



Arctic Athabaskan Council Newsletter

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Inside the Arctic Council Ministerial 2006



SALEKHARD, RUSSIA IS KNOWN AS THE ONLY CITY IN THE WORLD SITUATED ON THE POLAR CIRCLE. TO THE RIGHT IS A LANDMARK THAT MARKS THE LOCATION OF THE POLAR CIRCLE.



The Arctic Council is comprised of eight member states, six permanent participants and many working groups and observer states. Each member states hosts the chairmanship in turn for a two year period. At the end of the two years, the chairmanship hosts a ministerial meeting to establish their focus for the incoming chairmanship. This year's ministerial meeting was held in Siberia at Salekhard, Russia.

The Arctic Athabaskan delegation traveled a great distance from Alaska and Yukon and included International AAC Chair Chief Gary Harrison from the Chickaloon Village Alaska, CYFN representative James Allen from Haines Junction Yukon, CYFN Elder Advisor Stanley James from Carcross Yukon, Executive Director Cindy Dickson from Whitehorse Yukon and Technical Advisor and IPS Intern Colleen Henry also from Whitehorse Yukon. The entire delegation met in Moscow, Russia and traveled together with other Arctic Council participants on a chartered flight to Salekhard, Russia.

Senior Arctic Officials, Permanent Participants and Arctic Council Working Groups attended meetings for three days prior to the Ministerial meeting. During those three days participants reviewed and negotiated terms for the Salekhard Declaration to be approved and adopted by the Ministers on the fourth and final day of meetings. Great attention was paid to the Arctic Council meetings and local media covered daily proceedings with swift accuracy.

All meeting arrangements were masterfully organized by the Russian coordination team and included an extensive four day meeting agenda. Each delegate was greeted with warm Russian hospitality and incredible cultural and local activities which allowed the local and indigenous peoples to share traditional food, culture, songs, dances and stories with Arctic Council delegates.

The Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North hosted a 'meet and greet' with all Permanent Participants of the Arctic Council. Permanent Participants were warmly welcomed and received gifts, DVDs and books about RAIPON and Russian indigenous peoples.

The Permanent Participants were able to outline their focal points for the upcoming chairmanship and share concerns and mandates with the Ministers from the Arctic member states. Those speeches are available for download at <http://www.arcticpeoples.org>.

The Arctic Athabaskan Council continuously and actively creates opportunities to discuss matters of importance to northern indigenous peoples' with ministers, Permanent Participants and other delegates of the Arctic Council. Inside this issue you will find information on AAC community initiatives on climate change. Please contact our office for more information.

PERMANENT PARTICIPANTS



ARCTIC COUNCIL MEMBER STATES: CANADA, DENMARK, FINLAND, ICELAND, NORWAY, RUSSIAN FEDERATION, SWEDEN, UNITED STATES OF AMERICA



AAC Defends Indigenous Collective Rights



INTERNATIONAL CHAIR OF AAC CHIEF GARY HARRISON OF CHICKALOON, ALASKA WITH U.S. LAWYER MARK SIMINOFF

The drafting of the Salekhard Declaration at the Arctic Council’s Senior Arctic Officials turned to debate between the Arctic Athabaskan Council International Chairperson, Chief Gary Harrison and the United States. The Permanent Participants jointly requested that the Salekhard Declaration acknowledge the rights of indigenous peoples of the Arctic

by including the following text,

‘Taking into account the fundamental rights of the Arctic Indigenous Peoples expressed in International Law.’

The US insisted the declaration include the following counter text within a footnote,

‘The United States notes that the use of the term “peoples” in this Declaration and related documents shall not be construed as having any implications as regard the rights which may attach to the term under international law,’

the result of which diminishes the strength of the word “PEOPLES” and the collective indigenous rights it implies.

The Convent of Civil and Political Rights, articles 1 and 27 was, however, previously accepted and signed by the United States. Of great importance is the observation from the United Nations Human Rights Committee on this convention which states:

‘The State party should review its policy towards indigenous peoples as regards the extinguishment of aboriginal rights on the basis of the plenary power of Congress regarding Indian affairs and grant them the same degree of judicial protection that is available to the non-indigenous population. It should take further steps in order to secure the rights of all indigenous peoples under articles 1 and 27 of the Covenant to give them greater influence in decision-making affecting their natural environment and their means of subsistence as well as their own culture.’

Now why would the United States support the fundamental rights of indigenous peoples as outlined in the Convent of Civil and Political rights but not openly extend that support to include the Arctic Indigenous Peoples in the Arctic Council Fo-

“TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THE FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS OF THE ARCTIC INDIGENOUS PEOPLES EXPRESSED IN INTERNATIONAL LAW” –

ARCTIC COUNCIL PERMANENT PARTICIPANTS

rum? Does the US not want to secure the rights of all indigenous peoples in the Arctic giving them greater influence in decision-making affecting their natural environment, means of subsistence and culture? It would make them the only Arctic Council Member state to take that position.

The US refusal to further negotiate compelled the Permanent Participants to break into caucus to discuss the US position and its implications on the text proposed by the Permanent Participants. It was decided to leave the proposed text out of the declaration rather than have the meaning diminished by the US footnote.

The AAC did have a final opportunity to address the US on its stance. In his speech to the ministerial, Chief Gary Harrison stated

‘The international consensus supports these collective rights of indigenous peoples, and we would dearly like the United States to join the other Arctic states and the indigenous peoples in this consensus.’

The rapidly growing effects of climate change and the lack of adaptation programs to help indigenous populations cope both require immediate attention. Shouldn’t the people living in these regions, affected by these changes have a greater influence on decisions affecting their natural environment, means of subsistence and culture? How can individuals living outside the Arctic and sub-Arctic regions justifiably disregard the collective rights of those who have lived in these regions for millennia?

AAC continuously pursues answers to these and many other important questions. We will keep our member informed.

Communications can be sent to our AAC Executive Director, Cindy Dickson.



AAC DELEGATION: FROM LEFT TO RIGHT COLLEEN HENRY, CINDY DICKSON, GARY HARRISON, JAMES ALLEN, STANLEY JAMES



Climate Change Community Consultations Project Underway



CINDY DICKSON AND ROBIN URQUHART HOLD CONSULTATIONS WITH A SMALL GROUP OF OLD CROW COMMUNITY MEMBERS.

The Arctic Athabaskan Council has begun a pilot project to conduct climate change risk assessments with the northern community of Old Crow. The project will incorporate the Yukon's Umbrella Final Agreement and the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment, initiated by the Arctic Council, into the assessments and

consultations to better understand the implications of climate change on land use planning, traditional lifestyles and future sustainable development.

The climate is warming at an alarming rate and communities need adaptation program support to counteract the impacts. There is an undeniable need for first nations to manage climate change risks in light of recent indigenous ecological findings and observations. Thawing permafrost damages houses, roads, airport landing strips, and pipelines.

Specifically to Old Crow, a creek has sprung on a mountainside overlooking the Old Crow and causes residents concern that mudslides could soon descend into their community villages.

There was a meeting held on Saturday November 4th in Old Crow with the Hunters & Trappers Association, as the first step in the Climate Change, Risk Assessment and Final Agreement Analysis project. Cindy Dickson and Robin Urquhart led the discussion on consultation. This meeting was to receive direction on how the project should unfold - when to collect information, from whom, what format, etc.

The second step in the project will be to conduct a survey in the community of Old Crow and gather information from other completed projects or monitoring initiatives.

The meeting was comprised of 9 trappers or hunters (including women). The information and advice on how to proceed was invaluable.

AAC will send more updates as this project progresses.

Mussi cho!

BELOW: RIVER NEXT TO THE COMMUNITY OF OLD CROW



"THE CLIMATE IS WARMING AT AN ALARMING RATE AND COMMUNITIES NEED ADAPTATION PROGRAM SUPPORT TO COUNTERACT THE IMPACTS."

Did You Know?



On the final day of the ministerial meeting, Russian Indigenous Peoples held a reception for all Arctic Council delegates on the occasion of the 15th anniversary of the North Forum Cultural program. Inside these chums delegates were served traditional indigenous foods including fish, berries, and reindeer prepared in many different ways. AAC delegates shared the meal together with members of the Canadian delegation, the RAIPON delegation and the United States Minister. It was an excellent opportunity to discuss climate change in the north!

Russian Indigenous Peoples lived in CHUMS (pronounced "chooms") which closely resembled North American Teepees. Their chums could vary in size to accommodate a single family or 15 families. They sewed strips of birch bark together to create the outer covering of the chum for summer use. In winter they lined the inside of the chum with furs for added warmth.

Huge, woolly Arctic Rhinoceroses roamed Russian lands alongside the woolly Mammoth during the Ice age.

Russians use Vodka, their most famous export product, for a multitude of things from removing bandages, making homemade mouthwash, treating dandruff, curing foot odor, and numbing toothache pain. For more fun facts check out <http://www.russianlife.net>



Above: Modern day Nenets indigenous peoples from the Salekhard region sitting outside their chum. For more photos, visit <http://pooka.nunanet.com/~oxana>.



The woolly rhinoceros **Rhinoceros antiquitatis**
H. Osborn, 'Men of the Old Stone'



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FOR MORE INFORMATION ON NORTHERN
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THESE WEBSITES:

- [HTTP://WWW.ARCTICPEOPLES.ORG](http://www.arcticpeoples.org)
- [HTTP://WWW.GWICHIN.ORG](http://www.gwichin.org)
- [HTTP://WWW.INUITCIRCUMPOLAR.COM](http://www.inuitcircumpolar.com)
- [HTTP://WWW.RAIPON.COM](http://www.raipon.com)
- [HTTP://WWW.SAAMICOUNCIL.NET](http://www.saamicouncil.net)
- [HTTP://WWW.ARCTICPORTAL.COM](http://www.arcticportal.com)



Left: Hockey teams pose for photos after entertaining Arctic Council delegates with a 10 minute heart pumping, crowd pleasing exhibition game!

Below: Warm Russian hospitality and cultural night to welcome delegates.



Above: Group Photo of Permanent Participants at the end of the Ministerial Meeting



Above and Below: delegates were treated to examples of local culture including songs, dances, traditional beer and vodka for warmth!



Above and below: Pictures from Ministerial Dinner; Left: James Allen with a replica of a woolly Mammoth



At Left: AAC's Elder Representative Stanley James of Carcross, Yukon



Watch for our winter 2006/2007 Issue!

