



TUNDRA project final report, February 2015

Jennifer I. Schmidt, University of Alaska Fairbanks and University of Tromsø Norway

Email: jischmidt0@gmail.com Phone: 907-750-3750

Myself: I am a researcher who has spent the last couple of years looking through the results from the interviews and here is my attempt to summarize them, provide my personal observations, and hopefully give you information that is useful and interesting. I apologize in advance if any of my comments or approach taken in this report rubs people the wrong way, after all I am from Fairbanks and we are a little different. There are a lot of positive results about your communities that made me proud while living over in Norway. Thank you!

Please look for me at the tribal or city council office, school. You can also call me at 907-750-3750 to meet. I will be in Noorvik (2/2-2/5), Noatak (2/6-2/11), Brevig Mission (2/23-2/20), and Atkasuk (3/23-3/26).

Introduction

The goal of the TUNDRA project was to determine how environmental governance and socio-economic conditions influence ecosystems and the services they provide to local people. We also want to better understand the effectiveness of management approaches under different economic conditions and different types of government among arctic countries. This project involves 28 communities in tundra regions of Alaska, Canada, Norway, and Russia. For this project I lived in Norway on and off since 2010 and met with the people who conducted the interviews in the other countries. This project started in 2009, and I interviewed people in Alaska during January through March in 2012. Funding was from the Norwegian Research Council. We interviewed 16 people in each community, with the same numbers of Elders/Youth, employees of the government/non-government, and men/women.

These communities were chosen because they are in areas with tundra vegetation, and a large portion of their harvest is typically from the land. In Alaska we wanted to compare different boroughs/census areas, Native organizations, and access to wage income. During the interviews we asked about several topics including harvest and land use, community dynamics, conservation and mining opinions, wildlife management, and information about interactions and trust with various agencies. There was so much information asked that not all the results can be presented here. However, if you would like to see other results or more detailed results, please feel free to contact me.

Mining

In general there was agreement that mining will cause problems for caribou and peoples' use of the land and that the economic benefits from mining are not worth the potential environmental costs (Figure 17a and b).

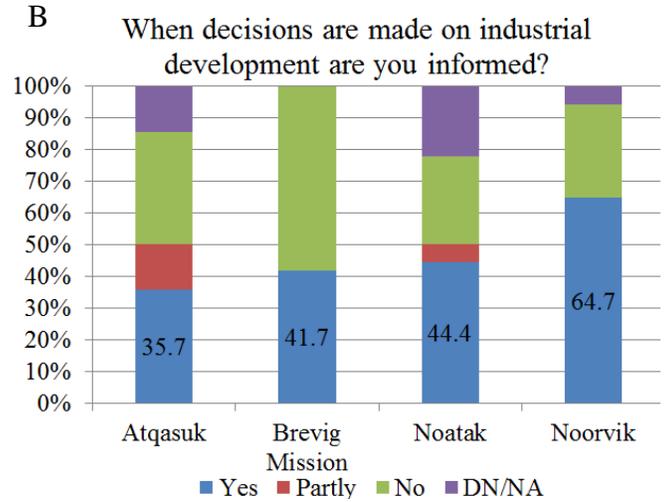


Figure 17. A) Response by residents in TUNDRA communities in seven Arctic regions regarding mining. B) Percent of interviewees who felt informed by industrial development (oil, gas, & mining).

However, these questions are phrased in very black and white terms and likely questions that are phrased in a more balanced way would produce more mixed results. In Norway, people thought that mining would be the least damaging but also trust for industries was the highest in Norway (Figure 18). In Alaska, most people thought that the environmental impact statement was beneficial largely because it provided community residents with an opportunity to express their opinions. Whether those opinions were heard or not was another story. On average 47% of respondents said they felt informed when decisions are made about industrial activity that might influence their village. This indicates the need for better communication.

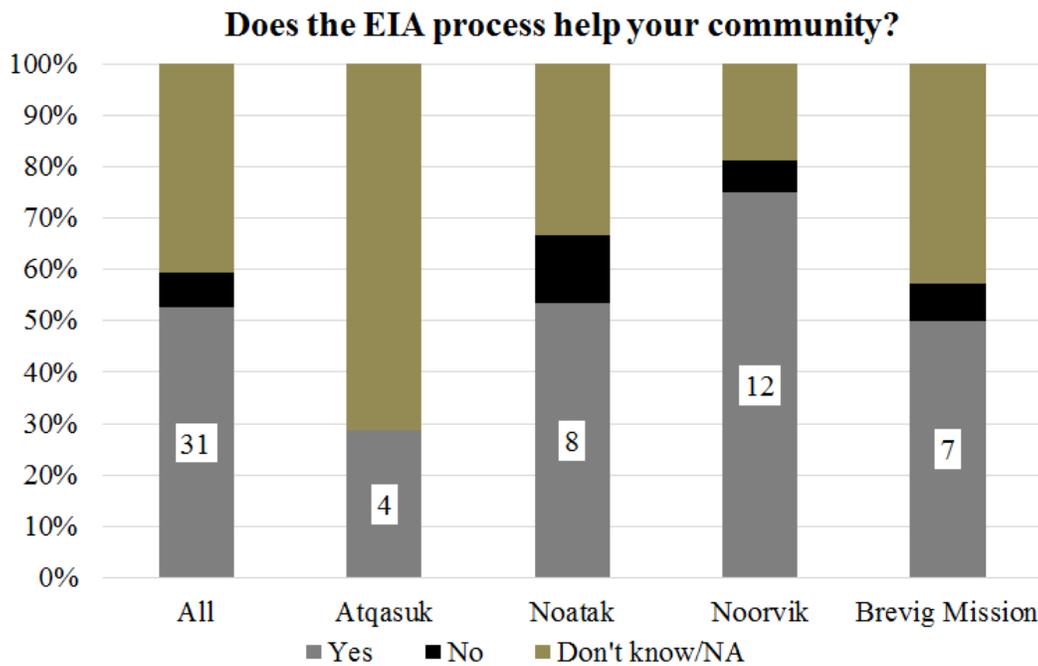


Figure 18. Responses by interviewees in Alaska as to whether they think the environmental impact assessment (EIA) process benefits their community.

“We get informed on whatever they are going to do next and how they are going to do it.” Atqasuk

“Really hope so. It is supposed to. Mr. Parnell is not happy about getting back to communities. Water is where our food lives.” Brevig Mission

“They need to do more of them. That is when we get to speak up. They act like they hear us but then nothing will be done.” Noatak

“Because we have to be involved with what's going on. If not involved, create our own problems.” Noorvik

Conservation & Management

Questions about conservation indicated that both Alaska and Russia supported maximum harvest of resources (Alaska 67%; Russia 72%) and to a less extent Nunavut (48%). Support for predator removal was greatest in Alaska (47%) followed by Murmansk (35%), Nunavut (34%) and Taimyr (33%). All of these regions depend on harvest of subsistence resources or reindeer herding. In addition Alaska, Yamal, and Taimyr did not support reduction of ATV use in wilderness, but Norway strongly supported this (63%). Management was sometimes difficult to explain and define in Alaska and Nunavut. This response is not without good reason especially in areas with large numbers of wild caribou. Caribou are known to fluctuate widely in population size and roam over several thousand miles.

Engagement with management and the decision making process:

People feel more informed by wildlife management than by industrial development. Communication is still an issue. There were 77 comments during the interviews about communication. However, those comments were a mix of positive and negative and several expressed gratitude for the Caribou Trails newsletter.

ac communicate council effective eia feds fish game gather
 give going group hear important information
 input keep knowledge local meetings people provide rac share speak state
 subsistence tribal village working

However, effective communication requires both parties to make efforts, and 60% of the people interviewed in Alaska reported going to meetings (Figure 22). The highest attendance was for meetings regarding community services.

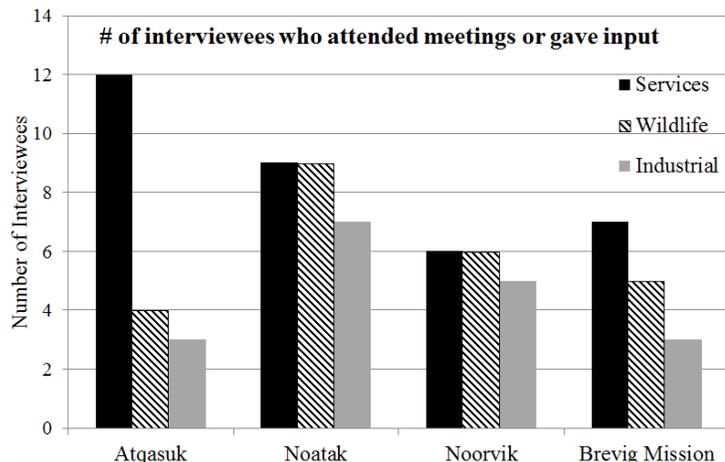


Figure 22. Reasons people gave for not attending meetings about community services (road dust, health care, school, etc.), wildlife, and industrial development (mining, oil, and gas) in the last three years.

Reasons for not going to meetings typically were that the person was not used to getting involved (Figure 23). Several elderly women said that their husbands typically did that and after their husbands died they do not hear about things anymore. Also since a few key people often go to several of the meetings it is important that this person effectively communicate with the residents of the community. In some communities this was an issue raised by residents.

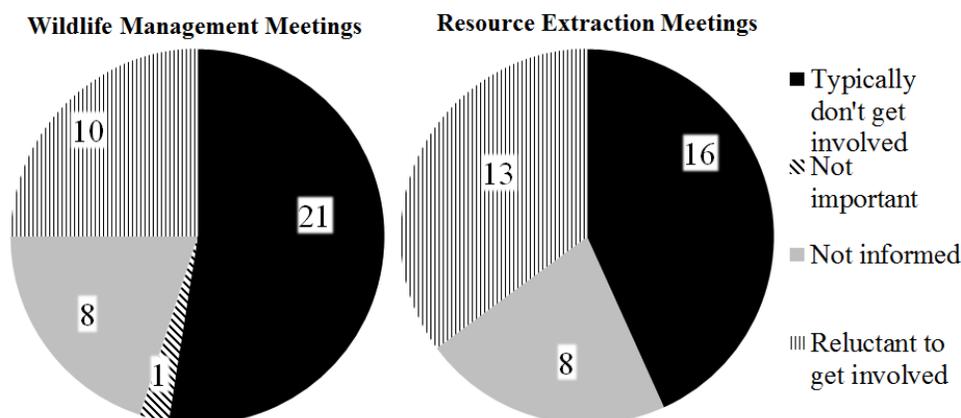


Figure 23. Reasons people gave for not attending meetings about wildlife management and resource extraction.

Involvement and getting one's voice heard is different in Norway than it is in other regions. People use organizations to get their voice heard and believe that these organizations represent their opinions.

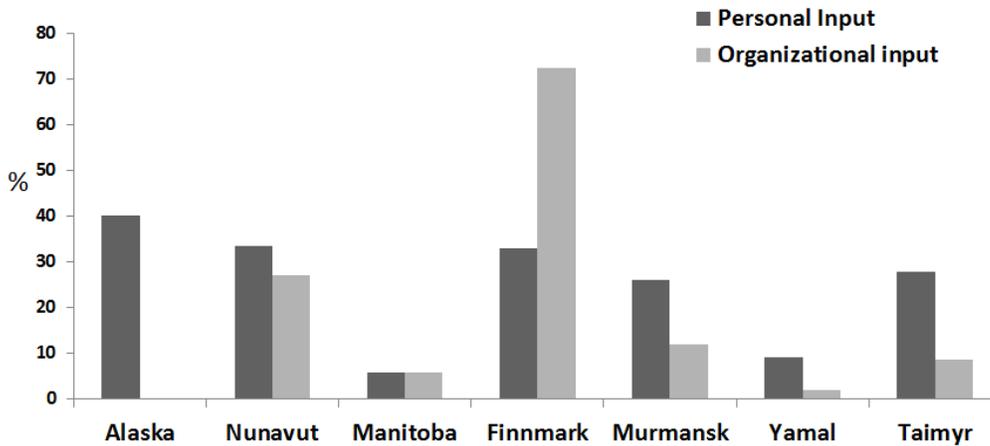


Figure 24. The ways in which people gave their opinions about either wildlife management or industrial development. Personal input means an individual spoke up at a meeting, wrote a letter, etc. Organizational input means that a person was confident that an organization represented them and expressed their opinion.

Thank you to everyone who helped including the local hires, interviewees, University of Alaska Fairbanks, University of Tromsø, and tribal councils.

I especially want to thank the local hires

- Josh Melton & Merna Sheldon (Noorvik)
- Ward Olanna Sr. (Brevig Mission)
- Hannah Onalik (Noatak)
- Wanda Kippi (Atqasuk)

And Interviewees

- Gilbert Tocktoo, Elmer Seetot Jr., Joyce Tocktoo, Rita Olanna, Daisy Rock, Floyd Olanna, Arthur Tocktoo, Bessie Olanna, Leonard Adams, Marcus Barr, Carla Kakoona
- Johnny Nayukok, Kate Aiken, Thomas Itta III, Doug Whiteman, Wanda Kippi, Della Shugluk, Della Ivanoff, Martha Kagak, Bert Shugluk, Elizabeth Hollingsworth, Virginia Brower
- Mary Arey, Alvin Ashby, Floyd Wesley Jr., Wendle Booth Sr., Robbie Kirk, Evelyn Shy, Carol Wesley, Allen Downey, Vernon Adams Sr., Helen Ashby, Hannah Onalik, Rebecca Brutche

To give comments or for more information about the TUNDRA project please contact:

Jennifer I. Schmidt, University of Alaska and University of Tromsø, Cell: 907-750-3750,
 jischmidt0@gmail.com