

trackingchange

Stories of Change: A Side Event of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

May 2, 2019 - Church of the Covenant (310 E 42nd Street)

Doors Open at 1:30 - Public Presentation and Discussion begins at 2PM

Tracking Change is a six year research program funded through the *Canadian Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council* (2016-2021) and other partners. Guided by a Traditional Knowledge Steering Committee (of elders, Chiefs and other leaders), it currently comprises a network of more than 60 Indigenous, Caboclos/Riverine and ethnic Lao/Thai communities and partner organizations from northwestern Canada (Mackenzie), Tapajos (Lower Amazon) and the Lower Mekong River Basins. The purpose of the project is to build capacity for Indigenous peoples and local fishing communities to document and share their own knowledge about changes in the sustainability of freshwater ecosystems and the associated impacts on local fishing livelihoods. More than 40 community led projects have been supported and resulted in new insights about these river basins as well as methodological innovations for documenting and sharing local and traditional knowledge.

Tracking Change has created opportunities for collaborative and community-based research in which Indigenous communities lead in the documentation and sharing of knowledge about critical issues of social and ecological sustainability. The network and supporting partners (e.g., Government of the Northwest Territories) works together to ensure Indigenous voices (including voices of youth) can be heard at different scales of decision-making (e.g., regional – national - global). For example, a group of Indigenous youth (Grade 10-11) from the network traveled to *24th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 24)* to have their voices heard on climate change. Traditional knowledge documented over the last three years, has also been used in implementing a trans-jurisdictional water agreement between provinces and territories in Canada. However, there are many challenges and issues that remain important for discussion and action:

Sustainability of Freshwater Ecosystems and Fishing Livelihoods for Indigenous Peoples

Freshwater ecosystems and freshwater fisheries have critical ecological, social, cultural and spiritual value to the livelihoods of Indigenous peoples and other communities. How can Indigenous governments, fishing communities and organizations work together with others to protect freshwater ecosystems and associated Indigenous livelihoods and cultures from climate change, resource development and other kinds of political, economic and environmental pressures?

Addressing Climate Change Impacts on Freshwater Ecosystems and Indigenous Peoples

Indigenous communities are uniquely affected by climate change because of their long-term relationship to the land, water, wildlife as well as freshwater ecosystems. It has been recently reported that northern Canada is warming twice as fast as other parts of the globe. How can Indigenous communities work with the **Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change** take action to address climate change impacts? How can Indigenous peoples in Canada and other nations and elsewhere work together to meet the greenhouse gas emission reduction targets for 2020 and foregrounding Indigenous community health and well-being in climate change adaptation planning?

Addressing the Impacts of Resource Development on Freshwater Ecosystems and Indigenous Peoples

Resource development, including hydro-electric development, oil and gas exploration and mining activity have had many kinds of negative effects on Indigenous peoples, economies and cultures. In the Mackenzie-Amazon-Mekong, hydroelectric development projects have been constructed and others planned and developed without the consent of Indigenous peoples and fishing communities whose livelihoods depend on the sustainability of fresh water systems. Mining activity is also creating increased risks for freshwater ecosystems and freshwater livelihoods in the Mackenzie and Amazon and elsewhere.

- a) How can we investigate and address the livelihood needs and rights of Indigenous communities and how they are impacted by large-scale resource development?
- b) How can we take action to ensure that multi-national corporations (e.g., Canadian mining companies) are held account to high standards of environmental and socio-economic practice around the world? How can we ensure that the principle of *free, prior and informed consent* is upheld in Canada, Brazil and Thailand and in other Indigenous homelands?

Celebrating and Nurturing Indigenous Youth

Indigenous youth have much to share and much to learn from their elders, leaders, communities and others. What are the ways we can celebrate the unique voices and contributions of youth to ecological and cultural sustainability? Can we create more opportunities for Indigenous youth from around the world to network together, to learn from both Indigenous Knowledge and science and to take innovative action in addressing current emergent needs and issues in their own communities?

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