

LCIPP Activity 4: Annual Thematic Workshops Summary Report

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I. Introduction

Under activity 4 of the LCIPP's initial two-year workplan, two members of the LCIPP's Facilitative Working Group (FWG) co-led a series of thematic training workshops. These workshops have the objective to build capacity of Parties and relevant stakeholders toward understanding, respecting, recognizing, and increasing their potential for ethical engagement of indigenous knowledge in the context of averting, minimizing, and addressing the adverse impacts of climate change.

This objective is consistent with the findings of Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reports highlighting the adverse impacts of climate change upon indigenous peoples and their communities, and the significance and value of indigenous knowledge of the diverse and biologically rich ecosystems across the globe. Though these workshops were originally anticipated to take place in-person, due to Covid-19, the co-leads determined to organize virtual sessions. The series of training webinars were held virtually from late 2020-early 2021, featuring presentations from fifteen knowledge holders from across each of the seven UN indigenous socio-cultural regions. The recordings of each webinar are available [here](#), and the webinar topics were entitled as followed:

- **Training webinar 1** (19 November 2020), "Trust and respect: Contours of indigenous knowledge"
- **Training webinar 2** (21 January 2021), "What does ethical and equitable engagement of indigenous knowledge in the context of climate change look like?"
- **Training webinar 3** (25 February 2021), "Utilization of indigenous knowledge in knowledge synthesis, and co-production of indigenous knowledge"
- **Training webinar 4** (25 March 2021), "Opportunities and moving forward: Substantive and procedural measures to ensure the ethical engagement of indigenous knowledge holders and the use of indigenous knowledge in the context of climate change policy and action"

This report provides a summary of the key points identified by invited presenters as indigenous knowledge holders and both indigenous and non-indigenous experts throughout each webinar, followed by conclusions and recommendations written by the FWG co-leads of the activity, Dr. Dalee Sambo Dorough and Mr. Thomas Cameron.

II. Webinar 1: Trust and respect: Contours of indigenous knowledge

The first webinar of the series provided a comprehensive overview of establishing what indigenous knowledge is, distinguishing it from other knowledge systems. Expert speakers highlighted the following points, elucidating that indigenous knowledge (IK) is spatially and

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temporally descriptive, with cultural processes that are constantly evolving. Indigenous knowledge systems are not static; they are systems of knowledge which have adapted over the millennia and reflect the observations and interactions of indigenous peoples with and within their respective ecosystems, and the natural world and its conditions. Thus, IK is adaptive, holistic, intergenerational, and dynamic. IK can complement other ways of knowing and other knowledge systems and approaches. IK does not require external validation. Furthermore, speakers illuminated that it is difficult, if not impossible, to separate IK from indigenous values and all other elements of the lives of indigenous peoples within their lands, territories, and with their resources. Therefore, any utilization of IK requires the respectful and intentional engagement with indigenous peoples. Lastly, experts acknowledged that in the face of climate change, national-level climate action plans and policies offer unique opportunities to enhance the inclusion of IK in mitigating and adapting to climate change and more significantly, to understanding the multifaceted and diverse impacts of climate change and its compounding adverse effects on the interrelated elements of the natural world.

The first speaker, **Dr. Naomi Kipuri** [Africa] explained the importance of cultural values and practices in informing and developing IK. She also explored how IK has adapted to shifting environmental factors throughout centuries, illuminating how this closely informs climate change adaptation. Additionally, she highlighted the vital importance of incorporating IK into the curricula of school systems and other educational processes within indigenous communities. She emphasized that IK is adaptive, intergenerational, dynamic, and not static. Naomi also underscored that IK has developed over millennia and is still developing, that it is intimately tied to the environment and that it is important to maintain both.

The second expert speaker, **Ms. Naw Ei Ei Min** [Asia], highlighted existing human rights frameworks for IK and best practices in existing mechanisms at the international and regional levels. This included the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, in particular Article 8(j) and the Nagoya Protocol. She also spoke of how recognition of indigenous peoples is linked to the recognition of IK.

Lastly, **Dr. Victoria Qutuuq Buschman** [Arctic] explained that under the threat of climate change in the Arctic region, IK can serve a critical role in complementing and further informing scientific approaches and data collection. She highlighted that IK provides strong, detailed descriptions of ecosystem dynamics. She also noted that this knowledge is not individually, but collectively owned, and that IK is a source within and as such a key cornerstone of indigenous sovereignty and self-determination, which is why the recognition of and respect for the right of indigenous peoples to maintain, control, protect and develop their IK and other intellectual property as well as the safeguards needed to ensure the ethical and equitable engagement of IK holders and IK are vital. Furthermore, she affirmed that IK has its own validation processes and provided useful examples of what IK is not. She also spoke of the vitality and strength of IK as constant among Inuit and indigenous peoples unlike the ever-changing methodologies and approaches of non-indigenous science and research. She concluded by indicating that trust and genuine respect are core, and that IK should never be used against indigenous peoples.

III. **Webinar 2: What does ethical and equitable engagement of indigenous knowledge in the context of climate change look like?**

This webinar highlighted the importance of building the capacity of actors, such as state Parties, research institutions and others, to ethically and equitably engage with IK holders and indigenous communities as equal co-producers of knowledge. Expert speakers underscored the importance of respecting community protocols and recognizing that IK cannot be understood without an understanding of the distinct cultural contexts, worldviews, and values of indigenous peoples. Speakers highlighted that ethical and equitable engagement entails recognizing the equal role of IK along with scientific knowledge in informing decision-making, and the significance of respecting and recognizing the profound relationship that indigenous peoples have to their lands and environment as well as their rights to land and intellectual property. Other elements related to equitable and ethical engagement include: valuing IK, appropriately compensating indigenous communities, and understanding and respecting indigenous rights and existing community protocols. This may ensure that research also serves a practical purpose from the point of view of indigenous peoples and their communities. These elements also ensure that indigenous peoples themselves are directly involved in the defining of research and key priorities or objectives of research that will impact indigenous peoples and their communities.

The first speaker, Mr. **Chili Yazzie** [North America] is a Traditional Farmer from the Diné Peoples of the Navajo Nation and he emphasized that indigenous peoples have crucial answers to help societies reorient towards sustainable living by recalibrating the equilibrium between humans and the natural world. This is a profound, critical and urgent concern for the 'comfortable survival' of future generations. Chili spoke of the crucial relationship of indigenous peoples to Mother Earth and how our fate is linked to the fate of the Earth Mother.

Mr. Atencio Lopez [Central America] spoke of traditional medicine and IK and how it has been disrespected in the context of intellectual property, emphasizing the need for recognition of the rights of indigenous peoples and respecting indigenous values. He further highlighted how indigenous peoples and their knowledge hold legitimate solutions to global crises such as climate change, yet indigenous peoples are faced with the negative outcomes of development, such as land grabbing. He expressed the need for widespread adherence to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the American Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as well as ILO Convention 169.

Next, **Chief Slava Shadrin** [Russian Federation] explained that for indigenous peoples in his region of Russia, the impacts of a changing climate are already being felt, and indigenous peoples must be engaged as equals in the pursuit of research on climate change taking place on their lands. Slava expressed the need for indigenous peoples to be partners of research and not merely subjects. He outlined that for engagement to be ethical and equitable, respect of the right to free, prior, and informed consent is necessary. He stated that mutual respect is key and that there is a need to remove the inequality that persists in the interactions between different knowledge systems, wherein he reminded the audience about a principle that indigenous peoples promote as basis for collaboration in several

fields, “nothing about us without us.” He also mentioned that indigenous peoples must be compensated for their time, any external research must be practical from the point of view of indigenous communities, and that the intellectual property rights of indigenous communities over their knowledge must be safeguarded in every collaboration.

Finally, **Dr. Victoria Qutuuq Buschman** [Arctic] highlighted examples of how indigenous communities are complementing climate science in the Arctic, where climate impacts are already being felt. She noted that it is imperative to recognize IK as equal to scientific knowledge in informing and contributing to decision-making, and to respect the unique protocols of indigenous communities in relation to their knowledge. Victoria spoke of the ongoing development of ethical, equitable, fair, and just engagement of IK. She emphasized that in knowledge production it is essential for researchers from outside indigenous peoples’ communities to recognize, understand, and respect indigenous peoples’ governance structures and identify IK holders and partners at the outset. She concluded with remarks about the criteria that indigenous peoples have to identify when research is unethical.

IV. Webinar 3: Utilization of indigenous knowledge in knowledge synthesis, and co-production of indigenous knowledge

In the third webinar, guidance on appropriate co-production of knowledge was outlined by expert indigenous speakers. Numerous presenters highlighted that conventional science approaches have historically and continue to exclude indigenous peoples and their knowledge systems. To cultivate knowledge synthesis and co-production, systems of knowledge of indigenous peoples and ways of knowing need to be understood, respected, and recognized as legitimate. Indigenous peoples and their communities require recognition of their intellectual property rights to be able to take this knowledge into the future, and the *United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UNDRIP)¹ must be at the core of all engagement with indigenous peoples. Regarding the process of co-production of knowledge, indigenous communities must be fully engaged participants and partners in every step of the research process, from defining the scope of research to analysis and dissemination. Researchers working on knowledge synthesis should value different knowledge systems, including indigenous knowledge, and in doing so must recognize that indigenous peoples and their communities are the holders of IK and have the right to control and direct appropriate synthesis and how they want their knowledge to be applied. Experts explained that this relationship for co-production with indigenous peoples must be continuous throughout the various phases of research, from the outset to the conclusion and local indigenous peoples must be compensated for their engagement when consulted or co-producing research. Finally, speakers acknowledged that co-production can be an incredibly laborious process, and thus first establishing trust is vital.

The first indigenous expert and knowledge holder to speak at the session, **Ms. Jessica Wegener** [Pacific], presented her work as a practitioner with the Firesticks Alliance. In her work Jessica engages with indigenous communities throughout Australia on the

¹ The *United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UNDRIP) full text can be found here: <https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/declaration-on-the-rights-of-indigenous-peoples.html>

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revitalization of land management through traditional Aboriginal knowledge. Jessica underscored the importance of indigenous leadership in driving the process, which catalyzes discussions with indigenous peoples at the local level on how they want to apply and revitalize their knowledge. She also commented on how the cultural practices of her people are not only traditional practices, but more significantly they are responsibilities that they have to their communities and their lands. After negative impacts of extractive practices have occurred, she explained that people have to take on the role of custodians as a responsibility to future generations.

The second speaker, **Dr. Anna Kerttula de Echave** [Arctic and North America], surveyed the history of research and the various eras that lent themselves to what she referred to as “chauvinism in science”. She outlined other trends in science that have slowly moved toward the need for co-production of knowledge. The more recent models have allowed for power-sharing and pivots away from only including conventional science. She further underscored the importance of indigenous leadership in guiding projects related to IK and climate change. She highlighted examples from Alaska, such as the *Kawerak Recommendations for Co-Production of Knowledge*,² which outline appropriate guidance concerning the importance of projects led by indigenous communities, and that this requires full community collaboration.

Ms. Alicia Mousseau [North America], joining as the third expert speaker, cited examples of the importance of non-indigenous scientists and researchers having continuous relationships with indigenous peoples, such as through the establishment of community advisory boards, to ensure that projects related to IK always follow appropriate ethical and cultural considerations. She spoke about the rich history of IK and indigenous ways of knowing and compared the approaches of different knowledge systems in answering the same question, noting the emphasis on visual elements and relationships used in the approach of her community. She concluded by underscoring the importance of genuine examples of co-production models and that constructive, trustful relationships are one of the most significant elements in co-producing knowledge with indigenous peoples.

Finally, **Mr. Clement Yow Mulalap** [Pacific] commented that IK is a constantly evolving body of knowledge, and it must be viewed as complementary, not subordinate to western science. IK systems are rigorous and valid. He referred to the constant need for good relationships between indigenous peoples and researchers from outside. Mr. Mulalap characterized this as the creation of a safe place to ensure that the integrity of the people and the environment are safeguarded. He summed this up in the term reciprocity and that co-production of knowledge not only requires protocols but also genuine cooperation and exchange. In conclusion, he spoke of the need for resources and financial support to ensure that appropriate and respectful engagement of indigenous knowledge and with the people who hold that indigenous knowledge is ensured.

² Read *Kawerak Recommendations for Co-Production of Knowledge* here: <https://kawerak.org/co-production-of-knowledge-in-research-valuing-traditional-knowledge/>

V. Webinar 4: Opportunities and moving forward: Substantive and procedural measures to ensure the ethical engagement of indigenous knowledge holders and the use of indigenous knowledge in the context of climate change policy and action

In the final webinar, expert panelists introduced the topic by explaining that IK is comprehensive and holistic, spanning millennia. Indigenous knowledge is the foundation of the identities and resilience of indigenous peoples, and thus indigenous knowledge holders must be understood as owners of IK. One cannot engage with IK without engaging directly with its knowledge holders. Indigenous knowledge holders have the right to preserve their knowledge for themselves, as certain knowledge cannot be shared. Experts also drew attention to the vital role indigenous women play in maintaining and sharing IK. Regarding co-production of knowledge, speakers outlined that it takes time, and mutual trust and respect is essential in both sharing IK and co-producing knowledge with indigenous peoples. Speakers highlighted that there are a multitude of options for engaging IK inside and outside of the UNFCCC process. These options included that Party delegations to the UNFCCC could include IK holders and to establish specific inter-constituted body guidelines on the engagement of IK holders and IK.

IK holder, **Ms. Maria Eugenia Choque Quispe** [Latin America], outlined the nuance and innovation present in IK that positions indigenous peoples as irreplaceable stewards of biodiversity. She additionally highlighted the crucial role indigenous women play in keeping and sharing IK, thus underscoring the importance of ensuring the full and effective participation of indigenous women in climate policy spaces. She referred to the important collective ownership of IK as well as the significant role that indigenous peoples' political institutions play in ensuring recognition of indigenous values as well as the traditional authorities of indigenous communities.

Ms. Monica Kristiani Ndoen [Asia], a legal expert in the rights of indigenous peoples, highlighted the imperative for indigenous peoples to have the full right to their territories to safeguard their environment and ecosystems, and to transfer their knowledge to future generations. She explained that IK is vital to cultivating community resilience, which cannot be fulfilled without indigenous sovereignty and self-determination. She emphasized that IK is inseparable from the lands, territories, and resources of indigenous peoples and highlighted the significant role indigenous peoples play in political institutions.

The third expert speaker and former member of the Sami Parliament, **Mr. Aslak Holmberg** [Arctic], explained that one challenge in ethical engagement with IK is that laboratory researchers and scientists are not familiar with the practices of IK holders, and vice versa. He further reinforced that mutual respect for both knowledge systems is essential, and IK must be seen as valuable, on equal footing with, and complementary to scientific knowledge. Aslak spoke of the distinct social context of his community and that of indigenous peoples, indicating the critical importance of the holistic knowledge system of the Sami. He stated that there are important economic, social, cultural, and political dimensions to the matter of IK. He continued that these elements are also linked to a diverse range of skills. He also referenced the activities of Sami out on the land, the stories, and experiences, especially those of understanding the behavior of animals and other carefully gathered observations that are central to many elements of IK. Aslak also

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mentioned the challenges that face some indigenous peoples and their communities when there are no clear structures to ensure the ethical use of IK. He reminded the audience that there are important considerations that must be considered in knowledge production, such as what kind of IK will be shared, who are the rights holders and who are the knowledge holders, what is the ethical way to share knowledge, what are the internal procedures, how will the two systems work together, how will sufficient time for engagement and co-production of knowledge be ensured, among other factors. A key recommendation shared was the need to build organizational capacity on community and/or national levels for dealing with indigenous knowledge. It is not effective nor useful to simply engaging with individual knowledge holders without, for example, a collective way of defining what is the knowledge that should be shared, and this requires more capacity. He concluded by indicating that there remains a need to ensure equal consideration of and value for IK and other knowledge systems.

As the last expert speaker, **Dr. Valerie Masson-Delmotte** of the IPCC illuminated concrete examples of how IK holders can improve assessment and synthesis of knowledge about climate change and climate governance. She shared an example from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's (IPCC) Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate where the Inuit Circumpolar Council was invited to provide input and contributed to the substance of the report through the use of IK. This contribution exemplified both the capacity of indigenous peoples to engage, and more importantly the extensive knowledge of indigenous peoples that is pertinent and indeed critical to providing international assessments and discussions the best available knowledge. She emphasized the importance of the linkage between climate, biodiversity, and the impacts on the lands of indigenous peoples, citing examples of impacts of land-based climate change and agriculture. Each of her examples underscored the risks for indigenous peoples and others in terms of climate impacts, from loss of culture, loss of IK, food security, health, ecosystem management, and more. Valerie indicated that there are many policy actions and climate-related questions best informed and addressed using both IK and science, and that such efforts can take place at all levels, including regional policy engagement. She concluded with the need to make investments in education to reduce risk and enhance climate literacy.

V. Conclusions and Recommendations

Key themes which emerged across all the webinars are synthesized and outlined below, followed by recommendations from the activity 4 co-leads based on the knowledge shared by indigenous experts during the webinar series. These themes represent key points shared by indigenous knowledge holders on understanding, respecting, recognizing, and increasing the potential for ethical engagement of indigenous knowledge in the context of averting, minimizing, and addressing the adverse impacts of climate change.

A. Recognition

Recognition of and respect for the right of indigenous peoples to maintain, control, protect and develop their IK and other intellectual property, as well as the safeguards needed to ensure the ethical and equitable engagement of IK holders and IK, are vital. The *United*

Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) should be at the core of all engagement with indigenous peoples.

B. Respect

Respect for all knowledge systems including IK is essential, and IK must be seen as valuable, equal, and complementary to scientific knowledge.

C. Role of indigenous women

Indigenous women play a crucial role in keeping and sharing IK and it is critical to ensure the full and effective participation of indigenous women in climate policy spaces.

D. Profound relation to indigenous land, territories, and resources

Ethical and equitable engagement entails recognizing and respecting IK as equal to scientific knowledge in decision-making. It also requires recognition and respect for the profound relationship that indigenous peoples have with their lands and environment as well as their rights to land and intellectual property. Ethical and equitable engagement also includes respecting and valuing IK, recognizing and compensating indigenous knowledge holders for their time, and ensuring that the engagement serves a practical purpose from the point of view of indigenous peoples.

E. Importance of indigenous peoples in research

In engaging indigenous knowledge, it is critical that indigenous peoples are partners in research and not merely subjects. In practice, this translates into indigenous peoples being direct partners in defining the research and key priorities or objectives that will impact indigenous peoples and their communities.

F. National climate policies and actions

National-level climate action plans and policies offer unique opportunities to enhance the inclusion of IK in mitigating and adapting to climate change. Inclusion of IK in national plans to mitigate and adapt to climate change contributes an enhanced understanding of multifaceted and diverse impacts of climate change and its compounding adverse effects on the interrelated elements of the natural and social world.

G. Potential for guidelines

There are opportunities to enhance ethical and equitable engagement in the UNFCCC process. Parties could consider, for example, including IK holders on their delegations to the Convention. Guidance could be developed that would be useful to bodies under the convention, including in the work of constituted bodies, on the engagement of IK holders and IK.

H. Co-lead's recommendations to enhance the ethical engagement of indigenous knowledge related to climate change

- Support early career indigenous peoples in pursuit of science degrees in order to assist in bridging the huge gaps that remain between IK and science;

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- Enhance financial resources for indigenous peoples to gather at the local, regional, and national level to discuss and identify protocols, guidelines, and values that support their right to “maintain, control, protect and develop” their knowledge;
- Support for indigenous peoples in organizing and scheduling of local and national workshops focused on assisting Party representatives to increase their capacity for understanding the value and content of indigenous knowledge and indigenous peoples’ protocols and guidelines for the use of indigenous knowledge;
- Encourage Parties to implement genuine co-production of knowledge at the national and local level consistent with the rights affirmed in the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* as well as those protocols, guidelines, and values affirmed by indigenous peoples;
- Support informal and formal networks of indigenous knowledge holders.