

NWT Environmental

Research Bulletin (NERB)



NWT Cumulative Impact Monitoring Program (NWT CIMP)

A source of environmental monitoring and research in the NWT. The program coordinates, conducts and funds the collection, analysis and reporting of information related to environmental conditions in the NWT.

NWT Environmental Research Bulletin (NERB)

A series of brief plain language summaries of various environmental research findings in the Northwest Territories. If you're conducting environmental research in the NWT, consider sharing your information with northern residents in a bulletin. These research summaries are also of use to northern resource decision-makers.

Improving Resource Management using Indigenous Knowledge and Community-Based Monitoring

The inclusion of indigenous knowledge (IK) in natural resource decisions can result in outcomes that are better for humans and the environment and are more reflective of local concerns. This project explored the needs and challenges in documenting and applying IK into cumulative impact monitoring and decision-making. We found four core challenges to integrating IK and developed recommendations to help address these challenges.

Why is this research important?

Despite best intentions, communities, researchers, analysts, and regulatory boards in the Northwest Territories struggle to incorporate IK into resource monitoring and decision-making. To understand why this is and to make recommendations for improvement, the barriers to meaningfully including IK were investigated.



(Credit: Jamie Stevenson Photography, Artist – Lena Adzin)

What did we do?

We examined when IK was cited or included in decision-making processes in the NWT, and how decision-makers considered and incorporated IK. This was done by:

- Reviewing scholarly literature on IK integration and community-based monitoring (CBM);
- Interviewing research practitioners and regulators; and
- Reviewing recent NWT environmental assessment decisions.

What did we find?

The challenges to including IK in resource decisions can be grouped into five themes:

- The expectation of what IK is and of its inclusion.
- The depth of inclusion of IK in resource monitoring and decision-making processes.
- Combining different types of knowledge, co-production of knowledge, and the use of different methods.
- The principles of ownership, control, and access for Indigenous people over their knowledge.
- Unclear linkages between observation-based IK and how to apply it in regulatory settings.

We determined that CBM provides unique opportunities for gathering and integrating IK. CBM allows for the development of new methods for considering IK alongside other (conventional) knowledge systems.

What does this mean?

Based on the results of this project, we have outlined recommendations to Indigenous organizations and environmental regulators, such as the Mackenzie Valley Review Board, Land and Water Boards of the Mackenzie Valley, Renewable Resources Boards, and GNWT, to improve the inclusion of IK in environmental decision-making.

Recommendations for Indigenous Organizations:

- Design CBM according to the information needs, interests, and concerns of the Indigenous community.
- Articulate and follow established methods for Indigenous and qualitative research and monitoring.
- Plan for and design information gathering around how and with whom the results can be shared.
- Create capacity and technical infrastructure (i.e. data management protocols & database).

Recommendations for environmental regulators and decision-makers:

- Public meetings and hearings intended to gather IK and community input must be designed to serve that function rather than being tacked onto other technical sessions.
- Provide staff training on IK research methods and integration with science and decision-making.
- Identify linkages between information gathered by CBM and resource management information needs.



(Credit: Tawna Brown Photography)

Recommended Reading:

Keats, Beth. (2020). Exploration of Indigenous Knowledge in Community-Based Monitoring Initiatives: Challenges and Recommendations. Master of Arts, Interdisciplinary Studies, Royal Roads University.
https://viurrspace.ca/bitstream/handle/10613/23273/Keats_royalroads_13130_10683.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

Keats, B & Evans P. (2020). Traditional knowledge and resource management in the Northwest Territories, Canada: Definitions, disciplinary divides, and reasons for decisions. EXIS 7, pp:1309-1318.

Contacts

Beth Keats, Royal Roads University
 beth.keats@trailmarksys.com

North Slave Métis Alliance
 general@nsma.net

NWT Cumulative Impact Monitoring Program (CIMP185)
 nwtcimp@gov.nt.ca