

Research for, with, and by Northern Society: Northern Research in the Public Interest

Report by Elena Piterskaya

Post-graduate student
Department of American Studies,
Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology
Russian Academy of Sciences

Notes

1) *Karen Kraft Sloan (Former Canadian Member of Parliament)*

All research is conducted by governments and research is under-funded in Canada. It is necessary to consider the need of researchers. Different departments have conflicting mandates and it is necessary to coordinate their work

2) *Frank Pokiak (Inuvialuit Renewable Resources Committee)*

When it comes to research for Polar bear, seals, walrus there is a lot of talks but nothing is really done. As for native traditional knowledge, scientists are including traditional knowledge into their research.

3) *Peter Johnson, Chair, Canadian Polar Commission*

What is public interest?

Communities, organization, publics – the whole series of terms – series of publics

Public on a global scale – providing data for international needs

Community level

Interaction with different publics – for the implementation of common projects

4) *Frances Abele (President ACUNS, Carleton University)*

common things – research makes a contribution. During last 50 years more collaboration between scholars and communities
skills we are lacking – researchers don't listen. Listening is a highly valuable skill – a way that allows you to learn
public space created by universities
public discussions – only during the tightly controlled events – congresses, conferences to provide information for public, conducting independent research

Issues raised during the discussion:

- How the indigenous communities expect researchers to behave?
- Participation of researchers and policy makers – we only talk about consultations we should talk about the participation
- Mainstream research is mainly supported. The public asks – why don't they do relevant research? No funding.
- Differences in mandates
- Research has become highly commercialized. The point for researcher is to discover knowledge
- Interest for research in the community
- Public and research
- Specialization and application of knowledge
- Synthesis of information

- Integration of traditional knowledge into the research, expansion of research

Session Part 2

5) Samuel Yangen
 Protocol – for science connected with the culture
 Science is based on curiosity
 To develop interest in community
 Traditional knowledge is what elders say to us

6) *Niels Einarson (Director, Stefansson Arctic Institute)*

The Arctic Human Development Report – 26 authors

- Human conditions in the Arctic
- Sustainable development – a human centered concept
- Knowledge construction and the need for contribution and feedback from the public
- Accessible knowledge about the North is needed – policy makers and public
- Arctic sociocultural change in a new perspective
- Local perceptions of the nature of change is crucial
- Languages are key markers of cultural and ethnic identity
- Transfer of decision making powers to local authorities will take time

7) *Alexander Sokolov*

Station for ecological monitoring
 Long-term observations of natural events
 The year-round presence of researchers
 Usage of natural resources in a rational way
 Consequences of exploitation of gas and oil fields
 Support by administrative resources

Discussion:

- Policy implications
- Traditional knowledge policy – use and apply. Traditional native practices and ways
- Patricia Cochran – Our cultural values remained intact – this is the key to our survival. We teach our children ourselves. We pass not only that knowledge that we get from our ancestors, but also what we learn from our life – that’s why our traditional knowledge survive.
- The necessity to study politics as a complex phenomenon

- The necessity to strengthen the Arctic council

Summary Text:

The session “Northern Research in the Public Interest” continued the work of two previous sessions “International Research Agenda for the Emerging Circumpolar World” and “Community-based Research in the North”. The session was chaired by Professor François Trudel (University Laval, ACUNS). 7 panelists made their presentations that were followed by an interesting discussion on public interest, public policy, decision making and research. As Professor James McDonald underlined the multinational audience was a great advantage for the session on public policy because the variety of examples, comments and ideas suggested by the representatives of different countries and different regions of Canada was really remarkable and highly appreciated by all participants.

Karen Kraft Sloan focused on science and research life cycles, she showed drivers that stimulate science and research, especially stressing the problem of Arctic sciences in the public interest.

Peter Johnson draw our attention to the necessity of defining what do we mean by the public interest, pointing out that there is a whole variety of publics – communities, organizations, publics on a global scale and publics on community level.

Frances Abele stressed that the modern researchers lack of highly valuable listening skills – a way that allows us to learn. She also stated the problem of lacking of wide public discussions that now usually happen only during the tightly controlled events, like conferences, congresses.

In the discussion we covered such problems as proceeding from consultation to participation, collaboration of researchers and policy makers, financial support only for mainstream research, interest of research for the community itself, traditional knowledge and its integration into the research.

During the second part of the session three more presentations were made about: Deh Cho First nation Traditional Knowledge Protocol, the Arctic Human Development Report, and about the ecological monitoring station.

This part of the session was also followed by a fruitful discussion with ideas and suggestions

regarding traditional knowledge policy, its use and application, the policy of the Arctic Council. In general I think that the discussion was very successful and thought-provoking, and it showed that still there are a lot problems to manage and things to discuss in the field of interrelations between public and research.

As for the young researchers I think that this session and NRF in general was a very valuable learning experience that contributed to our listening and analytical skills.

As for recommendations to the NRF maybe it is necessary to involve scholars from aboriginal societies and representatives of native communities more into the Forum process and not only organize a special session for them (Community-based research in the North) but also to invite them to actively participate in the work of other sessions (especially dealing with Resource Management, Policy Issues and Film Festival as well) where they can present their view on the same problems – the opinion of insiders.