

Memorandum 2/11/2018

## **IAB4: Biodiversity, cultural heritage and land-use planning**

This memo provides a summary of reports submitted on the session IAB4 organized at the Arctic Biodiversity Session in Rovaniemi, Finland, October 9-12 organized by the Labrador Institute (CAFF-IASC Fellow).

**Attendance:** 32

**Arctic Biodiversity Assessment recommendation themes most prominently addressed in the session:**

- Identifying and safeguarding important areas
- Ecosystem-based Management
- Addressing stressors
- Improving knowledge and public awareness

**Key points raised in the session that were important to note:**

- Protected areas are critical elements of biodiversity conservation strategies. These protected areas are often at the centre of debate over the types of uses that fit within a biodiversity protection mandate. Many protected areas in the Arctic co-occur with the traditional territories of Indigenous peoples, who globally protect the greatest biodiversity hotspots on the planet.
- Biodiversity is not only protected by Indigenous peoples, but in many cases enhanced by their cultural practices. Inuit in the Nunatsiavut region of northern Labrador increase beta diversity by creating islands of unique plant communities at traditional fishing places. The soils at traditional fishing places have been enriched by the deposition of bones and shells from traditional harvesting practices, where calcium rich environments encourage distinct plant communities. Biodiversity conservation planning must therefore also support the ongoing Indigenous cultural practices that have created biodiversity patterns that exist today.
- Traditional practices of Sámi communities in Finland frequently occur within the protected areas system, including in wilderness areas, national parks, and other protected areas. Reindeer pasturing is especially important in this system of protected areas. Special planning processes such as Akwé: Kon, and the Wilderness Act “Erämaalaki” commit all partners to a participatory planning process that protects Sámi culture and traditional livelihoods, and that will form part of the strategy towards adaptation and mitigation of negative climate change effects.
- Indigenous cultural practices support ongoing and active knowledge of traditional territories. Once regionally suppressed, Kamchatka sled dog culture is reviving not only traditions associated with sled dog travel, but also knowledge of travel routes and traditional sled construction and materials. Sled dog racing is one way for Itelmens to engage with neighbouring communities and with visiting racers and tourists.
- The protected areas planning initiative of the Sahtuto’ine of the small community of Déljñę has resulted in the establishment of the Tsá Tué International Biosphere Reserve, the only Biosphere Reserve established by Indigenous residents. Biodiversity monitoring programs are emerging from the Sahtuto’ine stewardship of and responsibility for their lands, which highlight the critical role of Indigenous peoples in leading conservation initiatives.

- Partnerships between reindeer herders and state forestry professionals are working to identify methods for maintaining forest biodiversity for the benefit of both livelihoods. These partnerships are needed to address land use planning in the context of changing climate and forest conditions.
- A key question of the session was how to combine (and conserve) indigenous people land use and land use planning for biodiversity conservation. This question was addressed from several angles: 1) by studying biodiversity in and outside areas with indigenous people land use, 2) by integrating indigenous people land use in management planning and the creation of biosphere reserves, and 3) by finding how to conserve indigenous land use in modern times.

#### **Recommendations/actions identified for how to deal with the issues raised in the session:**

- Biodiversity conservation planning must recognise the role of Indigenous peoples in creating biodiversity patterns and support those practices that underlie biodiversity.
- Participatory planning processes are needed to ensure Indigenous livelihoods are enshrined within the boundaries of protected areas.
- Revival of traditional practices can re-establish links between Indigenous peoples and their traditional territories, and encourage alternate avenues for livelihoods through tourism.
- Indigenous-led protected area planning and development of monitoring protocols is fully supported by traditional stewardship responsibilities, and the model of the Tsá Tué International Biosphere Reserve is an example of how Indigenous stewardship by its nature aligns with biodiversity conservation.
- Partnerships between Indigenous peoples/state/industry draws on best available knowledge in support of protected areas planning and is likely to be the most comprehensive response to climate change challenges affecting biodiversity.
- It was specifically addressed that biodiversity can be higher and thus maintained under indigenous people land use, both in villages, by fishing activities (By Erika Oberndorfer) and reindeer grazing (by Sirpa Rasmus). To conserve biodiversity, one should also conserve indigenous people land use. This should be taken into account in land use planning in reserves (by Pekka Sulkava), but as shown in Northern Canada, can also be done when indigenous communities themselves are involved in the creation of reserves (by David Livingstone). One worry is how to conserve the passing on of traditional land use in indigenous communities. The popularization of traditional culture, for example by the Beringia sledge dog race in Kamchatka, can be important means to do so (by Tatiana Degai).

#### **Take home message from the session:**

- Indigenous peoples are biodiversity stewards in all parts of the globe. Moreover, their practices have enhanced Arctic biodiversity patterns in some regions. Ensuring the continuity of this biodiversity stewardship requires a commitment to partnership on protected areas planning, and an openness on the part of land managers to learn about Indigenous models for safeguarding biodiversity through active cultural practice.
- Indigenous land use should be integrated in land-use planning from the earliest opportunity, by involving indigenous people in the decision-making processes around the conservation of biodiversity.