disrupting animal migrations and, in some cases, causing animals to be trampled (i.e. walrus haul outs). Both activities are associated with an increase in human accessibility (due to a lack of ice) and increasing research and tourist activities.

In discussing all of these changes and food sovereignty, it is clear that challenge arises when the federal, state, or territorial government policies and regulations do not adapt fast enough or take account of the reasons that the changes are occurring. For example, in Alaska, federal and state harvesting calendars do not reflect the changes in the weather and account for food processing activities that align with harvesting.



Photo: Carolina Behe

An additional challenge comes from top-down policies and lack of knowledge about our ways of life. Our communities hold many adaptive and quick decision-making solutions. Our decision-making is intimately tied to the land, coastal seas, animals, and plants. Our knowledge is required to understand the changes that are occurring and to address the challenges that the world faces today.

On Inuit Ways of Life Reflected in Management

Although we do not use the term “management” to describe it, we have been part of this environment for thousands of years. Throughout the project, participants have repeatedly stressed that ‘management’ is not a new concept; that our ancestors thrived by living an Inuit way of life, using our Indigenous Knowledge, our rules/laws/practices. As one participant shared, “We have our own way of life, we have our own laws.” These include our values that need to be at the forefront of all management discussions. Are our values reflected in federal, state, territory, or international regulations, policies, or agreements?

During these discussion participants highlighted the fact that outside regulations do not capture the emotional and spiritual connection that we have to hunting, harvesting, fishing, or being part of the environment. Often times there is a lack of knowledge about what our food security is, assuming it is just about nutrients, calories, and money, rather than about our culture, our knowledge, or our own rules/laws/practices. Concern was also expressed about the differing interests of why people are involved in management discussions or related activities. As a participant shared, "...many agency representatives take on positions to build their resumes. But this is our lives...it is everything that we are."

Participants pointed out that Inuit rules/practices are adaptive, flexible, and allows for quick decision making. Participants from both the ISR and Alaska felt that this ability to make quick decisions is not always reflected in the co-management systems that we operate within today. Working within a slow-to-adapt system has become more of a challenge as rapid rates of climate change makes weather and related factors (i.e. migration patterns, birthing) harder to predict.

Participants shared that within both national governments and international forums, many overarching policies and agreements are developed from or with people that hold little to no knowledge about the Arctic or our way of life. This requires a lot of time and energy spent on educating those that make decisions that directly impact or influence our lives and homelands.

For example, many policy and decision-makers lack an understanding of the important role that harvesting plays in our physical and mental well-being. Participants stressed that being on the land, hunting, fishing, and gathering is about spending time together and being connected to the land, the water, animals, and plants. Several participants shared that harvesting is their identity, what elevates their spirits, what grounds them, or what makes them feel whole. It is also an opportunity to learn and to teach. When traditional hunting activities are interrupted or stopped by regulations, it has far-reaching impacts.

Participants offered concerns about regulations or policies that conflict with our ways of life and values. For example, many participants expressed the need to, "...follow the weather and to follow the animals..." (Workshop Participant. 2019), as opposed to trying to control it. Examples were offered of decreasing quotas or moratoriums on geese or moose hunting, which resulted in an overabundance of both animals. Moose in particular areas are now eating up all of the vegetation. An over population of geese in other areas are now causing negative impacts to vegetation. Rather than applying adaptive decision-making, the responsive actions of others pivot on an attempt to control species populations without recognizing how such actions adversely impacted all other interconnected relationships within an environment.

Other examples were offered that highlighted regulations that do not align or coincide with harvesting times. As a participant offered, as a result of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, people within one area were expected to harvest some birds after the spring season. However, the best time to harvest these birds is in the spring. Indigenous Knowledge passed through generations has taught us the best time to harvest different animals and at what point in the animal's life to harvest them. These practices benefit both the health of the animals and us. Many of the practices are rooted in respect and the importance of never taking more than you need or wasting any part of the animal and a deeper understanding of the migration and lifecycle of such animals.



Photo: Shannon Williams

During this discussion, participants from the ISR commented that because of the IFA and the integral role that Hunters and Trappers Committees play, there are avenues to ensure Inuit ways of life are reflected in decision-making. Examples included the following:

- Quotas are self-imposed (for example, voluntary fish closures)
- Decisions are made starting at a community level
- Each community makes decisions about what occurs within their geographic area
- Communities are able to make decisions that work well for them (for example there is no sport hunting permitted in Aklavik, although it is allowed elsewhere)

"Our elders' regulations are really light and really easy to follow. They're really simple regulations. They're not hard to understand, just simple to let us understand as hunters." -Meeting Participant



Photo: Shannon Williams

Participants from Alaska commented that polices and regulations consistently come from the outside, take a top-down approach, and are reflective of values of another culture and not their own. Participants expressed a deep frustration at being so heavily regulated, adding that "...regulations rarely reflect our ways of life." (Workshop Participant. 2019). For example, single species management, siloed research questions, large scale commercial fishery by-catch, catch and release practices used by sport fishing, and certain research techniques which bother the animals (such as placing antennae on the heads of fish) go against our values and our understanding of the world. They further commented that many regulations are often outdated and/or hard to follow (for example, having to consult multiple handbooks before going out to hunt).

In regard to salmon co-management, participants expressed concern that they do not get to make their own decisions or use their own rules/practices; they are forced to abide by the rules of the state and federal government, and feeling and having to beg for a chance to fish a resource that they have depended upon for centuries.

Additional concerns were expressed regarding the constant change in federal and state government staff and representatives. Participants shared that staff and representatives are often coming from a different part of the country and hold no knowledge of our culture or the Arctic.

Participants also identified the following ways that KRITFC has succeeded in getting Inuit ways of life reflected in the current co-management structure:

- Annual meetings with 33 Tribes and seven executive councils that carry out decisions
- Four in-season managers who aid in an adaptive decision making process
- Development of weekly call in opportunities for individuals to share observations, knowledge, wisdom, and feelings
- The inclusion of some Indigenous Knowledge to fill in western science's information gaps

Many participants described some decision-making and policies to be economically driven. This was largely emphasized in relation to the state of Alaska and raises additional points about conflicting interests. For example, the Alaska salmon industry benefits immensely in terms of revenue for the state of Alaska. Alaska



Photo: Eilene Adams

participants felt that this economic interest is often placed above our food security and values and is reflected in related policies and regulations.

In the context of international regulations and policies, it was agreed that our way of life is often not included or considered. For example, a ban on

trading or selling seal fur or walrus ivory conflicts with our value and desire to ensure that we do not waste any part of the animal. Similar concerns to those shared about the Alaska system were shared about international regulations and agreements, such as single species management approaches, siloed research questions, 'western' concepts of conservation, such as no-take protected areas, and an approach that does not recognize humans as part of the environment or understand the interconnected relationships within that environment, lacking our holistic understanding of the world.

Having policies, regulations, and agreements that do not reflect our way of life and values is drastically impacting our communities, the animals, water – the whole of the Arctic ecosystem. For example, some participants shared that community members are not engaging or engaging less in certain hunting, fishing, and gathering activities due to increased regulations, changes in climate, and poor local economies. Many participants described how difficult it has been to see their communities be so profoundly impacted by regulations.



Photo: Eilene Adams

"Being able to provide is a privilege. To be able to share with your community and help make them strong, make yourself and your family whole is a real privilege. We live that lifestyle: it is valid, it is pure, and it is good." - Meeting Participant

In addition to the impacts upon our ability to hunt, harvest, and prepare food, material bans such as the seal skin ban, lead to a loss of opportunities to pass on knowledge, take pride in our culture, and an economic source. Participants further commented that many regulations have led to division amongst our people. Division was identified as a main factor which impedes

food sovereignty. Participants stressed the need to continue training young people to hunt, fish, prepare traditional foods, and take pride in their Inuit culture.

“I had exceptional teachers... [what] I learned is we stand firm. We don't waste our food. We don't overkill. We don't take more than we need. We share what we catch with our elders, with our families...there are those of us that want to hold on to our traditional ways that we grew up with and to pass on that knowledge to our younger generation.”
- Workshop Participant



Photo: Eilene Adams

On Consultation

The Collective meeting Participants were asked to have an open discussion about what consultation looks like and how the process makes them feel. There are different consultation policies across federal, state, or territorial governments. Agencies within these various levels of government often apply their own interpretations of consultation policies. Throughout the FSSG project, participants shared concerns about consultation being conflated with consent or confused with communications. There have also been a few positive examples related to individuals acting on behalf of government. Many participants stressed that consultation processes are often influenced positively or negatively by the individual scientist, regulator, or decision-maker that engages with our communities, governments (i.e. Tribes), or our organizations.

Again, processes differ greatly between the ISR and Alaska. Therefore, discussions have been grouped by location in order to better explore and understand consultation in both locations. Main topics of discussion to emerge while exploring consultation processes that exist within the ISR included the following:

- Consultation processes are based on what is written in the IFA; founded on the principle that the ISR is Inuvialuit land and that management bodies have to listen to what Inuvialuit say
- New projects go through a process that starts at ground level
- Higher-level governing bodies such as FJMC are able to work with ministers
- If governments want to make changes, they must consult with Inuvialuit.
- Face-to-face consultation at ground level includes elders and Indigenous Knowledge
- Challenges emerge in certain decisions such as commercial fishing or sports hunting, but communities are ultimately able to make decisions at a community level that suit community needs
- Concerns that there are no penalties for not consulting and no enforcement of consultation
- Often working with people that lack knowledge about the region or our way of life

Participants from Alaskan communities discussed challenges and obstacles faced within the consultation process. Main topics of discussion to emerge as participants explored the consultation processes that exist in Alaska include the following:

- Lack of state recognition of Tribes
- Decisions are made by the federal or state government regardless of the input provided by Inuit - often co-managers and Tribal representatives feel that they are wasting their breath
- Different federal management bodies have different standards for consultation
- Both state and federal consultation processes can be altered by current administrations
- Both state and federal regulators rarely know anything about our regions, our needs, or ways of life
- Public hearings are usually not local; it is very difficult to meaningfully engage when cost of travel can be prohibitive
- Consultation at a community level rarely occurs; there can be a disconnect between local needs and the views of regional government

- Cultural differences and cultural misunderstandings occur often between Inuit and western managers, scientists, and regulators

“How can you co-manage something when somebody else is on top of you all the time. They don't listen to us.” - Workshop Participant



Photo: Carolina Behe

Within Alaska, people shared that federal and state governments, or other institutions, often claim to have gone through a consultation process when they share decisions that have already been made or research activities already planned. Often communities are not consulted and activities and decisions move forward without their knowledge. As one participant shared, “...the state literally ignores that we exist out here, as people, as Tribes...they know we are here, but ignore [us].”

Participants also described different consultation processes. For example, there are some consultations processes that include all U.S. citizens and provide a limited time for testimony (often limited to 3 to 5 minutes) to a panel of people that are clearly or openly not listening to the input provided. This ignores the federal governments legal responsibility for government to government consultation.

Other consultation processes describe an opportunity to educate and guide representatives that lack knowledge of our culture or a holistic understanding of the Arctic. A participant shared, “I thought consultation was a back and forth [discussion] and getting permission from us. But it is not about permission, it is about saying [the federal, state, or researchers] this is happening.”

Participants shared that the IFA and processes within the ISR support and require consultation. There is a process that requires engagement with communities through the Hunter and Trapper Committees, requires engagement with the IGC, screening processes through the Environmental Impact Review Board (which reviews all projects that have a potential impact on the region), and a process that requires a research license to conduct any research within the ISR.

Other participants shared a need for stronger, 'meaningful' consultation, explaining that often the federal or territorial governments have a different understanding of what 'meaningful' consultation is. Again, this comes down to individual people. There are examples where meaningful and trustworthy relationships have been developed within both Alaska and the ISR. Where these strong relationships exist, there is a stronger shared understanding of what 'meaningful' consultation means.



Photo: Carolina Behe

"We have Inuvialuit final agreement. That's a legal document with the federal government. That puts us way ahead of any other organization in Canada. We take it to heart to hold the government accountable." - Workshop Participant

While there are policies and processes to support consultation within both Alaska and ISR (i.e. the IFA within the ISR and government-to-government policies within Alaska), participants expressed a need to have accountability to ensure that people are adhering to these policies. An example was provided in reflection of the number of vessels passing by ISR communities without their knowledge.

“Our style of consultation. No phones. It's not called consultation when somebody phones you. It's face-to-face and it has to be with that.” -
Workshop Participant



Photo: Carolina Behe

There are also international agreements that support consultation and meaningful engagement of Indigenous peoples, such as the United Nations Declaration the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN Declaration).⁴ The UN Declaration affirms the right to ‘free, prior, and informed consent’.⁵ When participants raised examples of international instruments that support their rights, a question was raised about why government agencies were not required to implement these agreements, such as the UN Declaration.

Participants also shared that consultation processes become challenging at different scales (i.e. regional, national, international) and depending on what the topic is. Different topics may come with competing values and agendas, such as those that are opposed to our hunting culture or those with economic driven interests.

Participants shared important components of consultation and the management of our land and resources. These components included managers taking responsibility for recognizing that they are at our table when they come to us; use of translators for elders at meetings; providing food at meetings to make the space more welcoming; choosing times for meetings that fit the needs of the community; using plain language rather

⁴ UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, UN General Assembly, *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples : resolution / adopted by the General Assembly*, 2 October 2007, A/RES/61/295, available at <https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/declaration-on-the-rights-of-indigenous-peoples.html>

⁵ UN Declaration, *article 19* States shall consult and cooperate in good faith with the indigenous peoples concerned through their own representative institutions in order to obtain their free, prior and informed consent before adopting and implementing legislative or administrative measures that may affect them.

than academic jargon; and taking responsibility to know about our culture, the laws that support our rights (i.e. IFA, UN Declaration, government-to-government requirements, agreed upon consultation practices, including when and how consultation will occur).

Equity

One of the themes that has arisen often throughout the FSSG project is equity, working within another culture's management systems, and power dynamics. Equity—and a lack of equity—in management and decision-making and utilization of Indigenous Knowledge has been central to most discussions about the co-management process. During the Collective Meeting, participants were asked to have an open discussion about equity and what kinds of equity or inequity exist in the co-management systems.



Photo: Shannon Williams

Participants from communities in the ISR described how Inuvialuit representation starts at a community level. Within each of the six ISR communities there is a Hunter's and Trappers Committee (HTC). The HTC is made up of elected officials that sit on the committee for two years. One member from each of those Committees is appointed to sit on the IGC. This structure supports each community having representation on the Council. Everything begins with the HTCs. Participants indicated that this allows more equal representation in decision-making. They also noted that "ground up" decision making leaves more space for inclusion of Indigenous Knowledge and what the elders say. Inuvialuit participants commented that IFA provides for equal opportunity. However, they identified the following ways inequity at times appears in working with territorial and federal government:

- Difficulty bringing focus to Arctic issues at a federal level (for example, there is only one ice breaker and little infrastructure to deal with disasters)

- A tendency for people to group Indigenous Peoples together (for example, thinking that Inuvialuit are the same as the rest of the First Nations in Canada)
- Decisions are made by majority vote at the higher levels of government; although Inuvialuit have a platform for their voice, they can still be out-voted
- At some levels, lack of understanding about our culture and ways of life
- Lack of funding for the gathering and inclusion of Indigenous Knowledge

Participants from Alaskan communities described how they used community-based representative bodies such as Tribal councils, city councils, and village corporations to give voice to community members.



Photo: Eilene Adams

Within the co-management system, the Alaska Native Organizations are made up of representatives from the communities they represent. The EWC is made up of 19 commissioners – each commissioner appointed by their relevant Tribal Council. The KRITFC is made up of 33 commissioners – each commissioner appointed by their relevant Tribal Council. The EWC and KRITFC carry forward the voices of the communities and their Indigenous Knowledge.

Alaskan participants described a lack of equity at multiple levels. Many participants indicated that while we are sometimes successful in fighting to have our voices heard, true equity and equal partnerships within co-management rarely exist. This offset is primarily because no true co-management exists within Alaska. Below is a brief list of inequities faced within the Alaskan co-management system:

- State of Alaska gives everyone, including non-Native people, hunting and fishing rights (this does not include marine mammals)
- Lack of equity in decision-making and lack of equal representation on co-management boards
- Large scale power imbalance (asymmetry); federal and state government set on maintaining those imbalances
- A pervading sense that money equals power
- A lack of trust and respect for Indigenous Knowledge apparent from scientists, managers, and policy makers;
- lack of trust and respect for knowledge that is unwritten or experience-based
- Indigenous Knowledge comes second or not at all
- Lack of equity in funding
- Feeling of being constantly underfunded and undermined

Alaska participants expressed frustration at being expected to live with being under another culture's imposed management system, the associated power dynamics, and how this relates to equity. In regard to participant reflections on the state, one participant shared, "...they [the state] does not cooperate or support us...they are in opposition to everything we say...it is a constant fight and we are not supposed to fight".



Photo: Carolina Behe

"We struggle with trying to find funding for indigenous knowledge projects. Science is well funded—we see it every day. When it comes to trying to do our own way [using our Indigenous Knowledge], where do we go to?" -Workshop Participant

Research and Community based monitoring

Concerning equity in the context of research, Indigenous Knowledge and science, participants from both ISR and Alaska noted that Indigenous Knowledge and science are often not treated equitably at different scales. Some participants expressed frustration that scientists are regarded with

greater credibility because they hold a graduate degree, while the expertise of our people is not understood or respected. Examples, were provided of scientists or other professionals being dismissive of Indigenous Knowledge or not understanding the knowledge. Participants also shared that while science is funded by federal, state, territory, or international agencies, much more effort is required to fund activities that include Indigenous Knowledge and is often expected to fit within a 'western' model.

To this point, participants also voiced frustration that some scientists and decision-makers think that they can and need to 'validate' Indigenous Knowledge using science. As one participant said, "...we should not have to fit our knowledge into western science."

Many examples were provided of substantially funded research projects that focused on one species (loss of holistic understanding and focus on the wrong species), or to gain information that community members already have. Participants also shared some positive example from ISR, such as a beluga tagging initiative under the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Canada. Through this program two Inuvialuit from each community are hired to tag beluga.

A participant shared that EWC has worked for years to have hunters involved in research projects and activities, such as tagging walrus. Their efforts have been successful and there are examples of hunters on vessels. One example included a project where two hunters joined a research team on a vessel to look for walrus in ice-encrusted waters. The participants shared, "...the fog came and this vessel got lost. They couldn't find walrus. So, our hunter said, "Why don't you stop the engines and let's just listen?" So, they stopped all the engines and they [the hunters] said, "Okay. We can hear the walrus." The scientist couldn't hear. And they [the hunters] said, "We're going to use our sense of smell." The walrus has a powerful smell. They're on ice. So that's how the research vessel finally found the walrus...because of hunters. They [the hunters] knew exactly where they were."

A key theme raised during the meeting was the need for monitoring and observation systems to support Inuit food sovereignty. Through these types

of programs, you are able to have documented baseline data. It is also important that our Indigenous Knowledge is included in this baseline data.

Participants from ISR shared information about their community-based monitoring program. The program includes harvest data. The harvest data is collected by Inuvialuit and under the control of the Joint Secretariat (it cannot be used without Inuvialuit permission). Participants shared that having baseline data has been an important tool in management discussions. The written data provides a reference point to compare to and hold as evidence.



Photo: Carolina Behe

Overall, participants expressed a need for research used to inform decision-making to be community driven (addressing questions and needs identified by the community) and/or co-producing research questions, methodologies, analysis, and output through a co-production of knowledge process.

Language

Throughout the FSSG project, participants have continuously brought up the connection between language and food sovereignty. Participants at the Collective meeting also raised key points about our language, sharing about the significance of being able to use our language. It was further shared that our language is not only verbal, it is also in our body and the way we listen.

Participants commented that learning and teaching our Inuit languages is a way for us to connect to our culture. Due to the cultural significance and positive impacts that language learning, teaching, and speaking can have, participants recommended that our Inuit languages be spoken in the home whenever possible, taught in our schools, and used in management contexts.



Artwork by Meeting Participants

“My grandma used to tell me not to lose who I am, not to lose my language. It's my identity.” - Workshop Participant

Many participants pointed out that our languages give life to the stories that elders tell; when stories are told in English, they sometimes lose context or meaning. From a management standpoint, the same can be said for how we talk about our resources and our role in our environment. When meetings are conducted in English by default, some of our Indigenous Knowledge can get lost in translation. A few Inuvialuit participants pointed out that government incentives exist for speaking French but no such incentives exist for speaking Inuvialuktun. It was agreed that use of our Indigenous languages within co-management would support food sovereignty.

However, there are ways that language can also impede food sovereignty. For example, the use of academic or jargon-ridden English can cause confusion for people who are not familiar with certain kinds of vocabulary that are common in management and regulatory meetings. Participants provided examples such as “anadromous” and “extirpate” as common management words



Photo: Eilene Adams

which are unnecessarily academic. Other words common within management processes and legislation exist—for example, “substantial”—are not clear or easily defined. We face challenges to our food sovereignty when laws are left up to interpretation or context.

Information accessibility

Throughout the discussion participants shared different points about access to information. It was shared that within the ISR, there is a strong process for ensuring that all community members have access to information used to inform management decisions through the HTC and IGC. This process may become more challenging at a national or international scale.

Within Alaska, participants expressed frustration at the lack of accessibility or timely access to information being used to make management decisions or share the results of scientific research. As one participant shared, “They don't give us the information that they [the state] have until the last minute and they have the control because we don't see the data. We don't have the money to gather that data.”

Inuit Management

Throughout the discussion many examples were provided of Inuit management and formal agreements. One of the strongest examples offered is the Inupiat and Inuvialuit Polar Bear Management Group and the Inupiat and Inuvialuit Beluga Management Group. Recognizing that like Inuit, animals have no borders, and increasing world interest in polar bears and belugas, the Inupiat and Inuvialuit decided to formalize these two groups to advise the U.S. and Canadian federal governments. Through these two groups, directed by Indigenous Knowledge holders, scientists were brought in to collect data. A participant shared that these two groups have been fundamental in addressing arguments raised by those that oppose our hunting culture and inadequate data used by federal governments to make decisions.



Photo: Carolina Behe

Participants talked about a desire to form similar groups. For example, there is a desire to have a formalized group between Alaska and Russia. There was

also discussion about the need to have a formalized Inuit group that is multi-species across all of Inuit Nunaat.

Within this discussion, some participants offered other ways in which they would like to see Inuit working together. One example is pooling monetary resources to implement programs across Inuit Nunaat that did not involve the federal, state, or territorial governments.

Communications

Participants stressed the importance of communication to support Inuit food sovereignty. There is a need to ensure that information is flowing through the communities up through co-management bodies, through the agencies, federal, state, and territorial governments, and back to communities. Within this discussion participants also pointed to the need for education and outreach.

Participants shared that a lot of care has to be taken with communication to ensure that those outside of our culture understand what we are trying to communicate to them. As one participant stated, "... [when communicating with] your top government official... a big thing here is communication and making sure that it's interpreted right. That's the biggest thing, that we need to make sure that comes across..."

A participant from the ISR shared that they are working to improve communications and education on both sides (the agencies and the communities). For example, within the ISR, there was a large initiative to educate people about the IFA. An education module was created and can be accessed online.



Photo: Carolina Behe

Participants shared that another component of communication is outreach. Both the EWC and KRITFC provided examples of communication materials

that have been created to help educate agency representatives about our ways of life and practices.

Recommendations

A main goal of the Collective Meeting was to spend time identifying key actions and recommendations that can help us move towards Inuit food sovereignty and self-governance. Participants were asked to discuss what we need to move toward food sovereignty in our respective countries as well as across Inuit Nunaat. Participants further discussed what can restore our control over all land, coastal waters, and air. Recommendations and action items identified by the participants tended to revolve around three main concepts: unity, the tools that are available to us, and the wellbeing of our culture and the Arctic. The following recommendations were identified by participants and have been grouped within these categories:

Focusing on Unity

- Remain united; we have greater strength when we work with each other
- Communicate with each other across boundaries, regions, and countries to collaborate, coordinate, and learn from each other
- Include all Inuit in this conversation (including representatives from Greenland and Chukotka)
- Band together to find ways to build wealth; use that money to influence government
- Focus on effective communication
- Reveal outstanding issues, collectively
- Strive for balance
- Strong leadership for our people

Using Tools Available to Us

- Know your human rights and supporting instruments, such as UN Declaration
- Know the policies that support your rights, such as the IFA
- Remind governments of their responsibilities to uphold agreements

- Look into what other legal actions we can take; legal research is needed to identify additional tools to use to achieve food sovereignty
- Stop compromising with the state
- Act sovereign; exercise our rights
- Work with legislators and leaders that are open to listening
- Amend ANCSA
- Increase educational outreach and media outreach; get the right information to the right people and get our voices heard
- Assert more control of Northwest Passage traffic;
- Advocate for equity at an international level

Focusing on the Wellbeing of our Culture and the Arctic

- Focus on teaching youth our traditional ways
- Focus on teaching food preparation practices and enhancing our language use
- Ensure our people, in particularly new leaders, are knowledgeable about our rules/laws/practices, federal, state, and government policies, policies and agreements that support our rights (i.e. how to interpret and use the IFA), and international instruments that may be used to advance our sovereignty
- Share positive stories, success stories, and stories that lift us up
- Focus on Inuit health including educating medical experts on our culture, foods, and ways; our environment and our health are interconnected
- Promote and educate about our holistic views and our Indigenous Knowledge (all things are interrelated; we are part of the environment)
- Advocate for research to be community driven and/or directed
- Equitable use of our Indigenous Knowledge in research – equitable funding
- Long-term observation and monitoring programs
- Continue to involve knowledgeable Inuit hunters in research and data collection
- Use our own languages frequently
- Managers should work to understand that all things are interrelated

- Educate managers, decision and policy-makers on the interconnecting health throughout the Arctic environment – For the Arctic to be healthy, we have to be healthy
- Develop a needs assessment using our own knowledge and methods – one that accounts for all aspects of our food security (i.e. culture, accessibility, availability)

Conclusion

This focus group provided an opportunity for continued in-depth discussions about the key themes that have emerged through the FSSG project thus far. This report provides a brief summary of the many rich discussions that took place throughout the two-day meeting. The knowledge, ideas, and recommendations shared during this meeting and the focus groups, workshops, and interviews that took place before it will be shared in the final Food Sovereignty and Self Governance report. The final report is scheduled to be completed by March 31, 2020.



Photo: Carolina Behe

