

Indigenous Perspectives



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Members of the COD-ILK during the Global Workshop on Intergenerational Transmission of Indigenous and Local Knowledge held in the Kahnawake Mohawk Territory, Quebec, Canada on November 28 - 30, 2022.

Highlights of the First Global Workshop on Transmission of Indigenous and Local Knowledge

Polina Shulbaeva/Centre for the Support of Indigenous Peoples of the North (CSIPN) ILK Centre

Indigenous and local knowledge has been recognized by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) as the basis of indigenous and local communities' decision-making on matters affecting their health, education, food, and other economic and social activities, in addition to being the driver of innovative indigenous and local solutions to related problems such as climate change, unsustainable development, and pandemics. It is thus vital that indigenous and local knowledge are transmitted to present and future generations. At the heart of indigenous and local knowledge transmission is communication, thus avenues such as global meetings, dialogue, workshops, and related forms of learning exchange within an environment of mutual support

and understanding play a key role in enabling indigenous and local communities to collectively reflect, analyze, and co-create learning and knowledge.

To this end, a three-day Global Workshop on Transmission of Indigenous and Local Knowledge, organized by the Centers of Distinction on Indigenous and Local Knowledge (COD-ILK) was held from November 28 to 30 in Montreal, Canada at the Kahnawake Mohawk Territory.





Participants were members of the COD-ILK network, resource persons, as well as indigenous peoples involved in research, policy development, and program and project implementation and management in relation to safeguarding and transmission of indigenous and local knowledge.

The Workshop showcased a broad array of progressive indigenous knowledge systems in connection to transmission of indigenous and local knowledge.

Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystems Services (IPBES)

IPBES is an independent intergovernmental body established by States to strengthen the science-policy interface for biodiversity and ecosystem services for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, long-term human well-being and sustainable development. It was established by 94 governments on April 21, 2012 in Panama City.

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

- **Indigenous and Local Knowledge (ILK)** - are knowledge systems understood as holistic, social and ecological understandings, know-hows, practices and beliefs pertaining to the relationship of living beings, including people, with one another and with their environment. It is grounded in territory, is highly diverse and is continuously evolving through the interaction of experiences, skills, innovations and different types of wisdom expressed in multiple ways (written, oral, visual, tacit, practical and scientific).
- **Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs)** - are widely used by international organizations and conventions to refer to individuals and groups who self-identify as indigenous or as members of distinct local communities. IPBES adopted the terminology to refer to groups who "maintain an inter-generational historical connection to place and nature through livelihoods, cultural identity, languages, worldviews, institutions, and ecological knowledge".

There were also sharing of lived experiences in indigenous and local knowledge transmission through arts, language, rituals, and research. Groups held discussions on the continuing issues and challenges in indigenous and local knowledge transmission. Of note were those on traditional and new ways of learning with children and young people, older people, and the general public, such as story-telling, spirit-based knowledge transmission, land-based learning, and use of creative media such as films, video, and comics.

The Global Workshop concluded with participants defining the ways forward in sustaining collective action to ensure protection of indigenous and local knowledge and engaging with global and related processes. To quote Simon Ndonco Mitambo, Co-Founder and Chief Executive Officer of the Society for Alternative Learning & Transformation (SALT),

The exchanges we have had inspired us to work hard in reviving our knowledge and practices, and in the process, keep the stories alive, to be shared, which then become opportunities to affirm identity and inspire others to join in the movement.



Indigenous ways of knowing and key learnings from the Kunming-Montreal Conference on the Global Biodiversity Framework

Kamal Kumar Rai
Indigenous Kirant Samarung Nepal



A cultural presentation from the Indigenous Peoples of Canada during the Nature and Culture Summit at the 2022 UN Biodiversity Conference dubbed as the Kunming-Montreal Conference on the Global Biodiversity Framework.

Photo credit: UN Convention on Biological Diversity

How indigenous people acquire and transmit knowledge

Indigenous and local knowledge (ILK) originates in culture, and to the extent that it is also a spiritual heritage, in an understanding of behavior and values such as respect and trust in the context of relationships, as for instance, between and among family members. Indigenous people have related to one another using common communication elements such as symbols, signs, and songs.

Their gathering places have always been in nature, that is, in forest clearings or riversides. To the outsider, the indigenous way of life would take some time to decipher and understand. For indigenous people, they are part of Mother Nature who allows their rituals and expressions to permeate everything on the Earth - the soil, plants, trees, flowers, stones, caves, mountains, birds, fishes, water, air, and sky - in a symbiotic relationship of deep regard and affection. The younger generations perceive this through emotional and spiritual renewal and connection to nature. Deep affinity with Mother Nature is not only a source of happiness, but also motivation to be beautiful, and, further energized by the spirit of Mother Nature, to be as expressive whether it be through song or bodily expression.

It is thus that oneness and harmonious relationship with and in nature is the keystone in understanding indigenous culture, knowledge, and spiritual heritage. From childhood, indigenous peoples are already relating with biodiversity and managing upstream and downstream natural resources minding the inter-linkages in nature.

Key learnings from the Kunming-Montreal Conference on the Global Biodiversity Framework

The important role and contribution of indigenous and local knowledge as well as the values system of indigenous peoples and local communities in relation to biodiversity have been lengthily discussed in the United Nations. Various events with indigenous peoples and local communities have been held discussing indigenous and local knowledge of languages, beliefs, animism, and cosmology, their rituals, ceremonies, expressions, ownership systems, affinities, institutions, and values. These have resulted to deeply-webbed networks and interconnectedness around biodiversity worldwide and integration of indigenous peoples' worldviews and values into the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) that came out of the Fifteenth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP15) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

Global Biodiversity Framework

It is a guide to global actions aimed at addressing biodiversity loss, restore ecosystems and protect indigenous peoples' rights. The Kunming-Montreal GBF aims to halt and reverse nature loss by 2030 and people living in harmony with nature by 2050.

International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity (IIFB)

The IIFB is a platform of representatives from indigenous governments, indigenous non-governmental organizations and indigenous scholars and activists that organize around the CBD and other important international environmental meetings to help coordinate indigenous strategies at these meetings, provide advice to the government parties, and influence the interpretation of government obligations to recognize and respect indigenous rights to the knowledge and resources.

COP15, essentially, finalized the succession plan to the 2011-2020 Strategic Plan which put in place urgent measures on transformative change toward protecting biodiversity. Priorities identified in the Conference included greater voice of indigenous peoples and local communities in dialogues on knowledge systems and benefit sharing. There were also discussions on genetic sequencing in light of biodiversity-related risks arising from new and emerging concerns such as digital sequencing and collection and sharing of information on genetic resources associated with traditional knowledge. Alternatively, these have been taken up as an agenda in the formulation of the Nagoya Protocol on Access and benefit sharing. There were also discussions on genetic sequencing in light of biodiversity-related risks arising from new and emerging concerns such as digital sequencing and collection and sharing of information on genetic resources associated with traditional knowledge. Alternatively, these have been taken up as an agenda in the formulation of the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing and the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety that were participated in by indigenous peoples and local communities. Synthetic biology, modern biotechnology, genetic engineering including gene drive involving living modified organisms, as well as horizon scanning have all been addressed in the socioeconomic and capacity building outcomes in COP15.

The GBF has a total of 23 targets addressing loss of biodiversity especially in areas of high importance and ensuring ecosystems are of high ecological integrity, with the aim of close to zero biodiversity loss by 2030. Of particular interest is the target on recognizing indigenous and traditional territories (Target 3) which has been included as a result of the collective advocacy work of indigenous peoples and local communities. Another pertains to the targets related to wild species and protection of their customary sustainable use that reflect indigenous and local knowledge that contribute to wildlife conservation, restoration, and domestication (Targets 5 and 9). Of interest as well is the target on encouraging and enabling financial institutions and business particularly large and transnational companies to put in place policies addressing the risks and challenges identified in the GBF that impact on indigenous and local knowledge, the traditional way of life, traditional livelihoods and occupations including skills, technologies, ecosystems, food, health, and harmonious relationship with Mother Nature (Target 15). The target on communication, education, public participation, and integration of indigenous or traditional and local knowledge, practices, and innovations ensure that activities and processes are done with the free, prior and informed consent of indigenous peoples and local communities.

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Photo credit: Jo Ann Guilloo



Indigenous People's representative from the Arctic region during the IIFB caucus meeting at the 2022 UN Biodiversity Conference.

Photo story

COD-ILK Members at the IPBES ILK Dialogue on the Nexus Assessment

Polina Shulbaeva/Centre for the Support of Indigenous Peoples of the North (CSIPN) ILK Centre

The event in Thailand brought together indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLCs) from the different regions of the world in a thematic discussion with the authors of the IPBES Nexus Assessment. Held in the review period of the First Draft of the Nexus Assessment, among the objectives was to review the Draft in order to ensure integration of indigenous and local perspectives. It was also intended to be a venue to further discuss the concepts, values, management challenges, and ways to take biodiversity and related concerns of food, water, and health forward. Proceedings of the Dialogue-Workshop will be included in the official report which will be made publicly-available on the IPBES website.



Noraeri demonstrating Karen traditional food.

Participants, led by Noraeri Thungmueangthong, also made a whole-day visit to the Hany E Kang Indigenous Community of Karen Peoples where they learned about the traditional knowledge of governance, interaction, and spirituality. The head of the Community, together with the elders and traditional knowledge holders, shared their work on territorial protection, rotational farming, community-based monitoring, seed banking particularly their history in working with rice seeds and other plants, and use of plants in traditional food, medicine, ceremonies, art, and ornamentation.



Karen elder explaining the map of their community.



Karen women explaining their seed banking.

Demonstrations were held to showcase the community's use of traditional fruits, herbs, and seeds in fabric dyeing. Participants took a hand in dyeing cotton, creating their own ornaments, and applying healing herbs and herbal extracts on foot baths for the women.



Karen traditional knowledge holders.



Participants experiencing herbs-infused foot bath.

Participants were also shown the process by which the community mapped their territory which included assets such as protected, sacred, and ceremonial places, as well as, their ceremonial practices, the knowledge holders, storytellers, seed farmers, and artists, among others.

A community farm, the Karen Indigenous People and Sacred Forest, was visited where participants witnessed traditional knowledge being applied in rotational agriculture.



Karen women demonstrating fabric dyeing.



Community farm

Photo credit: Lakpa Nuri Sherpa



Members of the International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity during the 2022 UN Biodiversity Conference.

Final Statement

The International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity (IIFB)

*Delivered by: Co-Chair Lakpa Nuri Sherpa
Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP),
COD-ILK network member*

For twenty days, we have been meeting in Montreal in the (Mohawk) nation territory of Kanien'kehá:ka (gah-nyen--geh-hah) traditionally known as Tiohtiá:ke, (joh-jaw-gay) which has been welcoming us with cold, sunny, rainy, and snowy weather.

The International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity (IIFB) celebrates the timely recognition of indigenous peoples and local community contributions, their roles, rights, and responsibilities to Mother Earth in relation to the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF).

The urgency of action resulting from the environmental crisis does not end with the signing of the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF). We must work quickly and efficiently for its implementation. From the depths of our territories, our ancestors and authorities are urging toward serious actions to protect our Mother Earth and all life besides us.

The Post-2020 GBF recognizes the integrity and distinct nature of the lands, territories, and resources of indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLCs) and our full and equitable participation in decision-making toward GBF implementation. The IIFB will be your partners in applying the adopted monitoring and reporting framework as reflected in community-based monitoring. Robust indicators for monitoring as contributed by IPLCs will provide a fuller picture of post-2020 GBF implementation, as well as the application of indigenous concepts and local languages.

We have spoken, and you have heard us. Let us now put those words into action.

Recognizing our efforts also means increased and direct access to financial resources for all IPLCs in the seven bio-cultural regions inclusive of all landscapes and seascapes, less bureaucracy in financial mechanisms, and inclusion in the GBF governance committees in order to contribute to better design and grants implementation.

Indigenous women welcome the adoption of Target 23 and the Gender Plan of Action.

Its implementation will be enriched by the Inter-American Belém de Pará Declaration, report of the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples on indigenous women, and the recent Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) General Recommendation 39 on the rights of indigenous women and girls.

Regarding the twelfth meeting of Article 8(j) and Related Provisions, we hope that the necessary resources will be made available to ensure broad participation of indigenous peoples and local communities and consider new work program and institutional arrangements in order to take our work forward. A face-to-face meeting of the Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group (AHTEG) to provide advice on a new program will be crucial and must be promptly convened, including preparatory meetings by IPLCs.

We give thanks to all our financial partners, particularly contributors to the Voluntary Fund for our attendance at the Fifteenth United Nations Conference of Parties (COP15). We also give our special thanks to our indigenous brothers and sisters in Canada, the Chinese Government Presidency, the Government of Canada for hosting us, and all Parties who worked tirelessly with us toward the adoption of a strong and transformative biodiversity framework.

The Yukaghirs' traditions of connecting with nature

Viacheslav Shadrin/CSIPN, COD-ILK Network Member

The relationship between indigenous peoples and nature is one of harmonious existence, a way of life, deeply-rooted in ecological knowledge as a result of years of experience and observation continuously renewed over time. Their traditional use of natural resources is sourced from their traditional knowledge, which is inextricably-linked, and together, form the intangible components of indigenous peoples' natural resource management systems. Moreover, traditional use of natural resources positively impacts on human settlements specifically on the ecology of any given landscape. This is the practice of the Yukaghirs in the Russian Arctic whose responsible attitude toward nature is central to their culture.

Recorded as the most ancient among the people of Eastern Siberia, the Yukaghirs are natives of the Republic of Sakha (ie. Yakutia) particularly Chukotka Autonomous Okrug and Magadan Oblast presently with 1,603 in population. They are comprised of two tribes - the tundra, and the forest Yukaghirs - each with distinct settlement area, culture including language, and livelihood. For the forest Yukaghirs, their livelihood is primarily hunting wild reindeer and elk, and fishing. The tundra Yukaghirs have a more complex economy based around big-game reindeer breeding with hunting and fishing as secondary activities.

Spiritual Connection

Totemic beliefs have been preserved today. In the Yukaghir view, people and animals are related through kinship hence the naming of clans follows that of their totemic ancestors: Hare Clan, Fish Clan, and the like. Yukaghir myths and folklore tell of a special attitude toward the bear, believed to be half-man and half-beast, as a relative. Accordingly, people descended from the marriage of a bear and a woman.

Yukaghirs believe that animals have spirits, or 'patrons', who are subjects of the Master of the Earth. These spirits, seen as the protectors of the animals,

look after the wellbeing of their wards. They are believed to be friendly toward hunters but only if they observe the unwritten laws of hunting, that is, to hunt only what are enough to feed their families. Such hunters are called 'lucky hunters', or hunters who observe the unwritten rules.

Natural objects as well are believed to have spirits protecting them. The spirits are said to appear only to people who committed transgressions, such as breaking customs, killing more animals than what are needed, desecrating, or scalding sacred areas, and the like. Yukaghirs believe in a special connection between natural objects and people. Their kinship to trees as tree-brothers, for instance, are established through a special ritual. As such, changes occurring to a tree-brother would reflect on the health of its human kin.

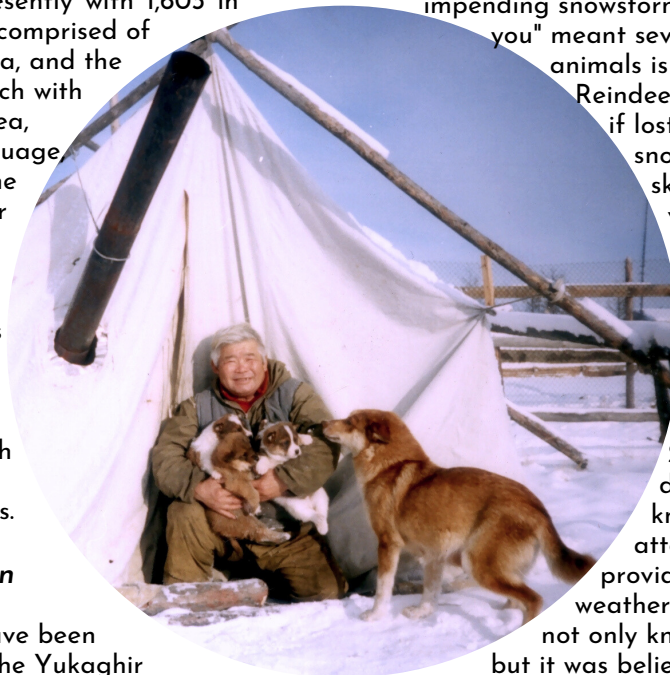
Weather Forecasting

The ability to predict weather is key to sustainable traditional nature resource management. Yukaghirs have used traditional observational methods to forecast weather on a daily, seasonal, and longer-term basis. These methods include observation of the sky, wind, sun, moon, stars, snow, and other atmospheric and space phenomena. Some examples: A white halo surrounding the moon, or said to be "the moon dressed in a shirt" is warning for an impending snowstorm. The northern lights "speaking to you" meant severe frost. The behavior of plants and animals is also a predictor:

Reindeers that duck and stop on the way as if lost and afraid meant there will be a snowstorm soon, but if they "study" the sky, the sky will clear. On the same vein, dogs rolling in the snow meant there will be snowfall.

The human body is also a source of certain information. If joints "crack," windy or damp weather is expected. If the body experiences pain, a change in weather is in store. Spiritual experiences including dreams, foresight, and shamanic knowledge are given special attention. It is believed that dreams provide information about changes in the weather, and shamans, in the olden days, not only knew what the weather would be like, but it was believed they could also alter it.

With the changing climate and increasing unpredictability of the weather, however, animal behavior has changed, consequently traditional knowledge about the weather as well to the extent that in recent years omens no longer proved as accurate. This has impacted on Yukaghirs' livelihoods. Wild reindeers have unexpectedly changed their migration routes severely disrupting domestic reindeer herding. In summer, with the growing distance of ice from the shore which cubs find harder to reach, polar bear increasingly remain on the coast and eventually make their way into human settlements and attacking domestic reindeer herds, which are being reported as "invasion" of bears and wolves". Elders have said that predicting the weather, especially over a longer period, has become almost impossible. "Nature has stopped trusting us," explained one elder.



Indigenous ways of knowing... from page 3

With recommendations from the Thirteenth Conference on Sustainable Building (SBI3) and the Twenty-third and Twenty-fourth Meetings of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA 23 and 24), institutionalization of mandates as stated in Article 8(j) of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) lies at the heart of indigenous peoples' ancestral identities and knowledge and continues to give voice for indigenous peoples and local communities.

Implementation implications for Nepal

It is crucial to establish an indigenous institutional mechanism and governance framework in the oversight of customary systems and regulatory biocultural protocols as well as an indigenous plan of action on indigenous and local or traditional knowledge taking into account the principles and philosophy of indigenous peoples as provided in the CBD Article 8(j). In Nepal, a number of initiatives have been established, namely the Nepal Indigenous Strategic Plan of Action, volunteerism in the care of customary systems, biocultural protocol institutionalization aligned to indigenous principles and philosophy focused on the voluntary guidelines in Article 8(j) with involvement of the IPBES ILK taskforce, identification of Liaison Member and National Expert and Nexus 5.4 Lead Author Transformative Change 1 Contributing Author to implement thematic outcomes and provisions of IPBES in the spirit of the CBD.



A Yukaghir man fixing his fish trap for the fishing season.

Photo credit: CSIPN ILK Centre

Indigenous Options

@ 2022 Center for Support of Indigenous Peoples of the North (CSIPN) ILK Centre and the Centers of Distinction on Indigenous and Local Knowledge (COD-ILK).

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A Yukaghir reindeer herder tending to his flock.

Photo credit: CSIPN ILK Centre