

Indigenous Knowledge Approaches to Informing Policy

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- *Panel: Austin Ahmasuk, Kawerak, Inc.*
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Indigenous peoples have lived in the Arctic for time immemorial. The resilience of these communities relies, in part, on complex knowledge systems that systematically explain the ecosystem beyond environmental observations to include cultural practices and beliefs in addition to biological and physical systems. These knowledge systems hold an interconnected and holistic view that includes people as part of the ecosystem. They are cumulative, handed down from generation to generation while also incorporating new information to reflect present time. Embedded within these knowledge systems are frameworks for evaluating evidence. Similar to academic science there are expert knowledge holders for different disciplines/areas. Indigenous peoples are presently living under contexts that were imposed upon them from a western world view (i.e., prevailing system) versus their own knowledge systems. This is reflected in many aspects of daily life including, for examples: education systems, natural resource management, housing, definitions of wealth/poverty, how research is conducted, etc. Indigenous wisdom and knowledge has been increasingly valued by various sectors, but there remain challenges for how information is equitably considered. This is particularly true in Arctic policy approaches tend to be hierarchical and top-down versus through an Indigenous lens that tends to be collaborative and carried forward by the community. Other challenges include the steps and pace of developing policy, directly engaging expert knowledge holders, communication, and languages. In this session panelists and other Indigenous conference participants will share their experience in developing policy with a focus on collaborative mechanisms that could strengthen future policy development.