

Arctic Borderlands Ecological Knowledge Society Strategic Plan – 2017-2020

VISION

Empowered Gwich'in and Inuvialuit harvesters sharing their knowledge; strengthening adaptive management and decision making.

GOALS

To document and assess changing environmental conditions in the range of the Porcupine Caribou Herd and adjacent coastal and marine areas.

To share and use local-traditional and scientific knowledge for co-management.

The Arctic Borderlands Ecological Knowledge Society is a group of interested community members from the range of the Porcupine Caribou Herd and adjacent Mackenzie Delta area in NWT, Yukon, and Alaska. We focus on accessing information from local Gwich'in and Inuvialuit harvesters and travelers that seek to understand the changes being experienced in this region, and their effect on traditional activities.

Our approach is to monitor, record, and share knowledge and stories about the ecological processes and wildlife status in the north. We collaborate and partner with relevant organizations interested in the monitoring, assessment, and stewardship of the range of the Porcupine Caribou Herd.

Community based monitoring in the North has evolved rapidly through the life of the Co-op. Many other monitoring programs have sprung up across the Arctic and some have looked to ABEKC for inspiration. In 2016 the ABEKC board gathered in Inuvik, NWT, to review and update the Co-op's strategic plan.

Increasing access to information about ecological changes within the study area will improve decisions that directly affect the region. Making Inuvialuit and Gwich'in knowledge available to decision makers strengthens their ability to create sound conservation goals.

Many organizations, boards, and councils contribute to stewardship and management of the environment. These include community organizations, Inuvialuit and Gwich'in management and co-management bodies (Porcupine Caribou Management Board,

Gwich'in Renewable Resources Council, Inuvialuit Game Council, Wildlife Management Advisory Council (NS and NWT)), as well as government departments, and the general public.

How ABEKS does this:

Collecting, managing, and analyzing Inuvialuit and Gwich'in environmental knowledge. Each year 20 harvesters in each community are interviewed by a local community monitor, hired by the ABEKS board. They ask a standard set of questions about what harvesters and knowledge holders are seeing on the land. The data collected from these interviews are reviewed by local Hunter and Trapper Committees, and then incorporated into a database that has recorded the responses since 1996. This long term, standardized collection of harvesters' information and perspective is the key to conducting analysis to look at the qualitative information received, and putting into perspective the observations, as we try to understand what may be driving this complex natural system.

Sharing and communicating the findings of data analysis. The Co-op database is geared to answering questions posed by researchers, decision makers, project partners and the public. The data gathered each year is validated during community visits and Co-op gatherings. These meetings provide an opportunity for information sharing between communities and between traditional and non-traditional scientists. While there are weather records for this region for decades, now, there are still little long term data available about ecological change. By developing the information into sharable reports, and bringing these annually back to the communities that collected the observations, the information, and the story that is painted, becomes available for all to consider against their own experience and observations.

Promoting use and integration Inuvialuit and Gwich'in local ecological knowledge is the key outcome when management decision makers and other authorities identify innovative and meaningful strategies to deal with climate change, contaminants and regional development in a way that reflects local values.

Arctic Borderlands Ecological Knowledge Society uses explicit monitoring and survey protocol for training, collecting, documenting and reporting on Gwich'in and Inuvialuit observations of environmental change.

The Porcupine Caribou Management Board has developed 18 indicators that may be used for Harvest Management Assessment. Most of these indicators are non-traditional science-based and are collected by various management agencies. However, five of the indicators rely, in whole or in part, on local knowledge. ABEKS provides these indicators to fulfill the data for the PCMB harvest management plan assessment and reporting needs. These indicators are:

- Are hunters' needs met?
- Hunter Assessment of Body Condition
- Health (i.e. reports of abnormalities)
- Snow Conditions
- Weather Events

Who uses our information?

The communities and councils involved in monitoring have authority over use of the Co-op database and review applications based on their relevance to their mutually identified goals. A growing number of local and non-local entities are utilizing ABEKS data. Nationally and internationally, there is strong interest from organizations (eg. Universities, Arctic Council working groups, and researchers). Biologists and researchers in other jurisdictions also look to the program for information on key species and to help them understand how we are managing our species of traditional importance. Locally, the program provides useful information on important species for the public, resource users, and land claim advisory boards (eg. COSWEIC status and trend assessments).

A framework to guide us

Any organization seeks to continue to improve relevance and utility over time, and ABEKS also strives to remain relevant and meaningful in their communities when resource management decisions are being made. By looking at the overall outcomes of these efforts, we can adjust our approach and inputs, and continue to be used as a source of traditional information. The following section outlines an evaluative framework that will be used to review the success of our efforts.

Outcomes		Measures achieved?				
		In each community	End data users	Management decision bodies	Social science investigators	Funders
1-3 YEARS	Current funders continue to support the Co-op					
	Communities continue to support the Co-op and drive Co-op activities					
2-4 YEARS	End users are satisfied with Co-op products					
	Increased interest from academic institutions, decision makers and other monitoring programs					
	Past and new funders come 'on line' with financial support					
3-5 YEARS	Decision making is strengthened with access to Co-op products					
	Growing partnerships with communities and other entities					

Annex 1

Workplan 2017 - 2020

Communications		
Activity	Timeline	Who
Letter of introduction for marketing purposes – to promote more stable funding and strengthen partnerships	S	Marsha
Increase presence on social media – more FB posts, consider twitter, Instagram etc.	S/M	Admin coordinator or board member
Increase facetime in communities	M/L	Coordinators & participating boards & councils
Meaningful communication with all partners – consider providing regular updates to partners (newsletter, quarterly report on activities)	S/	?
Signage in participating agencies to let community members know they can come and learn about the coop or share information	S	Jason
Consider collecting information throughout the year from individuals – encourage individuals to report their observations to ABEKS (to who?)	M/L	
Develop a system to acknowledge/highlight participants (pin, badges, certificate hats etc.)	S/M	
Spend more time in the communities – bring back the gatherings, youth gathering, show up in schools, consider youth workshops (hunter education, skill, safety)	S/M/L	
Review usability of the website and update as needed – should be accessible to youth and all products should be available, create a comment box or feedback form if not already there. Data sharing/ portal.	M	Admin coordinator
Improve marketing so information is used by other initiatives (CAFF, other CBM programs, academics, governments etc.)	M/L	
Use technology to reduce costs and environmental impacts (webex conferencing for strategic planning and community check ins)	M	
Create guidebook for end users. Manual/ information on how to use and interpret Co-op data.	S/M	Contract (Doug Clark, Don Russell?)
Guidebooks for interviewees (birds, fish..)	S/M	Contract

Governance		
Activity	Time	Who
Explore formal relationships		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PCMB 	S	Board/ PCMB
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore formal MOA between Inuvialuit and Gwich'in 	M	GRRB/ IGC

and other FN who want to be formally related to Co-op/		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider formal membership agreements (one pager/ declaration of support). 	M	RRCs HTC
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One pager diagram of Co-op governance structure. 	L	Co-op
Explore partnership with CBMP;		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider how Co-op data can be used to inform Inuvialuit decision making. 	M	CBMP/ Coop
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support information sharing that allows CBMP involvement or learned lessons to bare for entire range of PCH? 	M	CBMP/ Coop
Other Partners		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need to bring back Alaska involvement in Co-op 	S	Coop/ USFWS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schedule of Gathering – support building and partnership within the communities. Communications? 	S	Board
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider stronger relationship with RRC and HTC 	S	HTC/ RRC
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reach out to TLU Round River project? 	S	Round River Coop
Funders		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secure support key players (EC, PCA, WMAC (NS/ NWT) GNWT, YG, RRC, HTC). 	S	All
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WWF (Brandon Laforest) 	S	WWF/ Coop
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DiCaprio 		

Monitoring/Analysis		
Activity	Timeline	Who
<p>Caribou year – revisit – harvesting in fall, spring. Data collection in Jan/Feb (captures the previous year spring/fall harvesting period) – Move to May – capture fall/spring – more timely data for PCTC summary in following fall.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ACTION – letter to RRC/ HTC to weigh in on shifting the interview period. PCMB has asked to harmonize interviews with AHM timelines (move to May interview session). Decision – move monitoring to end of November/ early December to present the data at the annual harvest meeting ourselves. 	S **	
Collection methods – electronic tablets?	M	Admin coordinator to investigate
Describe criteria for interviewees; clarify how individuals are established – see training manual/ methods – as done by RRC and HTC	S	
Working with CBM – during overlap month – 1 st year	M	Coordinators

trial		
Products webpage – need to have all the 'reports/ knowledge' available to interested parties;	S	Admin coordinator
Annual Harvest Meeting – have developed 'product' for use and presentation.	M	Coordinators & data manager
Gap analysis – what current clients would like – that we don't collect/ present	M	
Take the analysed product as part of promotion of the work		
What we are looking for from the data – our own questions? As a board do we have questions of our own that we want to see answered? New analysis? - Eg. A-biotic work – what info gathered can inform that work (ex: erosion)	M	Board

Yellow highlights indicate priority activities deemed critical.

Green highlights indicate decisions made at the 2016 strategic planning meetings