

**CRUCIAL ISSUES CONCERNING
HEALTH,
HUMAN RIGHTS
AND THE
ARCTIC
ENVIRONMENT**

Dalee Sambo Dorough, PhD

Alaska Collaborative on Health & Environment

ACAT

Webinar

4 June 2024



PRINCIPLES AND ELEMENTS FOR A COMPREHENSIVE ARCTIC POLICY



Inuit are an integral part of Arctic ecosystems. For generations, Inuit subsistence activities have been and continue to be in harmony with, and an important part of, the dynamic processes of Arctic ecosystems. The profound relationship between Inuit and other living species of the natural world has economic, social, cultural, and spiritual dimensions. These perspectives of Inuit and ties with nature must be fully recognized and integrated in resource management and conservation strategies pertaining to the Arctic.

PRINCIPLES AND ELEMENTS FOR A COMPREHENSIVE ARCTIC POLICY



Inuit traditional knowledge and scientific research are both valid systems of knowledge that should be integrated and harmonized within the context of cooperative research. In light of increased resource development and environmental degradation, resource managers must have access to the best possible information relating to terrestrial and marine ecosystems on which to base their decisions.



INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE

Indigenous Knowledge is a systematic way of thinking applied to phenomena across biological, physical, cultural, and spiritual systems. It includes insights based on evidence acquired through direct and long-term experiences and extensive and multigenerational observations, lessons, and skills. It has developed over millennia and is still developing in a living process, including knowledge acquired today and in the future, and it is passed on from generation to generation.



CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS

- *Water temperature fluctuations affecting salmon*
- *Changes in the birthing of walrus in coastal seas due to lack of sea ice*
- *the influx of new species both on land and waters*
- *Increase in vessel traffic impacting marine habitat*
- *Change in animal timing, migration, and behavior*
- *Change in food webs (animals are eating different food sources)*
- *Change in vegetation timing (berries are ripening at different times)*
- *Warming temperatures earlier in the day*
- *Impacts on preservation of food*
- *Rapid change in quality, timing, and formation of ice*
- *Change in sea ice - unpredictable, shore fast ice, rapid melting, formation of new types of ice*
- *Change in harvesting and processing practices due to change in weather and ice*
- *Increase in storm variability and severity of storms*
- *Increased risk in hunting and other related safety concerns*
- *Increasing erosion*
- *Change in land formations affecting timing of sunsets*
- *Animal health*
- *Large animal die offs and animals with unusual hair loss and sores in Alaska (birds and salmon)*
- *New species in some areas*
- *Harmful algal blooms*
- *Change in prevailing winds and other dramatic weather changes*
- *Changes in air and water currents and temperatures*
- *Decline in health of water and air*
- *Declining populations of certain species (ptarmigan, king salmon, muskrats)*
- *Ocean acidification*
- *Loss of permafrost*
- *Change in salinity levels*
- *Changes in precipitation (increase in rain and less snow in some areas)*
- *Increased safety risk in unknown conditions and fast changing conditions*
- *Additionally, hunters noted that some animals are disappearing*
- *Change in ice cellars*
- *Decrease in types of animals (birds)*
- *Reduced biodiversity*
- *Food insecurity*



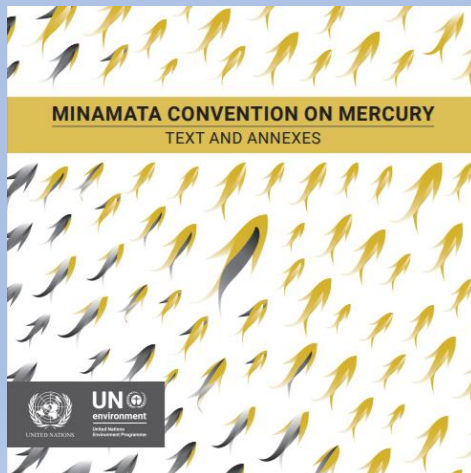
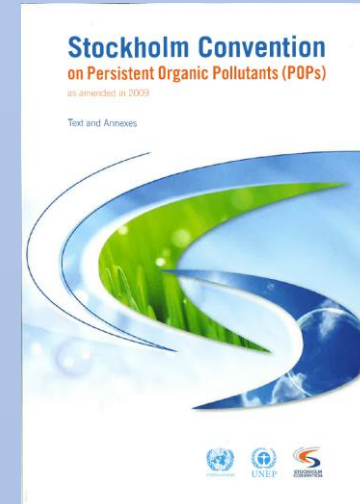
IMPACTS OF ARCTIC SHIPPING

- changing ice conditions due to fracturing of sea ice
- coastal erosion generated by increased waves
- vessel noise and disruption
- disruption of marine mammal habitat and migration routes
- increased potential for contamination due to waste, ballast water, POLs
- increased potential for major oil spills and similar disasters
- Invasive species
- increased marine traffic
- increased militarization
- construction of ports and breakwaters
- vessel collisions and accidents that communities are unprepared for

ARCTIC-SPECIFIC references

Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants

Acknowledging that the *Arctic ecosystems and indigenous communities are particularly at risk* because of the biomagnification of persistent organic pollutants and that contamination of their traditional foods is a public health issue.



Minamata Convention on Mercury

Noting the *particular vulnerabilities of Arctic ecosystems and indigenous communities* because of the biomagnification of mercury and contamination of traditional foods, and concerned about indigenous communities more generally with respect to the effects of mercury

PLASTIC POLLUTION

United Nations Environmental Assembly

March 2022

Process to develop a legally binding treaty on plastic pollution

- crucial to acknowledge impacts on Inuit and other Arctic Indigenous Peoples
- interrelated human rights of Arctic Indigenous Peoples
- recognition of Indigenous Knowledge



INUIT FOOD SECURITY

For Inuit, food security is the natural right of all Inuit to be part of the ecosystem, to access food and to care-take, protect and respect all of life, land, water and air. It allows for all Inuit to obtain, process, store and consume sufficient amounts of healthy, nutritious and preferred food – foods Inuit physically and spiritually crave and need from the land, air and water. Food provides for families and future generations through the practice of Inuit customs and spirituality, languages, knowledge, policies, management practices and self-governance.





QUYANAQ