

C10-O04

INTERNATIONAL PROJECTS: RESULTS AND PERSPECTIVES OF THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' PARTNERSHIP

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In recent decades there has been a steady growth of interest in the world towards indigenous peoples, including Arctic indigenous peoples. In the context of climate change in the Arctic, both scientists and local and indigenous people face radical changes. Open-minded interaction between natural scientists working in the region and the local population is vital for a mutually beneficial exchange of information. During the Soviet Union industrial development of the North, which began in 1950-1970s, traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples was actively used and acknowledged. Inter alia were representatives of the indigenous peoples engaged in scientific and geological expeditions, as guides, dog sled runners and worked as a research stations staff.

While a lot of funding is being targeted on orthodox polar research there is very little support for traditional knowledge. The Traditional Ecological Knowledge of Beluga Whale project (1995-1998) is a good example of effort to expand and retain knowledge in Northern communities, build capacity and strengthen institutions.

In 2001 the indigenous peoples of the Russian Arctic for the first time took part in the international research project not as assistants, but as equal partners of the research teams. The project "Persistent Toxic Substances, Food Security and Indigenous Peoples of the Russian North" has been initiated by indigenous organizations-Permanent Participants of the Arctic Council and the Secretariat of the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (AMAP). One of the key success factors of the project was close cooperation between indigenous peoples and scientific experts. The project developed a partnership between the stakeholders, which again resulted in relevant deliveries to the Arctic indigenous communities. The Arctic - is a region of strategic interests of all Arctic states, as it has an important geopolitical significance, a huge resource potential, as well as the unity of the natural environment and the similarity of cultural traditions in the Arctic. The region hosts many research programmes, and it is a hope of indigenous communities that others will follow abovementioned examples, making greater use of indigenous knowledge in the future. People of the Arctic and scientists who study the Arctic can form an effective partnership which will make an important step towards decision-making based on the best available knowledge.