

## #11 Traditional Knowledge and Resource Development by Henry Huntington, Huntington Consulting

Traditional knowledge has been the primary way that people have understood their surroundings and acted on that knowledge for most of human history. For many topics, traditional knowledge (TK) is still the main source of our collective understanding. It comes from repeated experience and sharing. Scientific knowledge, on the other hand, comes from formal and structured study. When scientific knowledge is available, it is sometimes seen as more objective and reliable. TK may end up pushed aside, or reduced to a token part of a larger scientific study.



TK has been applied to resource development for some time, as in the James Bay Hydro Project in Quebec in the 1970s. Since then, it has been used across the north to help identify areas where resource development and non-local human activity should be limited, and to contribute to development planning and environmental monitoring.

*Using TK benefits northern communities:*

- ⇒ It improves the outcomes of resource development and regulation by identifying and minimizing environmental, social, and cultural impacts. Co-management boards can help involve Indigenous peoples in the monitoring and decision making processes that concern the lands, waters, and species they use. Exactly how much this helps, and whether it leads to better cooperation with communities, needs to be examined.

- ⇒ It may provide payments to participants. This income is meant to compensate for the time spent in an interview or workshop, but does not reflect the time spent gaining the expertise. Whether these payments reflect the depth and quality of traditional knowledge held by community members is an open question.
- ⇒ Having one's knowledge recognized and respected is very important for peoples who have historically been excluded from decision making. Being seen as an expert can lead to more pride, self-respect, and community standing. This benefit has not been examined formally.

#### Areas that need further study:

- ⇒ How has traditional knowledge influenced the policies and practices of resource development in the Arctic?
- ⇒ What is the role of power relations in determining if and how traditional knowledge influences decision outcomes?
- ⇒ How do holders of traditional knowledge see themselves influencing resource development?
- ⇒ What framework is needed, and what is available, to support more use of traditional knowledge?
- ⇒ How do indigenous supporters of the use of traditional knowledge see progress to date?
- ⇒ How do the structure and emphases of traditional knowledge fit the ways knowledge is typically used in resource development decision-making?



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