

2.5 Cultural Self-Determination, Endogenous Development and Environmental Changes

Summary

Project Leader(s)

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The impacts of climate change on wildlife and vegetation, as well as on people, are considerable and have been little documented in the Canadian Arctic, especially on a local and regional level. Is wildlife harvesting under threat in Inuit villages? What resources can Arctic communities harness to face these challenges? The peoples of the Arctic have undergone enormous change over the last few decades including transformations in the political arena; social structures; economic diversification; approaches to land occupancy; land use; resource use; and diet. The aim of this sub-project is to enhance understanding of the extent of the environmental issues and challenges faced by indigenous peoples in a rapidly changing milieu. The project is first seeking to acquire a deeper understanding of the variables fundamental to the social, cultural, political and economic viability of Arctic communities in the Canadian North, and is exploring the avenues of concern highlighted by the communities themselves. Since April 2005 the project team has continued to develop an innovative research program on understanding climate change impacts on local livelihoods in Nunavut and Nunavik. This will result in the development of a new conceptual framework for understanding social-ecological systems in the coastal Canadian Arctic. Our project is determining, through a variety of methods, the extent to which climate change – as well as the levels of contaminants in water and wildlife -- threatens local abilities to sustain an appropriate human/food resource relationship in Inuit communities. We have continued our analysis of wildlife management regimes and the effects of social and legal institutions that circumscribe the lives of indigenous peoples. A comprehensive analysis of wildlife management policies in Nunavut has been underway and is expected to be published in 2006. We have been examining socio-economic aspects of resource use and resource management needed to provide basic data for integrated assessment modelling by focusing on institutional factors, such as user rights and regulation, paying particular attention to their influence over the past few decades. Our work is breaking new ground in the integration of traditional ecological knowledge and the environmental sciences, especially with regard to wildlife, and will have tremendous significance for wildlife management and the management of parks. Our work has yielded important new data on ecosystem processes, socio-economic systems and human-environment relations, and we are increasing our knowledge and understanding of the spatial and temporal trends of contaminants in Arctic char, ringed seals, lake waters and sediments. Furthermore we are making significant progress towards IRIS integration.

People

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Publications

Articles Published in Refereed Publications

Nuttall, M., 2005, Inuit, marine resources and climate change: risk and resilience in a changing Arctic, in N. Kishigami and J. Savelle (eds.) *Indigenous Use and Management of Marine Resources*, 409-426, Published

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