

Involving Aboriginal Peoples in ACAP



Presented by: Carole Mills, Gwich'in Council International

Presented to: ACAP Steering Committee, October 9-10,
2003, Oslo Norway

Presentation

- ◆ Background
 - GCI
 - TK and Science
 - Sources of Pollution
- ◆ Specific Activities for our Involvement
- ◆ What we can offer ACAP
- ◆ What we need from ACAP

Gwich'in Council International

- ◆ Gwich'in means “people of the caribou”
- ◆ Represent Gwich'in of Alaska and Canada
- ◆ We live where the treeline meets the coast
- ◆ We eat caribou every day, elders up to 1kg/day
- ◆ We are working internationally to preserve the porcupine caribou herd

We LOVE caribou!



Traditional Knowledge and Western Science – Both are:

- ◆
- ◆ Peer reviewed
- ◆ Repeatable
- ◆ Verifiable
- ◆ Require experts
- ◆ Require special languages and education
- ◆ Require resources
- ◆ Cannot be taken out of context
- ◆ Used for survival !!!!! !

Permanent Participants

- ◆ Gwich'in Council International
- ◆ International Circumpolar Conference
- ◆ Saami Council
- ◆ Aleut International Association
- ◆ RAIPON
- ◆ Arctic Athabaskan Council

Local Point Sources

- ◆ Abandoned military sites
- ◆ Oil and gas development
- ◆ Abandoned mines/contaminated sites
- ◆ Diesel emissions
- ◆ Canadian shield – heavy metals

Issues with Local Point Sources

- ◆ Cadmium advisories exist for caribou organs and beaver/muskrat meat
- ◆ Elevated levels of metals found in berries around mines
- ◆ Dioxins and furans found in railway ties and small animals

Long-Range Transport

- ◆ Air monitoring and modelling needed to understand import of contaminants from Asia to our region (CACARII)
- ◆ Riverine sources from Russia may resurface in upper layers of ocean near Alaska
- ◆ Atmospheric releases of radiation can reach us quickly based on Chernobyl!!!!!!!

Issues with LRT

- ◆ radioactivity in caribou – Cs 137
- ◆ POPs in piscivorean fish, marine mammals
- ◆ Levels of POPS in landlocked fish are low but increasing
- ◆ Levels of mercury in fish are high and increasing

Sources

- ◆ Local point sources from other Arctic regions become our local concern through long range transport of contaminants by air, water and migration of animals



Specific Activities for Involvement of Aboriginal Peoples

Planning

- ◆ Identifying local point sources
- ◆ Identifying research priorities and gaps
- ◆ Identifying where TK can contribute
- ◆ Reviewing and selecting proposals
- ◆ Identifying communication needs
- ◆ Determining follow-up activities before beginning

Implementing Projects

- ◆ Leading or assisting in baseline studies
 - What, where and when to sample
 - Participants become informal messengers, bring credibility to the projects
- ◆ Collecting data (science and TK)
- ◆ Analyzing data! !

Monitoring fish at a mine



Monitoring

- ◆ implementation of projects
- ◆ non-project related changes in the environment
- ◆ Aboriginal employees are informal “watchdogs”
- ◆ collecting archaeological data

Collecting Archaeological data



Mitigation

- ◆ where and how to build infrastructure
- ◆ identifying indicator species

Communications

- ◆ We are the trusted messengers
- ◆ We are in the communities
- ◆ We know what works and what doesn't
- ◆ We will present benefits and risks
- ◆ We will decide for ourselves if our food is safe to eat

Communications

- ◆ We will help make the messages:
 - Consistent – between groups, projects
 - Relevant – to the lives of northerners
 - Understandable – terminology and language
 - Timely

Example of Past Communications

- ◆ AMAP's summary document
- ◆ Minimal aboriginal review until it was released in Rovaniemi
- ◆ Stated Gwich'in of Old Crow were highest exposed population to Cs 137
- ◆ Used inaccurate data for levels in caribou
- ◆ Applied inconsistent dietary methodology between groups
- ◆ Gwich'in worked with Canada and radiation team to correct it for the full AMAP report

Program Model

- ◆ Aboriginal peoples were funded to be in the management structure
- ◆ Communications and capacity building funded equally as research
- ◆ TK and science used together

What can we offer ACAP?

- ◆ Traditional and local knowledge
- ◆ Local assistance
- ◆ Proper communications
 - Results of individual projects (good and bad results)
 - Successes of ACAP
 - Identification of new issues

What do we need to participate in ACAP?

- ◆ Willingness
- ◆ Access – membership and adequate representation
- ◆ Resources – project specific, to participate on management structures

Conclusion

- ◆ “To us, (pollutants) in traditional country food is not just an environmental or public health issue but raises questions of our cultural survival.” (CACAR II)
- ◆ We have a role to play in ACAP!and we are willing to participate!!!!!! !