

A Background Paper

Defining Arctic Community Sustainability:
Prepared for the
NSF Sustainability of Arctic Communities Project

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Introduction

Our original Sustainability of Arctic Communities Project proposal, submitted in 1995, stated researchers' intent to focus on three elements of sustainability. These elements of community sustainability were framed as "community goals." They include:

1. maintaining subsistence hunting as a way of life,
2. participating in the wage economy, and
3. perceiving local control in public policy matters.

When initiating our research, we recognized these three elements are a subset of a larger list, and that a comprehensive understanding of Arctic community sustainability requires attention to additional issues. At our first meeting (and before community involvement was funded as a part of this research), we addressed the question of how best to frame Arctic Community Sustainability.

The question of defining sustainability is a subject of much discussion in the literature, with much of it centering on debates regarding the definition of the more controversial term "sustainable development." Part of this discourse has examined questions of the erosion of natural and social capital, the evolution and diversity of institutions, and the dilemmas associated with achieving a balance between economic growth and maintenance of environmental quality. Through our initial discussions, we recognized the legacy of failures associated with non-locals defining criteria of sustainability (and community well being) for northern peoples. We, in turn, responded to this problem by applying for supplemental funding from NSF to involve communities in our study. As a part of our grant, we proposed that we work with local community members to define appropriate community sustainability goals. In this summary, we present the results of

our work – - a the list of the elements which are considered by locals to reflect the conditions for achieving Arctic community sustainability.

In the first stage of the research, we worked with the communities of Arctic Village, Aklavik, Old Crow, and Kaktovik. Our effort to define community sustainability goals was completed through meetings of local organizations (e.g., hunters and trappers committee) and at project-sponsored workshops. We also met one-on-one with formal and informal local leaders to discuss the project and with them entered into discussions about the applications of the term sustainability in a northern community context.

After these initial discussions, we were told by community organizations and members that the task of defining community sustainability did not require in depth discussions with community members at the local level. Community members expressed concern about asking questions of locals when answers are already available. Consequently, we collected community-based literature, recommend by community leaders and reviewed it to define community sustainability goals.

Community-based literature

The following documents served as our primary sources when defining Arctic community sustainability:

Old Crow Sources: Old Crow & the Northern Yukon: Achieving Sustainable Renewable Resource Utilization (F. Fuller & T. McTiernan); Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Final Agreement; Community Impact Assessment For Old Crow, Yukon (N. MacPherson & G. Netro); fieldwork

Kaktovik Sources: *In This Place - An Operational Guide for Those Wishing to Work in the Country of the Kaktovikmiut* .

Arctic Village Sources: Nakai't'in'in "Do It Yourself" - A Plan for Preserving the Cultural Identity of the Neets'ait Gwich'in Indians of Arctic Village

Aklavik Sources: Aklavik Inuvialuit Community Conservation Plan. Inuvialuit Final Agreement.

Elements common to all communities

Five elements common to all four communities emerged from this review and from our follow-up meetings with communities. They include:

1. Use of, and respect for, the land and animals in their homelands.
2. A cash economy that is compatible with, and supports, continued local use of the land and animals.
3. Local control and responsibility for what is done in village homelands and what happens to resources used by the community.

4. Education of younger people in both traditional knowledge and western science, and education of the outside world about community goals and ways of living.
5. A thriving culture that has a clear identity, is based on time on the land and language, which honors and respects elders.

It should be added that some locals also spoke of the need to achieve cooperative relations among local community members and with other communities of the region. Discussions regarding the need for a strong economy were framed by several community leaders as a need for local "wealth creation," (not simply "job creation"), and a shift away from past dependencies on government transfer payments. Community members in Arctic Village expressed a set of goals which focus on infrastructure (e.g. providing adequate housing). Locals from all communities also pointed out that each community does not speak in a single voice.

A summary of more specific comments about these elements shared by locals appear in the sections below. Initials (e.g., "AV"=Arctic Village) indicate comments made by specific communities.

Subsistence

- healthy land & resources
- unimpeded access to resources
- continued harvest & use; "maintain the activity"
- continued traditional respect for land & animals
- Oil development on PCH calving ground threatens sustainability of community (OC, A, AV)

Wage employment

- need to enhance/expand the local economy; help ensure economic stability
- flexible jobs (allow for time on the land and suited to local skills)
- work with oil industry (K)
- eco-tourism (scenario); preserve & enhance the renewable resource economy (ren. res. jobs) (OC)
- tourism & recreation (non-consumptive) w/ limited resource development of timber & mining) (AV)
- difference between "jobs" and "cash" (harvester support programs, renewable resources ventures, tourism) (OC)

Local Control/Self-Determination

- maintain control & responsibility over what is done & how it is done
- full & equal participation in fish and wildlife management processes & decisions (OC)
- guarantee rights to harvest and manage resources (OC)
- no restrictions on use of land and waters (K)
- develop effective co-management regime for homelands (K)
- desire to remain a sovereign nation (over land and village) under tribal government (AV)
- need local control of education to improve it (AV)

Communication/Education

- education is the key to better employment
- educate younger people in both traditional knowledge and western science
- schools must provide appropriate curriculum (industry & subsistence)
- Need to educate outside world about Native "world view"

Culture

- preserve & enhance the culture, identity and values
- time on the land
- language
- honor & respect elders (care for them; involve them in community decisions; learn from them)

Infrastructure

The additional goal of "improved infrastructure" was mentioned by the community members of Arctic Village. They noted that sustainability required

- adequate housing (# & condition)
- clean water
- airport repair; church restoration; road repair
- lower fuel costs; use of alternative energy technologies

Specific elements are listed below by community.

Aklavik

Subsistence:

- protection of wildlife and our land and the keeping traditional subsistence lifestyle; "maintain the activity"
- identify and protect important habitats and harvesting areas.
- define species management

Wage employment:

- enhance the local economy; help ensure economic stability.

Local Control:

- Land Use Decisions - describe community process for making land use decisions & managing cumulative impacts which will help protect community values & conserve the resources on which priority lifestyles depend.

Education:

- identify educational initiatives which will promote conservation, understanding and appreciation; educate younger people in both traditional knowledge and western science; education is the key to better jobs

Sources: Aklavik Inuvialuit Community Conservation Plan; Aklavik meeting

Old Crow

Subsistence:

- health of the PCH
- ensure conservation in the management of all fish & wildlife resources and their habitats
- develop local responsibilities for renewable resource management

Wage employment/economy:

- eco-tourism
- preserve & enhance the renewable resource economy (ren. res. jobs)
- difference between "jobs" and "cash" (harvester support programs, renewable resource ventures, tourism)

Local Control:

- "Whatever development occurs, it must be done on our terms, at our pace."
- ensure full & equal participation in fish and wildlife management processes & decisions
- guarantee rights to harvest and manage resources

Communication/Education:

- integrate local knowledge and experience and western science to achieve conservation
- education in traditional way of life as well as modern ways

Culture:

- preserve and enhance the culture, identity and values of Yukon Indian People
- time on the land

Elders:

- honor & respect elders (care for them; involve them in community decisions; learn from them)

Social:

- formal prohibition against alcohol

Sources: Old Crow & the Northern Yukon: Achieving Sustainable Renewable Resource Utilization (F. Fuller & T. McTiernan); Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Final Agreement; Community Impact Assessment For Old Crow, Yukon (N. MacPherson & G. Netro); fieldwork

Kaktovik

"Continued **economic security**...through **self-rule** and continued **ecological well-being** of their homelands"

Subsistence:

- healthy land & resources
- unimpeded access
- continued harvest & use

Wage employment:

- work with oil industry
- need to expand economic base
- need flexible jobs (allow for time on the land and suited to local skills)

Local Control/Self-Determination:

- maintain control & responsibility over what is done & how it is done
- be fully involved in planning, permitting, & monitoring
- no restrictions on use of land and waters
- develop a plan to manage all activity within these homelands, including any oil and gas activity
- develop effective co-management regime for homelands

Community:

- want to retain the complexion of the community (small community with mostly Inupiat)

Importance of and attachment to place:

- "Our country defines us"
- respect for Kaktovikmiut, their land and water and wildlife
- our attachment to our country is primary, central to our very being

Communication/Education:

- Need to explain Kaktovik "world view"
- schools must provide appropriate curriculum (industry & subsistence)

Methods of Implementing Policies:

- Creation of a Kaktovik Impact Office w/i the City of Kaktovik that deals with all outside interest & activity
- Kaktovik review & approval of all research and other ancillary activity deriving from outside interest in this area to assure proper professional design and sensitivity of the proposed work

Sources: *In This Place - An Operational Guide for Those Wishing to Work in the Country of the Kaktovikmiut* and discussions with the mayor of Kaktovik and Karl Francis

Arctic Village

Subsistence:

- Continued conservation and wise use of renewable resources
- Continued traditional respect for land and animals
- Oil development on PCH calving ground threatens sustainability of community

Wage employment:

- realize the need for a stable cash economy (based on traditional ways of hu, trp, & fi w/ limited resource development of timber & mining)
- tourism & recreation (non-consumptive)

Local Control:

- desire to remain a sovereign nation (over land and village) under tribal government
- need local control of education to improve it

Communication/Education:

- Continue to teach youth traditional ways
- realize need for academic education for employment/cash economy
- school understaffed and overcrowded; need better village ed system; maybe seek federal funding for school
- the education system in AV must change in order to build an economic base
- AV workshops (grant-writing; ad/business; tribal legal rights & responsibilities; land planning/res. develop.; construction project planning; fund raising/political)

Infrastructure:

- adequate housing (# & condition)
- clean water
- airport repair; church restoration; road repair, etc.
- high fuel costs => alternative energy technologies

Culture:

- preserve the culture, identity and values of Gwich'in Indian people of Arctic Village
- teach youth Gwich'in Indian language

Elders:

- continue to respect and cherish elders

Social:

- Not allow alcohol and drugs into Arctic Village legally
- lakes drying up

Sources: Nakai't'in'in "Do It Yourself" - A Plan for Preserving the Cultural Identity of the Neets'ait Gwich'in Indians of Arctic Village; field trip