

Breakout session

Group 2, Friday, September 26, 2008

Rapporteur: Drew Gerkey

The presentations featured in this plenary session stimulated a wide-ranging discussion in our breakout session. Session participants identified two key themes for addressing the many issues of an accessible arctic in the global economy: transportation and governance.

Reflecting on the material presented by Lawson Brigham and Reynir Gislason, our group felt that the big task facing arctic stakeholders is to effectively integrate research and policy. Here, our discussion echoed a common refrain heard throughout the 5th assembly: the need for developing mechanisms to collect and communicate information that can inform policy makers as well as other groups that are involved in governance. Like previous reports, the forthcoming Arctic Marine Shipping Assessment promises to provide a great deal of information, but will also pose challenges for dissemination. One example of how to address the challenge of communication that we discussed was the Institute of the North's *Top of the World Telegraph* newsletter, which gathers relevant articles from media sources throughout the North and compiles them for wider distribution.

Much of our breakout session was devoted to discussing the potential costs and benefits that northern sea shipping routes may hold for northern states and local communities. On the local level, a participant from Iceland raised concerns about whether or not the development of transportation would impose costs on fisheries and other natural resources that are vital for many communities. Similarly, a participant from Canada noted that many northern communities lack the natural sea ports that would allow them to benefit from northern shipping routes, leaving them with only the potential environmental costs. Moreover, several participants noted that potential costs and benefits differ regionally, creating a diverse pattern of interests that present challenges for governance. Thus, our group agreed that regarding governance the primary task for stakeholders is to

establish boundaries for sovereignty and locate nested interests that connect state and regional concerns.

Although a great deal of uncertainty surrounding these efforts remains, our group discussed some specific cases where solutions have been or may be achieved. First, a participant from Alaska described how the timing of shipping routes through the Bering Strait had been coordinated with local patterns of whaling in order to prevent disruptions of this important activity. Second, a potential transportation shuttle between two arctic locales (ex. the Aleutian Islands and Iceland) was discussed as a means by which common interests could unite otherwise disparate regions. Finally, a participant presented Alaska's Arctic Council Working Group as an example of ongoing efforts to connect regional stakeholders and communities to the processes of governance at broader scales. With these examples in mind, our breakout session adjourned to enjoy the rest of the evening at the Alaska Native Heritage Center.