

A SUMMARY REPORT

AMERICAS CONSULTATION: CO-CREATION OF AN INCLUSIVE CONSERVATION ACADEMY



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AMERICAS CONSULTATION: CO-CREATION OF AN INCLUSIVE CONSERVATION ACADEMY

On February 18, 2021, Tribal Link Foundation, in collaboration with WWF, led a consultation on Inclusive and Indigenous-led Conservation in the Americas. The information garnered from the consultation will assist in the proposed development of an Inclusive Conservation Academy. The consultation took place between 2:30 PM and 4:30 PM EST. There were 50 total attendees from 12 countries.

Session moderators: R.Múkaró Borrero, Tribal Link Foundation, Janene Yazzie, and Rochelle Diver

Technical team: Sandra Patricia Visbal, WWF, Joost Van Montfort, WWF

Consultation Objectives

The objective of the Americas Consultation of Inclusive Conservation was to a) Report on and catalog best practices, challenges, and gaps in conservation. B) Identify areas and approaches for capacity building initiatives. C) Learn and provide recommendations on how Indigenous Peoples can take the lead in building capacity in inclusive conservation and to practices and their impacts on indigenous people and local communities.

Program Agenda

The program agenda included a welcome; a presentation on Inclusive Conservation by WWF; a first Q & A round; 2 breakout groups focusing on 4 cases studies; reconvening to discuss breakout groups; and final round of discussion.



BEARS EARS NATIONAL MONUMENT, USA

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Inclusive Conservation, Delphin Ganapin, WWF: Presentation summary:

Inclusive conservation is conservation that is led by Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities who see nature and people as one. It embraces the rights, needs and values of the communities and groups whose knowledges, practices and innovations have preserved biodiversity and ecosystems. Within this context, the initial concept for an Inclusive Conservation Academy (ICA) is a capacity development mechanism to support the strategic agenda to shift away from "fortress conservation" and into conservation approaches that are IPLC-led and rights-based in approach.

While initially starting to build such capacity in the WWF network, and especially for those involved in landscape/seascape conservation, a proposed goal is that initiative should become a multi-organizational platform that not only is led by and serves Indigenous Peoples, but also other big international conservation organizations, government agencies, donor institutions, and even the private sector.

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- DELPHIN GANAPIN, WWF***

Breakout Session Case Studies

Terry Dorward, Project Coordinator Tla-o- qui-aht Tribal Parks, Canada

Tla-o-qui-aht Tribal Parks began with the declaration of Meares Island Tribal Park (Tla-o-qui-aht name: Wah-nah-jus- Hilt-hoo-is [wanačis ḥ ithuuʔis]) in 1984. Tla-o-qui-aht Tribal Parks represent 35 years of successful Indigenous-led conservation in the Clayoquot Sound region. In the 1970s and '80s, the provincial government of British Columbia had clear cut a significant area of Clayoquot Sound, when the Tla-o-qui-aht Indigenous Peoples established the first Tribal Park. The Tla-o-qui-aht tribal parks are an act of self-determination, sovereignty and traditional stewardship between the land and the peoples who have lived there since time immemorial.

Felipe Ical, Green Creek Farmers' Cooperative (GCFC)

For 30 years, the Green Creek Farmers' Cooperative (GCFC), an organisation led by indigenous peoples, has been managing their Indigenous Peoples and Community Conserved Territories and Areas (ICCA) without external support. The GCFC was established in 1982 with the objective of communal land management of its 1,012 hectares of prime forest. Within these lands, sustainable agricultural production and protection of flora and fauna define the community's cultural identity. The Green Creek Cooperative land borders on the Maya Golden Landscape in southern Belize, and is an area of exceptionally high conservation value, making up an important part of the region's southern biological corridor.

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Breakout Session Case Studies

Kid James, Community protected areas, Rupununi Region, Guyana

The Wapishana Community in the Rupununi Region in Guyana, through their community-based organization the South-Central People's Development Association and the South Rupununi District Council have strengthened their work through the development of a management plan, which has guided their work with a strong focus on the importance of engaging youth and the inclusion of women. As a result of the implementation of the plan, they have engaged different government agencies, such as the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs to deal with land management and land rights with an emphasis on land titling and demarcation; and with the Environmental Protection Agency and the Geology and Mines Commission to form a monitoring team for measuring the pollution levels of creeks and rivers.

Kid James mentions the importance of partnerships in which honesty and mutual respect are the basis of their work, and the importance of finding common ground in order to move forwards. He highlights the long-standing relationship with WWF and its contribution to supporting local initiatives.

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Albaro Cruz, OZIP, Capacity Building Programme on Indigenous Territorial Governance, Colombia

Many indigenous communities in the Amazon confront increasing threats to their territories, which are often accompanied by the scarce resources, lack of tools and opportunities to strengthen their capacities for effective governance. The Capacity Building Programme on Indigenous Territorial Governance developed with Forest Trends, was born to respond to these challenges, with a special focus on those indigenous peoples living their territories, who usually do not have access to these types of training. An important part of this programme is its shared governance structure that brings together a partner from the academia, from an indigenous organization and WWF (forming the Local Pedagogical Committee); who together decide on the content, its adaptation to local context and the overall organization of the training.

Albaro Cruz, from OZIP (Indigenous Organization from the Putumayo Zone-Organización Zonal del Putumayo), who has been involved with the programme, highlights that the trainings provide tools that promote dialogues, regarding policies, environmental issues and laws, with different actors that approach indigenous territories. It has also allowed for different indigenous groups to come together and share knowledge, while learning from the different perspectives and ideas from the participants. Additionally, as participants' skills are strengthened, they are able to identify the needs of their communities, provide possible solutions, and together with organizations like OZIP, plan ways to address these issues.

Guiding Questions for Breakout Groups

a) What are the capacities that Indigenous Peoples should develop to be able to manage IPLC-led approach partnerships with non-IP entities?

Participant responses included: Articulation of landscape scale approaches looking at all ecosystem components and functions; Capacity to articulate and assert rights-based approaches as identified in the UNDRIP and other constructive agreements. Participants also noted that while there are mechanisms such as UNDRIP, the SDGs and others, the challenge is that these mechanisms “don’t land in countries and territories.” This information needs to be brought to communities and the proposed ICA should find ways for help this to happen. Additional focus for capacity building included economic independence, building resilience in the face of Climate Change, and territorial management and governance. Finally, political education was also highlighted as participants noted that legislation is needed to protect not only Indigenous Peoples knowledge but to undue policies that prevent or hinder community initiatives to exert sound management initiatives. Participants also recommended that community members should be on to be on the same page when we engage with outside potential allies and resources to do the things we plan to do collectively.

b) What are key elements that should be developed for pilot training modules or activities for both non-IPs and IPs engaging in inclusive conservation?

Participants responses included: There were many training opportunities available but not for those who stay in their communities and who face day to day challenges; Training programs should provide different tools to allow to be able to dialogue with states; understanding Legal frameworks that grant rights are important. Training modules should also include how to assess threats or challenges to territorial conservation. For example, what are the collective rights of Indigenous Peoples or local communities recognized by your governments? Training courses must elevate knowledge and understanding of human rights standards and mechanisms to assist in the defense against legal threats.

Training should emphasize that imposed land policies are individualistic, managing healthy IP lands into the future has to be a collective effort. Activities should also focus on promoting cross-pollination of movements across the globe to build stronger resilient communities, strengthening traditional governance systems, prioritize the role of women in conservation and of youth, promote sustainable livelihoods, and connect traditional spirituality to conservation. Training should also clarify the concepts of inclusive conservation vs managing a territory.

c) Besides the presentations that were shared here, are there other best practices to learn from?

Participant responses included: The UN Convention of Biological Diversity and the Indigenous Peoples Forum on Biodiversity. One of the things that is mentioned in the Convention is “benefit sharing”. It is a term that is now led by states and NGOs.

The case of Bears Ears and Grand Staircase in the U.S. and land protection in those areas were also cited as a best practice. In this case, five Tribes have come together and set precedent about land management and being inclusive. They are also building a traditional knowledge institute. It was also noted that in Brazil, CINEP (Centro Indígena de Estudos e Pesquisas) brought indigenous authorities closer to academia. A challenge was the lack of recognition by the academia of indigenous knowledge as scientific knowledge. The organization had to close due to management and financial issues and this is an important lesson as it is important to think about the long-term sustainability of creating the Inclusive Conservation Academy.

A participant also shared that in the Aymara cosmovision, knowledge exchange is essential. There should be an interface that connects both worlds, instead of having an intermediary. The Capacity Building Programme on Indigenous Territorial Governance (in Colombia) is an instance for knowledge exchange. There can be a knowledge exchange on different topics: health, environment, etc.

Guiding Questions for Discussions

a) What is it that non-IPs (Conservation NGOs, donors, government, private sector) should understand well when working with Indigenous Peoples (IPs).

Participants responses included: For Indigenous Peoples the connection/relationship with mother earth grows stronger every day; In pre-colonial times, land management was kinship based, communal based;

There is legislation in place that has taken land away from Indigenous Peoples; and many policies exist to disrupt and dismantle the community systems that Indigenous Peoples have utilized to manage their lands. The conservation movement, for example, was built on power, privilege, and oppression because they recognized the land, but didn't recognize the Indigenous Peoples that traditionally lived on or had a relationship with that land. In Canada, Indigenous Peoples "were subjugated to limitations within the Indian Act, government funded programs that really do not reflect our true roles and responsibilities to the land." This is not an issue specific to our communities, [Indigenous-led land management] is a larger movement happening across the globe.

Participants also noted that when working locally with Indigenous Peoples, there is a needed to recognize "where they are at." There are a lot of people in with different capacities and a lot of moving pieces to being inclusive. This different for each community so recognizing that and making space for this diversity is important. This is similar to discussions on traditional knowledge as there are "so many ways of knowing." One participant stated that this diversity is the "beauty of traditional knowledge" and sometimes in "western knowledge" everything is squeezed into a little box to "make it look pretty for a policy." The human right to free, prior, and informed consent is also something non-IPs need to understand and respect.

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b) What skills and values would be important in these engagements?

Participants noted that Indigenous Peoples need to be able to understand non-indigenous ways (legislation) to put systems in place to protect themselves. For example, there is nothing protecting indigenous peoples' intellectual property rights when it comes to forest use. Part of this work, whether it is engaging with tribal government systems, or National government systems, requires the "people's political engagement with these processes. Landscape scale approaches looking at all ecosystem components and functions are also important.

Participants also noted that "community readiness and capacity, in part, is self-organizing." The concept of think globally and acting locally was also highlighted. The idea that this issue is not an issue specific to Indigenous Peoples' communities, but it is "a larger movement happening across the globe. People are really rising up to assert their political rights and do what they need to do to build resilience in face of climate change. The cross-pollination of movements across the globe really helps to build stronger, more resilient communities that are interdependent rather than working in silos."

c) What are the best ways to conduct capacity-building modules or activities?

Participants responses noted in-person (especially in communities) training was the most desirable with trainings led by Indigenous Peoples. Online training was also recommended, understanding its limitations.

d) What organizations and capacity building programs/projects already exist that can provide support?

Participants mentioned the Tribal Link Foundation's Project Access Global Capacity Building Training Program for Indigenous Peoples and the International Indigenous Women's Forum (FIMI).

e) What resources, in terms of manuals, guide materials, presentations, and other such capacity-building materials are already available?

Participants did not mention any resources, in terms of manuals, guide materials, presentations, and other such capacity-building materials are already available.

f) Is the idea of a pool of IP expert leaders being the trainers or "faculty members" of an Inclusive Conservation Academy feasible and desirable? Who can be in the initial pool of such IP faculty for the Academy?

Participants responded that Indigenous Peoples should lead the ICA and be included as faculty members. In addition, Indigenous Peoples should be direct actors, participating in the construction of the overall program

Final Question

Would you like to receive follow-up on this consultation and the process for the establishment of an Inclusive Conservation Academy?

Most attendees expressed great interest in the subject and the possibility to continue to engage as the process moves forward.



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