Engaging Indigenous Youth and Adults in Community-Focused Efforts Around Climate Change

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Land Acknowledgement

• I am in Fairbanks, Alaska, on the traditional and unceded homelands of the Lower Tanana Dene People. I gratefully acknowledge and honor them, their past and current relationship to and care of the land. I am committed to building long term reciprocal partnerships with Indigenous individuals and organizations in my work in support of their sovereignty and self-determination.
Why engage Indigenous Youth and Adults in community-focused climate change work?

Climate change affects us all. We need diverse people, talent and skill sets, and knowledge systems for intergenerational climate learning and action— for climate adaptation.

Association of Interior Native Educators
Why engage Indigenous Youth and Adults in community-focused climate change work?

Indigenous peoples bring many strengths:

- Community values
- Indigenous knowledge and practices
What is Indigenous Knowledge?

“Indigenous knowledge is a systematic way of thinking applied to phenomena across biological, physical, cultural and spiritual systems. It includes insights based on evidence acquired through direct and long-term experiences and extensive and multigenerational observations, lessons and skills. It has developed over millennia and is still developing in a living process, including knowledge acquired today and in the future, and it is passed on from generation to generation.” – Inuit Circumpolar Council
Why engage Indigenous Youth and Adults in community-focused climate change work? 

Climate Change disproportionately impacts Indigenous populations who are deeply connected to the land.
Permafrost warming over past fifty years in Alaska

From V. Romanovsky
Climate Change Impacts

from G. Juday
Impacts – Alaskan communities

Shishmaref bluff retreat

... severe erosion caused by
Coastal erosion... (Shishmaref October 2005)
Key Findings from Signs of the Land Camp

Reaching Arctic Communities Facing Climate Change Project

Figure 1. Participants’ Knowledge of Climate Change Before and After Camp:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Causes, Impacts, and Solutions</th>
<th>PRE</th>
<th>POST</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The causes of climate change</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact of climate change</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ways we can slow down climate change</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=15
Indigenous Knowledge & Ways valued

“I felt well educated on the Western science and perspectives of climate change, but the real value of the camp was in teaching to the heart and spirit. The elders taught so many lessons and we all brought powerful stories. The success of the story telling and values-based experience at this camp was invaluable.”
Why engage Indigenous Youth and Adults in climate change work?

• Indigenous adults want their youth to learn STEM and gain skills and tools for climate change adaptation plans and action in their communities

• Indigenous youth want to contribute to their community
Kwethluk River Bank Erosion Study

- Alaska Native students at their study site and at a GLOBE international conference in Ireland
- They shared who they are and real life climate change experience through the science session and the cultural session.
A climate change learning and data success story

- Edward David  Elder
- Cassius Brown  Assistant Principal, Teacher
- Joseph Mute  Tribal Administrator

Credit: Association of Village Council Presidents
Other benefits of engaging Indigenous and other adults in community focused efforts on climate change

95% of experts reflected about building relationships with scientists or Indigenous culture experts and practicing cultural responsivity.

70% of the experts involved believed A&E provided opportunities for mutual learning among the participants and the partnering scientists, Indigenous content experts, and educators.
Thank you

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