

**ACIA-International Scientific Symposium on
Climate Change in the Arctic
Reykjavik, Iceland Nov 9-12, 2004**

Trip Report by Elaine Alexie

Funding Received by: GCI, ACIA Secretariat

PURPOSE OF TRIP

To provide representation in a mini panel discussion on **Indigenous Perspectives on Climate Change in the Arctic** for Gwichin Council International and to observe the international symposium event as a community individual to report back to the organizations and community members. Due to last minute cancellations from other parties, I had been given the opportunity to participate on invitation from the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment Secretariat (ACIA), and to fill in a seat for the panel discussion. I had managed to write a position paper for the panel presentation and was sent separately for viewing.

The panel discussion was held on Thursday, Nov 3rd, Day 3 of the event and was chaired by John Krump of Indigenous Peoples Secretariat and Jan-Idar Solbakkan, Saami Council, Norway. Other participants that were on the panel was Pavel Sulyandziga from the Russian Association of the Indigenous Peoples of the North (RAIPON), myself for GCI and Geir Tommy Pederson of the Saami Council was scheduled to take part but could not make the event. The panel discussion focused at the overall issues of limits to adaptation for Indigenous Peoples position to Climate Change, the importance of the use of Indigenous Peoples Traditional Ecological Knowledge, the threats to food security and most importantly on what are the next steps after the ACIA Symposium on the issue of climate change for the benefit, interest and involvement for Indigenous communities within the Arctic. Key audience discussions were on the use and involvement for Indigenous Peoples knowledge in further scientific research on climate change effects as seen in rural communities in the Arctic, how to influence policy makers within the interests of Indigenous Peoples rights and recognition on the issue of climate change and of how to address the human, cultural- impact of global warming within the Arctic.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The ACIA report was initiated as a information based project by the Arctic Council and was implemented under the Arctic Monitoring Assessment Program (AMAP), Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF), and the International Arctic Science Committee (ISAC). With a heightened focus on Climate Change and it's relative impacts to the Arctic, the ACIA report was a key focus on the projected analysis for the future outlook for the Arctic, as it is the key indicator for global climate change. The report was designed to help policy makers and the broader public to understand the current on going changes of the circumpolar environment and of the future outlook on the potential impacts and benefits for the Circumpolar Arctic from projected climate change. The

report has a primary focus on international efforts of several hundred scientists and researchers with some input by Indigenous groups.

ISSUES

It is noted that climate change has occurred naturally in the past and past levels of methane and carbon dioxide are emitted naturally in the Arctic. It is scientifically recognized internationally that human activity is the most causing and to this it is the burning of fossil fuels. Currently, more than eight percent of the global energy source is fossil fuels and since the industrial revolution the global output of carbon emissions increased by 35%. More greenhouse gas emissions are projected to rise in the near future unless strong force is in place to curb emissions world-wide. It is projected from scientific analysis of the ACIA report that the temperature in the Sub-Region III of the circumpolar region, which consists of areas of Chukotka (Russia), Alaska, the Western Arctic of Canada and adjacent seas region has risen 2-3 C in the past 50 years.

A key area on analyzing efforts on the mitigation of climate change impacts is by reducing global greenhouse emissions. Such a tool in place at the decision making level is the International Kyoto Protocol Agreement. Currently, most circumpolar states have endorsed and signed on to the Agreement, Russia as being a recent signatory but another Arctic State, the United States have not. From information gathered from the ACIA symposium, ten major key findings were identified for current Arctic Climate Warming and of its irreversible environmental impacts that can change the current ecosystem of the arctic and lifestyle of Indigenous Peoples cultures and ways of life.

PERSONAL COMMENTS

The ACIA symposium was a real experience to see first hand the international effort that was in place recognizing that climate change is occurring and quickly in the Arctic. I was very happy and supportive to be a part of the process as with my input within the noted panel discussion. A major follow up process is needed to ensure that two main areas are identified and assured for implementing the effects of climate change for Indigenous Peoples of the Arctic. The two main areas as noted is the mitigation analysis and adaptation process that still needs to be identified and further looked in. Major-areas that follows within these two main parts includes a sub-regional consultation, awareness, and networking amongst Indigenous Participants and communities within the circumpolar world. Although the meeting was very scientific based, I had observed that Indigenous Perspectives and participation was very limited. There needs to be more Indigenous presence and perspectives within the international arenas, especially relating to issues of Climate Change where it is very sensitive to our perspectives and livelihoods.

During the symposium, I had observed the following Sessions and oral presentations within the sessions: Presentations of the main results of the ACIA report; conclusions and recommendations, Past, Present, and Future Changes to the Physical Environment, Possible Feedbacks on Global Climate System, Impacts on Human Activity, and Past, Present and Future Changes in Biological Systems. I was very intrigued by the scientific data collected as I have studied changes in the biological systems as a Environmental Student. The information gathered and the array of research was very well done. I was

happy to observe the amount of energy and dedication that came from the scientists at this event. The work that was generated was very well received and much needed to understand future climatic changes for the Arctic.

I want to thank Ms. Ethel Blake for her immense contributions to ensuring that I was ready to attend the event, and for her moral support with the last minute circumstances. I also want to acknowledge the board of the Gwichin Council International and the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment Secretariat for allowing me to participate on short notice. I felt very happy to contribute to such a historic event.

FUTURE WORK

Upcoming meetings after the ACIA symposium is the 4th Ministerial Meeting to be held in Reykjavik, Iceland Nov 24, 2004. The Senior Arctic Official Meeting will be from November 22-23, 2004, just prior to the Ministerial Meeting. The chair of the ACIA will be making a presentation of the main recommendations and conclusions of the ACIA report to the Ministerial Meeting where the Chair will then make policy recommendations to the SAO meeting.

For more information on the ACIA report: www.acia.uaf.edu