

Trip Report
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Gwich'in Council International
Washington, D.C.
March 21-26, 2004

Purpose of Trip

To represent the GCI at the A.C.A.P. meeting in Washington D.C.

Background Information

My main purposes for attending this meeting in Washington D.C. was first, to ensure that proper and meaningful participation by indigenous communities is considered by the working group, and second, to seek funding for permanent participants to the Arctic Council.

Tuesday Meetings, 23 March

I had a lunch meeting with Drue Pearce, the Senior Advisor to the Secretary of Interior for Alaska Affairs. We discussed potential funding opportunities for p.p.'s. She said that due to international travel restrictions that the Department of Interior was not willing to support funding at this time. However, they may consider partially funding special projects in the future. I attempted to meet with Sally Brandel with the US Department of State. However, she was not available. She returned later in the week.

Wednesday Meetings, 24 March

I spent the entire day at the A.C.A.P. meeting, held at the E.P.A. office. Issues of primary importance were;

1. leveraging more money to solve environmental problems
 - a. There was no resolution as to how to leverage additional resources. However, discussions identified better education so more people are aware and potentially willing to partner to solve these problems.
2. U.S. goals as chair are for increased education, outreach, & developing a website
 - a. There was much debate on the method, reason, and finances behind developing a website. Those in favor of the website, nearly everyone, believed it would be an important education tool and could be used to disseminate information to the public and committee members.
 - b. Some committee members believed education and outreach could be achieved by producing informational sheets while others believed it would be a waste of money. I spoke in favor of a variety of outreach ideas, including the website and information sheets that could be distributed in communities to educate people on various environmental hazards such as dioxins, furans, and BFR's. I also mentioned the importance of coordinating efforts with other governmental, NGO, and indigenous communities.
3. Involving industry in problem solving
 - a. The board members were in agreement about the importance of involving industry in problem solving. Especially since many decisions that may be made by each nations agencies, on products they use, will directly impact their business. Also, their input would be valuable since industry does much of the research regarding the improvement of their products.
4. Russian P.C.B. phase-out project

- a. The Russians and Denmark are working to identify, consolidate, and destroy liquid PCB's and capacitors in rural Russia where there is about 180,000 tons of these hazardous substances. They have enlisted the help of a US Navy Plasma Arc for the destruction of the PCB's and capacitors
5. Russian Dioxin & Furan Reduction Project
 - a. Sweden is assisting Russia in compiling data, developing a sampling protocol, creating regulations regarding emissions, education about the hazardous substances, and seeking additional funding to do more.
6. Atmospheric Mercury Reduction Project
 - a. Denmark is assisting Russia in developing a mercury reduction action plan. This plan calls for an inventory, prioritization of reduction areas, selecting pilot projects, and removing mercury.
 - b. This project didn't seem very well organized yet.
7. Managing Stockpiles of Obsolete Pesticides in Russia
 - a. Finland is assisting Russia in a project to eliminate obsolete pesticides. This seemed to be a very serious problem since most of the pesticide stockpiles, some several tons worth, were not secure. They were often in the open air being mixed into the ground water and vegetation. In many cases, when there were communities nearby, there were reports of high numbers of cancer cases. They are working to categorize current storage status, conduct regional inventories, identify better collection, storage, and packaging methods, develop methods to destroy obsolete pesticides, and destroy them.
8. Russian Cleaner Production Project
 - a. This is a project that would improve Russian mining procedures. Project goals include; reducing fresh water consumption, reduce reused water consumption, decrease sewage discharge, save electrical energy, and reduce emissions. I am concerned that projects of this nature may serve primarily to bring hundreds of thousands of dollars to improve industry production, while environmental conservation may only a name to get financial and technical resources. I believe that industry needs to be involved financially if the Arctic States are going to provide resources.
9. Brominated Flame Retardants
 - a. BFR's have been in use for over thirty years. They are used in circuit boards, vehicles, plastics, textiles, foams, and other products. AMAP has detected BFR's in the arctic environment.
 - b. A BFR expert group was identified to address this issue. The US and Canada representatives are, respectively, David Jones, and Jim Haskell.
 - c. The BFR project goals are to reduce loads, evaluate impacts, and promote safe alternatives, with considerations of voluntary or regulatory restrictions on use.
10. Traditional Food Safety and Pollution Monitoring Program
 - a. The Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium is collaborating with pregnant women (205 mothers and 91 new born babies) along the coast of Alaska and part of Canada. They are looking at umbilical blood and dietary intake. This project, and others like it, is helping researchers to follow trends in the bio-accumulation and bio-magnification of POP's and if levels are dangerously high.

I had a dinner meeting with Sally Brandel. We discussed funding opportunities for p.p.'s through the Department of State. She said it didn't look good. She commented, as she had several times in the past about four p.p.'s wanting to come to the meetings all the time being a problem. I told her to look at the number of State Department, Interior Department, and Environmental Protection Agency staff at the meetings. I asked how they can justify sending

well over a dozen people, most of which are strictly support staff, while expecting us to send one. Sally was able to set up a meeting between some EPA higher ups and myself.

Thursday Meetings, 25 March

1. Developing Radioactive Waste Guidelines
I missed this discussion.
2. Transformer Removal Pilot Project
 - a. I recommended that the GCI develop a proposal to create a methodology for identifying, packaging, and removing PCB containing transformers from indigenous communities around the north. I recommended that we conduct the project in several communities to show its effectiveness. The project idea was met with support from all the committee members. They were happy to see that A.C.A.P. would finally consider environmental cleanup projects outside of Russia.
3. Dioxin and Furan identification, Education, and Recycling Project
 - a. I recommended that the GCI develop a proposal to create a methodology for identifying, packaging, and removing dioxin and furan containing wastes, and an educational effort to teach indigenous communities about the dangers associated with burning these hazardous wastes. This project idea also met with support.

I had a lunch meeting with Carol Jorgenson and Jean Gamache with the EPA. I presented the idea of EPA funding US p.p.'s attendance in Arctic Council affairs. They were supportive of the concept and would like to see a one page pre proposal for analysis. Funding could be as high as 110,000 each year.

I had a dinner meeting with Evelyn Hurwich of the Circumpolar Conservation Union. She is seeking GCI support for developing the Washington D.C. based Arctic Resource Center. This center would be used to build a broad base of support for arctic environmental issues. It would also serve as an educational portal for indigenous people to become active in the D.C. scene.

Conclusion

The trip was very successful. Unfortunately, I was the only permanent participant at the A.C.A.P. meeting. I spoke to the fact that A.C.A.P. appeared to have an affinity for Russian based projects but that we have many similar problems in many rural indigenous communities. The chairman stated that they would like to work with indigenous groups on meaningful projects. I accomplished my main objective of representing the GCI at the A.C.A.P. meeting. I also gained support for two potential GCI projects including; developing a model for properly identifying, collecting, labeling, and removing transformers from rural roadless indigenous communities. The second project is a dioxin and furan education and recycling project that would allow us to build a model that could be used anywhere in the circumpolar world. Each of the meeting participants and national representatives that I met with were pleased with GCI participation at this meeting. The A.C.A.P. Chair and other national members seemed pleased to work with the I.P.S. and particularly the G.C.I. on various initiatives.