

# Environmental Decision-Making in the Arctic Council: What is the Role of Indigenous Peoples?

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The Arctic Council (AC) is a decision-shaping body and a regional organisation dating back to 1996 (Kankaanpää and Young, 2012). The Council comprises eight Member States (Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden, and the US) and includes the voices of the Indigenous Peoples (IPs) of the Arctic, through the Permanent Participants (PPs) (The Parliament of the UK, 2015). The AC is widely seen as providing the best platform for a new, peaceful and collaborative form of Arctic governance (Stokke, 2014).

IPs have lived in the Arctic for thousands of years, managing local resources in a sustainable manner and adapting quickly to environmental changes (Young *et al.*, 2004). Not only are IPs today seen ideologically as protectors of the Arctic region, and as knowledge holders who could shed new light and provide valuable skill-sets for environmental protection measures, but IPs live on the front lines where they will be most affected by environmental changes (Koivurova, 2008; Nuttall and Callaghan, 2000; Lindroth and Sinevaara-Niskanen, 2013). Traditional Knowledge (TK) is a well-known aspect of Indigenous Knowledge (IK). TK can be understood as a dynamic knowledge system that is holistic and includes a multi-causality framework. TK can be characterised as: “[c]laims of those who have a lifetime of observation and experience of a particular environment... but who are untouched in the conventional scientific paradigm” (Haverkort and Reijntjes, 2010, p. 3).

Environmental changes in the Arctic are a widely studied and debated topic. Coupled with political and business competition, the regime that is being, or should be, set in place to govern the Arctic in the face of such change is also being scrutinised (For example, Stokke and Hønneland, 2006; Berkman *et al.*, 2009, Koivurova, 2010, Young, 2014).

The AC stated the importance of consulting with IPs in its founding Ottawa Declaration (Arctic Council, 1996). The Declaration puts intent and a structure in place for the inclusion of IPs to take part in all levels of its work, including the specialised Working Groups that prepare the bulk of its business. There is therefore *prima facie* reason to suppose that effective involvement of IPs is important for the quality of the AC’s work and its results, as well as for the peoples themselves. No detailed studies, however, have previously been undertaken to trace and assess what is actually happening in this regard.

This study looked at the role and contribution of the IPs of the Arctic through their representatives, as Permanent Participants (PPs), in the Arctic Council to the work and final outputs of the AC as it grapples with current challenges of Arctic climate change, management and governance. The extent of PPs influence was identified and measured using a qualitative interview process, designed to access information from those who are competent to articulate well-informed views on the IPs' influence in environmental decision-making in the AC. The study attempted to ascertain what the PPs aims and motivations were and whether the AC structure was satisfactory to allow for their inclusion.

## Background

In total there are currently six Indigenous organisations in the AC known as the Permanent Participants (PPs): the Sámi Council; Inuit Circumpolar Council; Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North; Aleut International Association; Gwich'in Council International; and the Arctic Athabaskan Council (Figure 1). According to the AC Rules of Procedure, the position of PPs was created “to provide for active participation and full consultation with the Arctic indigenous representatives within the Arctic Council” (Arctic Council, 1996, p. 3). PP status is available to any majority Arctic indigenous constituency, representing a “single indigenous people resident in more than one Arctic State; or More than one Arctic indigenous people resident in a single Arctic State” (Arctic Council, 1996, p. 3).

All of the PPs except the Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North (RAIPON) operate in multiple countries and under the rules of several jurisdictions. This means that the Arctic states do not have equal fiscal responsibilities towards a given PP or, the PPs in general (Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation *et al.*, 2013).

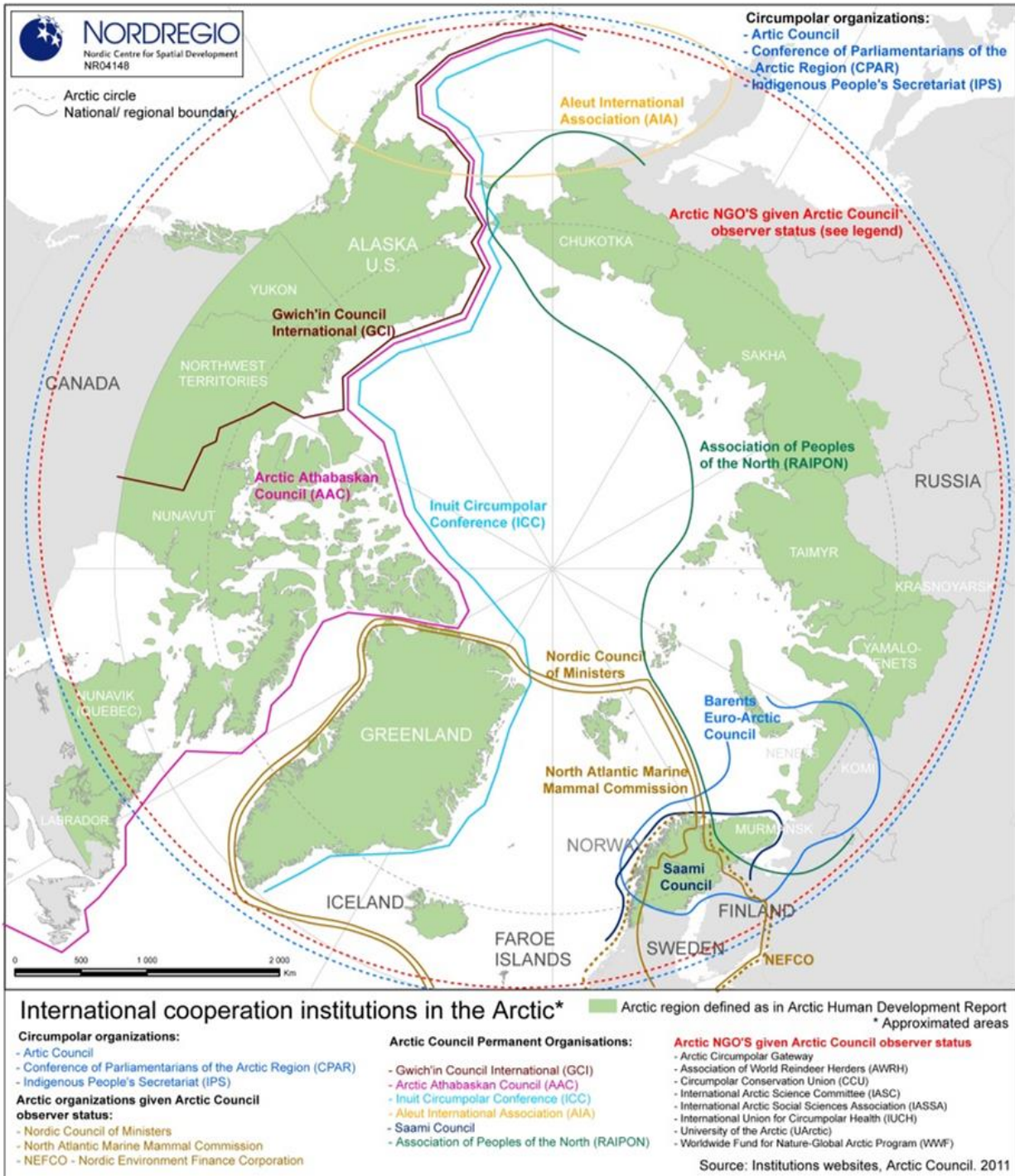


Figure 1: Regional Distribution of PPs (Sterling, 2015).

### **The Permanent Participants**

The Sámi Council (SC) is one of the oldest IP organisations in the AC as it was established in 1956 and operates in four countries (Norway, Sweden, Russia and Finland) representing about 60-100,000 people. The Sámi Council is one of the oldest existing Indigenous Peoples' organisations, coming to existence in 1956 (Saami Council, n.d).

The Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC), formerly the Inuit Circumpolar Conference, was established in 1977 and represents about 160,000 Inuit living in Alaska, Canada, Greenland and Chukotka (Russia) (Inuit Circumpolar Council, n.d). The ICC's activities are divided regionally and there is an office in each of the states where the ICC is active. The ICCs' former International Chair, Sheila Watt-Cloutier, was instrumental in the creation of the international Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, in 2001 (Watt-Cloutier, 2016).

RAIPON, founded in 1990, is an umbrella organisation for about 41 indigenous peoples, organised into 34 regional and ethnic associations all within the state of Russia, and representing approximately 250,000 individuals (RAIPON, n.d). RAIPON was recently shut down and reopened and there is some criticism that it may now be a puppet organisation, with those in charge selected to approve the government's decisions (Berezhkov, 2012).

The Aleut International Association (AIA) was formed especially for work in the AC in 1998, making it one of the younger Indigenous Peoples' organisations, and represents both Russian and Alaskan Aleuts numbering approximately 12,000 people. It has one office in Alaska where the operation is based. The AIA was formed by the Aleutian/Pribilof Islands Association, which was itself created from the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971, and from the Association of the Indigenous Peoples of the North of the Aleut District of the Kamchatka Region of the Russian Federation (Aleut International Organisation, n.d).

The Gwich'in Council International (GCI) was formed in 1999 and represents the Gwich'in in Alaska (USA) and the Northwest Territories (NWT) and the Yukon (Canada). The GCI represents 9000 people and their secretariat rotates between the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation in Old Crow, Yukon and the Gwich'in Tribal Council in Inuvik, NWT (Gwich'in Council, n.d).

The Arctic Athabaskan Council was established in 2000, making AAC the youngest PP, and represents 45,000 Athabaskans in Canada and the United States of America. Day to day running of the AAC is shared between the AAC executive directors in Canada and Alaska (Arctic Athabaskan Council, n.d).

Before evaluating the PPs' ability to engage in environmental decision-making and subsequent outputs of the AC, it is important to gain a clear picture of who the PPs are. The individual PPs are not structured in the same way, nor established at the same time: they have different funding capabilities, links to external organisations and motivations for their activities in the Arctic Council (See AAC, 2007 and Gamble, 2015). They are representing different peoples who face different environmental and social issues due to different geographies, histories, cultures and local resource extraction practices (See Nuttall, 2000 and Koivurov and Stepien, 2008). At the same time, the PPs are a central component of the AC system as AC activities rely in significant part upon the IPs to set the agenda and to provide a rationale for scientific and policy output and the PPs have the ability to sway the focus of decision-making in the AC and the related outputs on environmental issues (See Kankaanpää and Young, 2012 and Fenge, 2015)

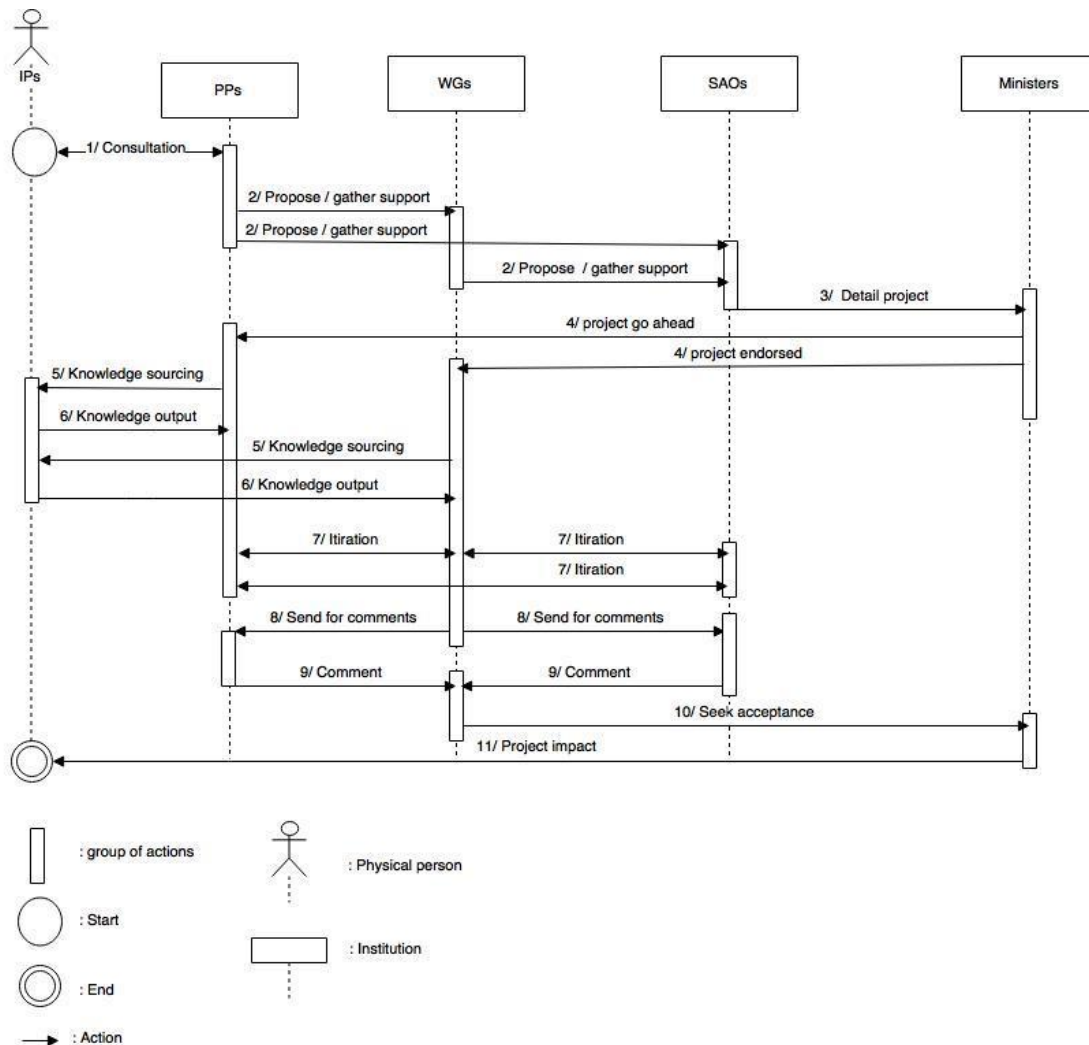
## The Decision Making Process

After introducing the Permanent Participants (PPs) it is necessary to provide some explanation of how they are formally engaged in Arctic Council (AC) environmental decision-making. The PPs have access to all of the AC activities and meetings and they can communicate with other members of the AC system both through channels provided for in the AC Rules of Procedure (Primary) and those processes that have become available *because* of the AC structure or activities (Secondary) (Arctic Council, 1998).

Primary communication will occur predominantly in AC meetings – where PPs can raise a point of order which will be decided upon immediately by the Chair – and through other activities such as Working Group (WG) and Task Force projects where PPs have the right to participate fully. In these activities, the PPs are supposed to be consulted by other AC members in decision-making, for instance on what should be included in a project, and have the chance to make suggestions before an action is undertaken. The PPs, however, have no voting rights within the Council (Arctic Council, 2012). The PPs can also make proposals for projects or programs to be directed by a given PP itself, or collectively by more than one PP group. The PPs have access to all documents and decisions of the AC, placing them in a unique position to influence decisions both within and external to the Council system. (Arctic Council, 1998). Due to the complexity of the procedures a PP may undertake to have an idea brought to fruition, a Unified Modelling Language (UML) sequence diagram (Figure 2) was created to show the simplified pathways an idea may take from an IP and to an AC report. The diagram should be read from the top left and finishing at the bottom left, following the arrows. Each transaction is numbered and an explanation provided in the box below.

Secondary communication is likely to occur in multi-lateral or bi-lateral communications, between the PPs themselves, the PPs and state representatives such as the Senior Arctic Officials (SAOs) and the PPs and Arctic member states. This could be in the form of electronic communication or through informal conversations at conferences, for example.

Aside from the top-level AC meetings, an enquiry into the PPs' influence on outcomes needs to consider what ways they have of accessing and affecting discussions in the permanent Working Groups and ad hoc groups and task forces. It can also be assumed *prima facie* that when they attach real importance to an issue, the PPs (and/or the IP groups that they represent) will consider other channels for exerting influence, starting with direct lobbying of their own national government, or possibly of other national constituencies (e.g. national oil/gas and shipping companies, environmental and civil rights movements). Cases could be imagined where IPs in one country try to lobby the government in another, e.g. if it holds the AC Chair or if it is threatening to obstruct some decision that they favour. Most IPs also have access to, and may be quite skilled in, modern media routes for publicising their views and seeking wider support, using both their own media and interviews with sympathetic journalists.



1. Continual consultation is occurring between the PPs and the IPs they represent
2. When embarking on a project, the PPs must gather financial and practical support for the projects. The projects must fit in with the Arctic states ambitions. The PPs may speak to the SAOs or WGs to ascertain whether a project is likely to be accepted and then make pathways to create a project outline.
3. The SAOs send a detailed outline of the project for Ministers to approve.
4. If the Ministers approve the project, the project will go ahead.
5. The PPs and the WGs will likely source skills for the project from the Indigenous Community, either working together or separately.
6. The IPs will contribute to the project, most likely in the fashion of TK or observation sharing.
7. As the project continues, the WGs will hold numerous consultation sessions with the PPs and the SAOs to gather their input.
8. One the project is completed; the PPs and the SAOs will be informed and asked to comment on the finished result.
9. The PPs and SAOs may comment.
10. Once the comments are addressed, the project is sent to the Ministers to be endorsed and therefore accepted as an AC project.
11. The impact of the project is felt, or not, by IPs in regards to their environment.

Figure 2: Possible Avenues to Influence Decision-Making.

## Methodology

The research was qualitative in nature and carried out through interviews with those who have expert knowledge in the Arctic Council. In total ten individuals who either represent or work alongside IPs were interviewed (See Table 1.) using a semi-structured interview guide (see Hennink et al., 2010). A narrative interview (NI) format was used within the semi-structured process, whereby the interviewer refrains from guiding the conversation as much as possible, encouraging the expert to tell the story in their own way (Bauer, 1996). Five informants were currently in, or had previously been in, a leadership position in a PP organization. In addition, one expert affiliated with the PPs was interviewed, as well as one high-level member of the Arctic Council Secretariat, and three experts in a leadership position in the Council's Working Groups. The interviewees were selected using the AC online staff lists and through word of mouth, to target potential knowledge holders. Interviews were analysed using a simple coding method in which a series of themes were selected from the background information. From this, phrases were selected from all the interviews that related to the key themes and analysed (Hennink *et al.*, 2010). All interviewees were consulted about using their names and quotations in this article.

Name of Interviewee	Position	Country
<b>Chief Gary Harrison</b>	Alaska Chair of Arctic Athabaskan Council.	Alaska
<b>Chief Michael Stickman</b>	International Chair and President of Arctic Athabaskan Council.	Alaska
<b>Dmitry Berezhkov</b>	Former Vice President of RAIPON.	Russia
<b>Terry Fenge</b>	Known for his long-standing knowledge of the AC, Terry is an Ottawa-based consultant.	Canada
<b>James Gamble</b>	Executive Director for AIA.	Alaska
<b>James Stotts</b>	President and ICC Chair of ICC Alaska.	Alaska
<b>Jutta Wark</b>	International Chair, Arctic Council Sustainable Development Working Group.	Canada
<b>Lars-Otto Reiersen</b>	Executive Secretary of the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Program.	Norway
<b>Magnus Johannesson</b>	Director of the AC Secretariat, former Secretary General for the Ministry for the Environment and Natural Resources in Iceland.	Iceland
<b>Tom Bary</b>	Executive Secretary, Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna International Secretariat.	Iceland

**Table 1:** Study Interviewees

## Results

Four key thematic areas were drawn from the analysis of the interview results identified four key thematic areas regarding the contribution of the PPs to environmental policy through the AC (aspirations of the PPs, the PP's relation to the home-state, structural set up on the PPs and, their ability to operate in different procedural contexts). The results of the study are summarised below.

### *Aspirations of the PPs*

The primary thematic area looked at here is the basic rationale for IPs to make inputs into the AC: what motives do they have, and what goals do the PPs set themselves when working with the Council? The aspirations of the PPs give the basic rationale for their communication and it can be supposed the extent that the PPs are able to achieve their motivations can form the basis of a judgement of successful inclusion in environmental decision-making.

All of the PPs interviewed said that the preservation of a subsistence lifestyle was their main goal. Issues of development came up in the majority of the interviews as a key area that the PPs would like to address. Wark, International Chair of the Sustainable Development Working Group, summarised the general attitude of the feelings of the PPs towards development, echoing other interviewees who saw a need for a degree of compromise:

I think they are much more attuned to the implications of development. I think they are very sensitive about environmental impacts and I don't think any of them are anti economic development, I think there is a basic understanding that in the current context, it is not possible to entirely go back to a traditional way of life, but there is that important power sharing that needs to go on so IPs have a choice about what kind of economic development is being done and how.

Echoing previous research, this study has confirmed that the PPs representing different IP communities have different aims and motivations in terms of environmental protection. Or, in other words, what is important to each Indigenous Community may be different from the next. Fenge, a consultant who held a vast knowledge of the AC, summarised this point:

They have different interests. For example, the Athabaskans are particularly concerned about terrestrial species, the Inuit about marine species. Now the environmental issues associated with these species can be quite different. For example... the biomagnification of certain POPs (persistent organic *pollutants*) is greatest in the marine food chains as opposed to terrestrial.

In addition to environmental protection, cultural protection was cited in the interviews as a key motivation for IPs' activities in the AC. A key finding from this study was the comment made by a large number of PPs that in order to 'continue their way of life', the promotion of projects and activities supporting culture may offer an easier and less politically sensitive way to forward their agenda upon the international stage; and secondly that the PPs may be more successful in protecting the culture of the IPs rather than the environment *per se*.

Fenge suggested that there could be a difference in the ability of PPs to articulate matters when it comes to environment or culture by explaining that "[w]hen you are talking about, and if it is



closest to culture, closest to health, then my sense is that those are the issues upon which the PPs do the best job”.

All of the PPs spoke of their ambitions for TK to be utilised for AC environmental outputs. Moreover, all PPs agreed that they saw the AC as a place to present their own experiences or those of the IPs they represent to a global audience. Berezhtkov, former Vice President of RAIPON, explained that the “main aim is to implement Indigenous agenda or Indigenous issues and challenges into the work of the AC on environmental issues. Indigenous peoples describe their experience and ideas and also hopes and risks for Indigenous style of life, Indigenous culture, TK etc. to the experts and to states and stakeholders”.

All of the PP interviewees felt that they were mostly successful in getting their views across when the matters were in line with motives of the Arctic states. Historically, IPs have less experience of engaging with the political system of the Arctic Council than do the Arctic states. Nevertheless, Wark stated, supported by other respondents, that the IPs have a good ability to engage at a political level because “[t]hey [meaning the PPs] are extremely politically astute and I think very knowledgeable and I think they know how to operate in the Council”.

Strengthening relationships was commonly cited as a reason for the PPs to utilise the AC as a channel to influence environmental decision-making. The related aims were two-fold: first, to strengthen existing networks of IPs, and secondly, expanding this network to include other key stakeholders. For Stickman, developing these personal connections was the “most important thing” and it was the indirect means of communication that had the most bearing: “You go there and sit down at the meeting but I think the most important conversations are the side conversations that you have”. Berezhtkov concurred that indirect means of communication was a very important rationale for utilising the AC: “Maybe 50% of the effectiveness of the AC meetings and work for Russian IPs, for RAIPON when I worked there, was first of all and simply the place to meet with concrete people”.

### ***Relation to the Home State***

The next set of findings concerns the way in which the PPs’ relationship with their home state(s) influences the way they utilise the AC to influence environmental policy. IPs have different histories and different opportunities that also affect the relevant PPs’ ability to gain funding. As Harrison, Chair of Arctic Athabaskan Council, argued when talking about project and PP funding, some PPs may not have the same abilities as others:

None of the Arctic Athabaskan villages have that kind of money, when you talk about it you have to have people who are able to provide for their families when they are doing this kind of work and we just don’t have the funding for that and the states are not willing to make the resources available to the IPs of the countries and when you ask the other countries they say well, you belong to one of the richest countries in the world, what’s the problem?

Barry also explained that “[c]ountries fund the different groups differently, some more, some less and I suppose that reflects their national interests”. Some participants suggested that this problem lead to some competition amongst the PPs for funding in cases where a host state did not provide the support needed and the PP concerned had to seek resources from other Arctic states. This was especially relevant in Russia, where this study suggested that only those loyal to

the government could apply for funding and no Russian funding would be given to any persons/groups that were critical of practices regarding environmental or Indigenous rights. The majority of interviewees suggested that partnership approaches with businesses and observer states might provide some solutions for capacity issues.

A number of reasons were noted why a good relationship with the home state can have a positive influence on the ability of PPs to engage in decision-making. One interviewee pointed to the benefits of having the ability to gather information from those actors in the state that may be advising the Senior Arctic Official (SAO) in their decisions; this gives the PPs the opportunity to make suggestions that are in line with the state's values, and thus more likely to be supported by the state. In addition, good communication was found to be a key factor in the PPs' ability to lobby governments to act in accordance with their goals. In addition, as the agreements in the AC are mostly 'soft' in nature and not enforceable, one interviewee argued that a close relationship is crucial for guiding the states in their activities relating to follow-up of AC positions and declarations. If the relationship is lacking with the home state, or the PP is focusing on issues that are not in line with the priorities of the home state, interviewees mentioned that approaching other governments is another avenue to take. As Gamble, Executive Director at Aleut International Association, highlighted that "[w]e might be interested in talking to other Arctic States about issues because sometimes you recognize a similarity of opinion, so even though there is not an opposition from our home state we may notice that a particular Arctic state may be more likely to see our perspective on an issue".

One of the core complexities cited in the interviews was the interference of state priorities with the motivations of the PPs. As Stotts, Chair of the Inuit Circumpolar Council Canada explained, supported by other interviewees that "[t]here are some cases where a country, they have some priority or some national interest and they are just like, 'we don't talk about it', you know, and we've been trying to have the issue of commercial fishing in the Arctic raised as something to talk about but "we don't talk about that".

A key reason cited was the ACs aversion to stepping into regulatory regimes in national systems or negotiated bilateral agreements. This echoes the general finding of Bailes (2014) that one reason for states' failure to truly address the needs of the IPs reflects reluctance by the relevant governments to interfere in the internal affairs of other Arctic states. The AC was seen by all PP interviewees as a place where issues could be resolved that were problematic with the home state.

### ***Structural set-up of the PPs***

The next findings concern the way that differences in the PPs' structural set up were found to have a bearing on their ability to operate. The PPs represent diverse opinions to some extent, by representing either communities existing within different states or numerous communities within the same state. RAIPON is alone amongst the PPs in belonging to the latter group. Operating in numerous countries was also shown to present certain opportunities and difficulties. Berezhkov explained the opportunities and challenges regarding the management of diversity:

If you bring this knowledge from different parts so it's the richness of the AC and in input of the PPs into this work and of course it's a challenge because we have different opinions, we have different languages, we have different distances and timing etc. so it's very difficult to gather people and discuss so this is two sides of this.

But as Stotts, explained, this complexity can bring financial benefits: “The other thing that ICC has going for it is its members, it’s mostly member funded, we get most of our money on our own, from ourselves. We do get government funding here and there but we are able to at least our core operations, fund by ourselves, so we don’t have to compromise to get the money”.

In addition, bearing in mind that the PPs operate at an international level and must do in order to get projects accepted, the benefit of having a good relationship across multiple states becomes clear. As Gamble explained:

For it to be an AC project it almost always has to operate in more than one Arctic State, it can’t just be in one of the countries, and so in reality the more circumpolar the better: and on the other side of that is that it also helps to have a willingness from one or more of the Arctic states to be involved in the project to co-lead, also it helps to be aware where some of the funding for the project might come from. So we have to sort of put all the pieces together.

### ***Ability to Operate in Different Procedural Contexts***

At the heart of this research is an analysis of what type of influence the IPs may have in different AC contexts and what the final outcome may be. This last results section looks at the main tools and methods of potential influence including input into discussions; engagement in and initiation of projects; effects upon recommendations to states, and the influence on the implementation of these recommendations on the states’ environmental activities of influence the IPs may have in different AC contexts and what the final outcome may be.

The Chairmanship’s priorities were found to have a large influence on the type of environmental topic on which a PP may choose to enter into discussions. All of the interviewees agreed that the IPs’ greatest strength in the AC was their ability to influence discussion. As Johannesson, Director of the Arctic Council secretariat stated:

There is a good atmosphere in the work of the Council in the meetings of the SAOs. Also, I have been in meetings of the WGs, the SAO meetings where the SAOs and the PPs have been at the same table and I would say it’s a good atmosphere and, as I said earlier, the PPs presence broadens the discussions, they come up with new local knowledge which helps to make the discussions broader and very often leads to, I would say, a better conclusion.

All of the PPs agreed that although the AC was seen as offering a great opportunity to create projects to aid IPs and the environment, the complexity of getting a project accepted by the AC in collaboration with the WGs and the states made it challenging. The primary reasons given concerned the difficulties of having states support the projects; gaining finances for the projects; and coping with the different structural set-ups of the WGs. Harrison explained that he felt the existing system led to a sort of power imbalance, where the states had an unfair advantage over the PPs in getting projects started:

It’s pretty hard to get a project through in the AC for several reasons. The PPs have to have a lead country so you have got to convince a country that your project is good, you have to figure out where the resources are coming from for the project and seeing as how most of the IPs in the AC don’t have resources like the countries,

because the countries are the ones who have confiscated all of our resources so it's hard to get a project started.

The inclusion of TK was also highlighted as a difficult area to pursue for the PPs. Barry, said: "There is no perfect example of the AC work where you can point to and you can say yes, this is where TK has been included. But very often it's easier to include indigenous perspectives rather than TK". The necessity of including the PPs early into projects was shown to be of high importance in this study. Wark explained the benefits of early engagement:

It refines the questions to be pursued under a project or under an initiative. And then it also ensures that they are interested and engaged...in order to have more TK included in the work it has certain resource implications and capacity implications. And it's very useful for the AC working groups to understand those at the beginning because that means they can adjust budgets accordingly and timelines accordingly rather than having the TK component as an add-on later on with sort of an artificial chapter or commentary that gets inserted an already existing product.

PPs were considered to be very successful when contributing to WGs and Task Forces, yet severely hindered by capacity. The PPs themselves agreed that their hope was that their testimony would enable change in policy either nationally or internationally. A number of the interviewees stated that SAO meetings were the location within the AC where it was most important to be present in order to influence policy. The SAOs' meetings bring together a number of national and international key actors (including observers) that may allow the PPs to further their aims. Once the agenda is set through the AC and recommendations to policy makers produced, it is of course down to the individual states to enforce these policies.

A number of the interviewees took the view that the AC's work has considerable impact, ensuring the creation of international environmental agreements such as the Stockholm Convention and the Polar Code for shipping; however, most also highlighted the difficulties in judging this with any certainty due to the lack of a standardised AC monitoring system to be used by the states. As Johannesson commented: "I think that is perhaps not clear and obvious, but it is perhaps one of the shortcomings of the AC that decisions taken by the Council, which are to be implemented by the states and there is sort of no reporting obligation of the states to the Council on the implementation so I feel this is something that is lacking in today."

The interviewees, at the time of interviews, all saw the fact that only the states had the power to vote on AC decisions as an element weakening IPs' voices in the AC process.

### **Analytical Summary**

Looking back at the different procedural stages where IPs may intervene to secure a change to an environmental output in the Council, as discussed above and presented in Figure 2, with the interview results, it is possible to offer some systematic analysis of the PPs' engagement at each of the process stages in project creation and inaction. Table 2 presents a summary of the strengths and weaknesses of the PPs' engagement, as outlined in the interviews.

Stage of Process	Strengths	Weaknesses
1/Consultation between the IPs and the PPs	The PPs have a wide range of methods for consultation with the IPs, many of which take on a personal communication style and involve the consultation of a vast number of stakeholders.	There is no standardized method for consultation nor are there the means for assessing the extent and impact of these interactions through the AC monitoring system as best practice in an environmental management system.
2/Gathering support	The PPs are respected and listened to. They have the ability to be present at all discussions and have access to all information giving them knowledge that may aid them.	They do not have the human or financial capacity to always be present and, may only be able to work within the political aspirations of the states themselves either in their relationship with the home state or, through the AC.
3/Outline by SAO to Ministers	/	/
4/Project approved	The PPs feel they have good opportunities to create projects through the AC.	Projects that do not fit the AC's mandate or take on rights based discourses are not likely to be accepted.
5/Sourcing the skills from the IPs	The WGs and other AC members see great benefit in the inclusion of TK.	There have been some issues with including TK into AC outputs and often skills are outsourced from outside of the PPs.
6/The contribution of PPs to the project	The PPs have the ability to engage to their best ability.	The PPs may not always have the financial capacity or the skills to fully participate.
7/Consultation within a project	The PPs have the ability to engage to their best ability.	The PPs do not always have the capacity to engage in all areas of a project.
8/PPs Asked for comments on the finished project	/	/
9/Comments given	The PPs can highlight issues and necessary changes before publication.	At this point, if the PP has not been engaged early, they may not be able to a great impact at this stage.
10/Project endorsed	The PPs may contribute to a document that benefits the IPs they represent.	If the PPs have not worked closely enough with the SAOs during the process, the project may not be accepted as the states may not want to give their support.
11/Project impact on IPs	/	It is difficult to ascertain the extent of benefit without a robust monitoring system.

**Table 2:** Summary of PP Influence in Environmental Decision-Making in the AC.

## Summary

As the interviews for this study confirmed, the PPs' influence in decision-making and the related outputs of the AC does not extend to full participation, and they face a number of barriers to engagement. Yet the PPs are often very successful in manoeuvring within the framework allowed to them. Interviews suggested that the PPs start from a strong position in influencing the direction of discussions in the AC, as they are respected, listened to, and their opinions are considered of high worth. However, due to a lack of capacity, the PPs are not always able to be present at relevant discussions to give their opinions.

Capacity issues, including lack of human resources, hinder the PPs' ability to influence discussions in several ways; the PPs sometimes lack the technical skills they need to fully engage in WG discussions, or lack the in-house staff to send as experts to AC activities on certain topics such as TK. Most of the PPs cover more than one state's territory and their home state or states have a crucial role in supporting, or hindering, the PPs' operational and political capacity through the provision of funding and of knowledge, which can go to inform their discussion points. In agreement with previous studies such as, Koivurova (2010), this study has underlined how the lack of a central, regular and neutral funding mechanism for the PPs leaves their activities susceptible to political interference, further complicating the PPs' formulation and pursuit of their goals. Other obstacles are posed by the collective stance of the AC states on what they are, or not, prepared to discuss at the AC (See Pedersen, 2012). If the PPs wish to engage in a discussion on fisheries, security, or rights-based discourses – which are not formally within the Council's competence and/or not acceptable to certain states – their point of order is not likely to be taken up for serious discussion at the meeting. If the PPs' position is looked at from a Realist perspective (See Korab-Karpowicz, 2012) it is clear that, as the weaker players, they have less chance to get their decisions enacted through the Council than the larger and financially more powerful states.

According to the interviews, the most pressing set of issues on which the PPs hope to achieve influence were shown to involve support for IPs in their ability to practice subsistence living. Given that the states and the IPs may have different attitudes towards development, the conversation may turn to one of rights and sovereignty as ownership and control of land in order to achieve one's aims becomes crucial. There can be seen another inherent conflict in the fact that while PPs wish to protect a subsistence lifestyle, many directly related and important questions regarding rights to resources and associated issues of sovereignty are banned from the AC agenda. PPs looking to engage in such discourses must therefore find another avenue to exploit, such as the United Nations (UN) or, by the creation of partnership approached with multi-national corporations. If IPs are becoming increasingly despondent with the mechanisms in place to promote fair business interaction, which the interviews hint at, the IPs may wish to move past the structure of the AC to create new resource governance partnerships with other powerful non-state actors (See European Council of the European Union, 2008).

The study found that, the PPs were found to have a strong institutional knowledge of the AC and they can provide other members with historical and current knowledge of the workings of the AC. Given the finding in this study on the importance of network formation for the PPs who participate in the AC, the people-based forum provided by the AC forms a mutualistic help mechanism for furthering the Arctic environmental agenda. The human nature of the forum was

found in this study, to make up its strength and provides the main rationale for many PPs to pursue the AC as an avenue to help IPs live in a subsistence manner. As another reflection of this human factor, the PPs were found to have the most influence in AC discussions when they related the environmental issues to consequent cultural issues such as knowledge loss or suicide amongst IPs. Given this people-centric nature of the AC decision-making system, it is perhaps not surprising that the PPs find it easier to communicate, and their colleagues find it easier to understand, the struggles faced by IPs on a human level rather than by addressing the environmental issues that may have caused these cultural issues and which policy makers may have no direct observational understanding of, due to perhaps living in a non-Arctic location or not having environmental knowledge. By channelling the views of the IPs in this way, the PPs can offer scientists and policy-makers a kind of mouthpiece for the environment, allowing the environmental issues of the Arctic to be understood from the human perspective of PP representatives with direct observational knowledge. The PPs' institutional knowledge and strong communicative abilities could also offer particular benefits for informing and guiding the AC's observer nations (See Arctic Council, 2011), particularly the newer ones invited to join in 2013 who are further away from Arctic realities. As highlighted in the interviews, in return these nations such as China and Japan may offer new possibilities of practical support and publicity to further the PPs' aims.

Interviews showed that there are a number of complexities for PPs wishing to initiate AC projects: they need to gain support from the states financially and ideologically, whilst navigating the numerous different templates of the Working Groups (WGs). Supporting a previous study aimed at building capacity amongst the PPs by the Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation et al., (2013), the interviews confirmed that the PPs are not able to keep up with the increasingly large body of work that the WGs undertake, and are forced to select which projects best suit their aims within the bounds of their capacity. When engaged in projects, the PPs may only be able to engage at a cursory level, inputting their thoughts at the end of a project. Their limited capacity means they must rely on the financial contributions of states including the technical abilities of the WGs to achieve their goals. When seeking the knowledge and support required for project acceptance, this study found that, the PPs benefit the most by communicating informally through bilateral or multilateral channels with their PP or WG colleagues or with state officials in the know. The environmentally based projects that the PPs propose were shown to, most likely, have the best chance of acceptance if they are in line with the current Chairmanship's priorities, or coincide with areas of constant work within the AC mandate such as TK.

This study found that, the PPs' position within the AC framework allows them to contact other states if they are not happy with their own state's environmental progress, and also to contact non-governmental organisations or non-Arctic states if they cannot find a solution among the Arctic states. From a Constructivist perspective (See Fearon, 1999), IPs are endowed with an identity as environmental witnesses and guardians with specialist knowledge of their environment: this gives them potentially great political power, as the PPs can lobby beyond the nation-state in order to create pressure from external sources supporting their goals.

## **Conclusions**

Environmental governance, as it becomes increasingly complicated by globalisation, climate change and numerous other factors, requires dynamic solutions that go beyond historic

approaches linked with the hierarchical and unequal benefits of development. As the Arctic environment undergoes change, IPs may need to place increasing pressure on the states to maintain their subsistence existence. The states may be hesitant to give power to IPs to pursue their own aims in the region, but ultimately states can only achieve environmental protection in a comprehensive and balanced manner by allowing a new way of being to be integrated into environmental governance. This study has managed to identify some specific issues with the institutional decision-making process, and to suggest some remedies: but additional critical study is needed to design the necessary institutional reforms to allow for PPs' full participation alongside other state and non-state actors, and to create a more grounded and holistic environment decision-making process.

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