

**Community Environmental Monitor Training Course
March 11-20, 2009
Inuvik, NT**



**Funded and delivered by the Inuvialuit Joint Secretariat and Indian and Northern
Affairs Canada through Cumulative Impact Monitoring Program funds**

The Inuvialuit Joint Secretariat, in partnership with the Cumulative Impact Monitoring Program (CIMP) organized an Environmental Monitor Training course for community members from Inuvik, Aklavik and Tuktoyaktuk between March 11th and 20th. Funds for the course were secured through CIMP and the course was delivered by INAC staff from Water Resources and Land Administration and by staff from IMG-Golder in Inuvik.

Course objectives:

The objective of the course was to train local community members in environmental data collection techniques relevant to the NWT CIMP program and monitoring of the proposed Mackenzie Gas Project. The participants, including youth, hunters and trappers and elders, identified potential baseline monitoring sites near their respective communities and provided important input to refine or improve community data collection protocols.

Course Outline:

Day 1: Biophysical monitoring - In-class

- Introductions
- Course outline
- Presentation on ESAT science in the Mackenzie Delta area
- Discussion on science in the Delta region, including future opportunities, environmental change, and traditional knowledge

Break

- Presentation on monitoring and CIMP
- Discussion on community involvement in monitoring, including who to get involved and how
- Introduction to field equipment
- Hands on practice with field equipment

Day 2: Biophysical monitoring - site visits to Inuvik ski club and Harry Channel

Group split into two

- Half the group flew to Harry Channel in Outer Mackenzie Delta to visit an INAC field experiment on the effects of overland winter travel on different delta environments
- The other half of the group visited a potential community monitoring site at the Inuvik ski club
- The groups switched in the afternoon
- In each of the sessions participants collected field data from the research sites using standard data collection protocols.

Day 3: Biophysical monitoring - In-class

- Summary of results and experiences from previous day
- Presentation on overland winter travel experiment
- Discussion regarding community monitoring and field experiments
- Course evaluation

Day 4: Wildlife snow tracking - In-class

- Introductions
- Animal tracking course outline
- Discussion about methods of monitoring animal tracks
- Introduction to scientific approach in monitoring animal tracks
- Introduction to animal track field sheets
- Instruction and practice with handheld GPS units
- Discussion regarding animal tracking in the Mackenzie Delta region (tracks expected, location, common problems in tracking)

Day 5: Wildlife snow tracking – Field methods and protocol refinement

- Recognize, document and report observable tracks and signs of wildlife species present in the area.
- Share knowledge on the general ecology of the animals in order to interpret observed signs of wildlife.
- Understand the principles of standardized data collection and analysis.
- Complete meaningful and accurate datasheets when in the field.
- Use handheld Global Positioning System (GPS) units to record locations in the field.

Day 6: Wildlife snow tracking - Inuvik monitoring sites

- Site visit to Blueberry and Gills Camp monitoring sites
- Practice and refine animal tracking protocol at the sites
- Visit other potential community monitoring sites (Douglas Creek, Blueberry Hill)

Day 7: Wildlife snow tracking – Aklavik monitoring sites

- Site visit to Aklavik and Rat Camp monitoring sites
- Practice and refine animal tracking protocol at the sites
- Visit other potential community monitoring sites (Aklavik gravel quarry)

Day 8: Wildlife snow tracking – Tuktoyaktuk monitoring sites

- Site visit to ESAT Tuktoyaktuk peninsula monitoring sites
- Practice and refine animal tracking protocol at the sites
- Visit other potential community monitoring sites near Tuktoyaktuk (New road development, Husky Lakes)

General impressions

The course was an excellent opportunity for INAC researchers and community members to share knowledge about the environment of the Mackenzie Delta, how it works, and how it is changing. Elders provided tremendous insight into many of the questions that researchers have about the land and how it has changed in recent history. As such, the use of both science and Traditional Knowledge will enhance our understanding of the environment and the potential impacts of development. Such knowledge sharing and capacity building opportunities provide INAC with a better

understanding of community environmental concerns, thus providing researchers with ideas for future research directions and partnerships. Participants and organisers agreed that such opportunities to bring elders, youth, land-users and scientists together to discuss the land, how it is changing and how the community can be involved in monitoring those changes enhance the stewardship roles of the Inuvialuit.

Lessons learned

The course participants were easy to engage in discussions, as participants were heavily invested in the subjects that we were discussing. Standard power point presentations, with a presenter standing up front and delivering a lecture were less effective than having a presenter show a slide with a photo or a figure and then engaging the participants in a discussion about the topic. While the original goal of the course was to train community members as environmental monitors, it quickly became evident that there was an equal flow of knowledge from community members to researchers. Site visits were the most effective means of demonstrating study design and field techniques to participants. Having elders and youth in the course provided an excellent opportunity for cross-generational sharing of knowledge about the land. While elders were keen to share their knowledge about the land and how it is changing it is clear that youth are the likeliest candidates to take on environmental monitoring responsibilities under CIMP. Having elders involved in the monitoring process as mentors will promote future knowledge sharing between the groups.

Next steps

A more detailed follow-up training program should be initiated once environmental monitors for each of the CIMP communities have been identified. In this course potential monitors would receive specific training for each of the community sites, including troubleshooting tips, reporting techniques and site maintenance. The course should involve community elders in mentorship roles.

The success of the March 2009 course has resulted in a request from other regions for similar training. There is a proposal to hold a similar course in winter 2010 in partnership with the Gwich'in Tribal Council.

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