

Title: *How To Assess Food Security From An Inuit Perspective*

Project Summary

Inuit possess a unique understanding of food security within the Arctic; viewing food security to encompass both cultural and environmental systems; systems which interlink and support each other. While many changes are taking affect within Arctic ecosystems, primarily resulting from climate change and industrialization, food security is becoming a central topic of conversation. Research shows that food security definitions and assessment mechanisms do not necessarily match the Arctic ecosystem or cultures within. In response to the need to address food (in)/security of traditional food resources within a changing Arctic, the Inuit Circumpolar-Council Alaska (ICC-AK), has commenced building a framework on how to assess food security from an Inuit perspective.

The project builds upon the support of the ICC-AK board's decision to place food security as its first priority. In addition, the Arctic Council chairmanship has also placed food and water security as a top priority. Three objectives will be met within this project: 1) provide an understanding of Arctic food security, from an Inuit perspective; 2) prioritization of Inuit concerns which impact food security; 3) provide a tool to assess food security across both cultural and environmental systems. Throughout the project; the Inuit perspective and traditional knowledge (TK) will be sought and developed through semi-directive interviews, community meetings, and information gained from previous projects and regional workshops. The developed framework will be shared with the Arctic Council with encouragement to conduct the assessment throughout Alaska and the entire Arctic.

Intellectual Merit

While the world focuses its attention on the Arctic, various actors, including industry, academic institutions, governments, etc. are conducting numerous assessments to better understand how far this unique environment can be pushed before reaching a tipping point. From an Inuit perspective, assessments take place through a food security lens, allowing one to see were the inter-connections between systems lie. The proposed research will provide an understanding of Inuit concerns in food security and a tool for assessing food security within the Arctic through a potentially transformative methodology. The developed assessment methodology will be built from TK and science and focused on Inuit concerns. Such a tool will be invaluable to groups such as, the Arctic Council, which has struggled to incorporate the use of both TK and science in assessments. We recognize that our research is characterized by uncertainty, and as such the methodology is designed to be adaptive as the PI and TK holders work together to create the framework. ICC-AK and the PI are actively engaged in Arctic communities providing the project with a unique accessibility to information that may not be obtained otherwise.

Broader Impacts

ICC-AK is an Inuit run organization, the PI is a minority female and information to build the proposed tool is developed from an under represented group and source of knowledge. The development of this project will bring a greater level of Inuit involvement and TK to future and ongoing assessment projects. Food security is not simply one of academic interest; it is a cornerstone of Inuit culture. Understanding Arctic food security and derived cultural and environmental system interconnections will provide policy makers and leaders with a holistic view of the Arctic. An assessment tool developed from both TK and science ensures community involvement in decisions made that ultimately affect the Arctic. ICC-AK is an acting bridge between local communities, the national government and international bodies such as the Arctic Council. This connection provides ICC-AK with a unique position to ensure maximum impact of this project. The final results will be submitted to the Arctic Council, Alaska Native Organizations, Tribal organizations, NGOs, active Arctic Industry, Regional organizations, Alaska government offices and agencies, federal agencies actively engaged in the Arctic. The project will also be posted on the ICC websites and will be shared with the 16 visited villages through community visits.