

# Uses of Traditional Ecological Knowledge

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## Case 1:

The Berger Inquiry was the first environmental-social impact assessment that took into consideration the views and knowledge of the aboriginal inhabitants—Inuit, Dene, and Metis—of the proposed pipeline area in the northwest corner of Canada. Local aboriginal residents were represented by the Committee for Original Peoples' Entitlement (COPE), the Council for Yukon Indians, and the Indian Brotherhood of the Northwest Territories/Metis Association (Lalonde & LeBlanc 1991) to express their concerns about the proposed pipeline project. Consequently, Freeman (1979:353) points out that "since the publication of the Berger Inquiry report, the credibility of native hunters as accurate interpreters of nature has become more widely accepted."

## Case 2:

Douglas Nakashima, a researcher from McGill University, undertook, with the help of Inuit hunters, to collect and compile Inuit knowledge of the temporal and spatial distribution of the Hudson Bay eider. One reason for the collection of this information was to obtain baseline ecological data on the eider in case of an oil spill in the region. His research was not simply aimed at acquiring the views and opinions of Inuit residents in the area, but rather it was to create a process by which there would be "formal integration of the Inuit into the EIA process as environmental experts who possess information not readily available to scientists" (Nakashima 1990:1).

## Case 3:

Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak (MKO) and Environmental Protection Laboratories have designed a program aimed at identifying sampling sites and sample types near the Ruttan copper-zinc mine as a result of aboriginal hunters and fishermen refusing to eat the wildlife or drink the water because of a change in taste over the past two years. The sampling sites initially were selected following interviews with local aboriginal hunters and fishermen and subsequently were confirmed by field sampling technicians. Efforts are now being made to establish a comprehensive environmental monitoring system in northern Manitoba that would make use of both TEK and laboratory analyses (Wavey 1993).

## Case 4:

The Hudson Bay Programme (HBP) is a 3-year collaborative research initiative involving the Canadian Arctic Resources Committee, the Environmental Committee of Sanikiluaq, and the Rawson Academy of Aquatic Science. Its goal is to examine the various approaches to assessing cumulative impacts in the Hudson Bay bioregion. The HBP, which relies on both scientific data and TEK in its examination of cumulative impacts in the region, is based on the assumption that TEK can be used in conjunction with science to identify ecosystem components or processes deemed to be under stress or undergoing change. The first step is to identify the changes; the next step is to evaluate the ecosystem's susceptibility to the cumulative impacts of past and present development.