

## Ethical guidelines for handling traditional knowledge at the International Centre for Reindeer Husbandry

The International Centre for Reindeer Husbandry (ICR) has a special responsibility looking after the traditional knowledge (TK) of reindeer husbandry, and shall collect, analyse, store and share information of relevance to reindeer husbandry including both TK and scientific knowledge (SK)<sup>1</sup>.

All researchers working in the North have an ethical responsibility toward the people of the North, their cultures, and the environment<sup>2</sup>.

TK in this context is defined as *” knowledge and practices acquired and rooted in the traditional way of living in the reindeer husbandry, accumulated and preserved through generations, in an always changing life environment”*. TK is multifaceted, and skills derived from thousands of years of careful observations, scrutiny and survival in a complex ecosystem readily lends itself to the in-depth studies of basic principles of both natural<sup>3</sup> and social sciences.

Knowledge is considered “traditional” because of the way it is gained, within traditional cultures. It does not necessarily have to be old, but can arise and be continually updated and revised even today as a result of cultural or environmental changes<sup>4</sup>.

TK belongs to the people and the societies where it was created and is protected according to custom and international law. The TK of reindeer husbandry should consequently be managed according to the practice of the respective cultures.

The following represents ICRs own ethical standard for handling TK and the knowledge carriers of TK (indigenous peoples), and for how TK and SK should be integrated. These rules apply to all projects where new knowledge is to be produced and/ or compared, and where results are to be published in any form. This includes research projects and projects related to documentation of TK.

### 1. The value of TK:

- 1.1. TK is of equal value as SK. The same applies for the different systems of producing, organising and transmitting knowledge in indigenous and scientific communities. TK is more than simply a source of empiry for researchers.
- 1.2. In addition to the cultural value of TK, it also includes an instrumental value. That is to say that TK has essential practical value for the carriers of such knowledge in their day-to-day activities and subsistence, and shall be respected as such.
- 1.3. TK has the same value as other professional knowledge, and qualified reindeer herders shall receive the same compensation for their efforts in projects etc. as senior scientific workers do. They represent the state-of-the-art knowledge in their field, and shall be respected as such.

### 2. Ownership of TK:

- 2.1. We realize the explicit right of reindeer herders to both preserve their TK and determine how it should be used. TK carriers shall play a central part in shaping projects and shall be involved

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<sup>1</sup> § 1 and 2, Statutes for International Centre for Reindeer Husbandry, The Norwegian Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development, 20. June 2005.

<sup>2</sup> Ethical Principles for the Conduct of Research in the Arctic, NSF Policy document USA, 2006.

<sup>3</sup> Alaska Rural Systematic Initiative (ARSI, an indigenous knowledge project focused on education).

<sup>4</sup> In accordance with Mattias Åhrén (World Intellectual Property Rights Organization, FN), Kautokeino, March 2003.



- as equal partners in consultation and decision-making. Hence, both TK and SK must be appropriately integrated within a framework of cooperative research.
- 2.2. Because TK is the intellectual property of the people who hold it, it is essential to agree with those people on the rules for the use of TK<sup>3</sup>. Researchers are therefore to abide by the ethical guidelines set out by the respective communities.
  - 2.3. When a liaison between researchers and those who possess TK has been established, it shall be sustained through mutual consultations<sup>5</sup>.
3. Testing TK in the right context:
- 3.1. As is the case for SK, TK can and should be tested. However, it must be tested by people with the appropriate background, that is indigenous people. Otherwise, there are clear dangers of misinterpretations and misunderstandings of TK. Such errors occur as a consequence of piecemeal extraction of TK from its cultural context<sup>6</sup>.
  - 3.2. The participation of indigenous peoples and indigenous institutions are crucial both for the process of testing TK and the integration of TK and SK. In other words, a “native to native-approach” shall be used in such processes.
4. Informants:
- 4.1. The quantity, quality and nature of TK varies among community members, depending upon age, gender, social status and profession<sup>7</sup>. Both elders and youth shall be involved, as the connection between elders and youth is an integral part of traditional societies and such an approach will give better overall results.
  - 4.2. Likewise, both men and women shall be included as they perform different traditional activities and harbour different TK<sup>8</sup>.
  - 4.3. The conductors of studies have a specific ethical responsibility to secure that the informants has adequate knowledge and understanding of the study, its goals, scope, possible implications etc. beforehand.
  - 4.4. The Nuremberg Code (1949-53) point 1 states the importance of a voluntary, enlightened consent in research projects. Any study shall get a *voluntary, written and informed consent* from the appropriate bodies of the informants. The appropriate bodies may be the directly concerned individuals and / or their organisations and institutions.
5. Language:
- 5.1. TK about animals, landscapes, climate etc is preserved in the language by exact expressions and precise terms for those concepts that are important for exploiting nature’s possibilities to support life, and transmitted through oral tradition and first hand observation<sup>9</sup>.
  - 5.2. Cultural and linguistic diversity goes together with biological diversity<sup>10</sup>. It is through the language that TK is available. Native languages shall therefore always be used in communication.

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<sup>5</sup> Following Guidelines for Environmental Impact Assessment in the Arctic.

<sup>6</sup> Alaska Native Science Commission, 2006

<sup>7</sup> Dene Cultural Institute, in Stevenson 1996:281

<sup>8</sup> Alaska Federation of Native Board Policy Guidelines for Research.

<sup>9</sup> Jernsletten, Nils (1997) Sámi Traditional Terminology, Professional Terms Concerning Salmon, Reindeer and Snow; In: Sámi Culture in a New Era, The Norwegian Sámi Experience, Harald Gaski (ed), 86-108. Davvi Girji, Kárášjohka.

<sup>10</sup> Helander, Eliina (ed) (1996) Awaked Voice. The return of Sámi Knowledge. Diedut 1996: 4. Nordic Sámi Institute: Guovdageaidnu.



6. Communication / publishing results:

- 6.1. In order to secure clarity and trust between cooperating partners, institutions, communities and ICR, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) should always be signed.
- 6.2. A program for publication and communication (PPC) shall always be developed, signed for all formal cooperation where new knowledge is produced and/ or compared and where results are to be published. The purpose of such a program is to secure that:
  - 6.2.1. all acknowledged partners are given the ability to review and comment the results to be published.
  - 6.2.2. dissenting comments which, for whatever reason, are not taken into account in the final reports etc. are included in the appendix, unless otherwise agreed upon with the dissenting parties.
- 6.3. Reporting schedules must be established, followed and kept.
- 6.4. All parties shall be heard by taking draft information back to the communities for review and feedback to be integrated into reports/ publications for local, regional and wider use. The communication / publishing of the results must be coordinated with the stakeholders that include the indigenous peoples affected by the study.
- 6.5. It shall be a goal to make information usable and useful at a local level, and then integrated in larger data sets.
- 6.6. Scientific quality of perspectives / objectives / hypotheses and experimental design / protocol should preferably be ensured through international peer review evaluation.

7. Authorship and contributorship:

- 7.1. Following the Vancouver Rules<sup>11</sup>, authorship credit should be given based on contributions to project design, data-acquisition, analysis, and drafting or revising reports etc. Whenever these criteria are met, reindeer herders shall be given full status as authors.
- 7.2. Following the Vancouver Rules, all reindeer herders that contribute but do not meet the criteria for authorship shall be listed in an acknowledgments section.

8. Capacity building:

- 8.1. ICRs activities, projects and project participation should generally contribute to local capacity building.
- 8.2. Capacity building means to empower indigenous peoples as minorities through increased knowledge, in order to make them able to become truly equal partners in processes with mainstream society. Capacity building thus includes building knowledge in the indigenous societies themselves, their people, their own institutions and organisations.
- 8.3. All relevant projects shall include capacity building as a separate project-goal. As far as practically possible, the projects should involve some form of evaluation of effects on capacity building. The projects should preferably be designed so that any results of capacity building are made measurable. Object achievements related to capacity building shall also be included in the communication plan, according to point 6 above.

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<sup>11</sup> Vancouver Rules, International Committee of Medical Journal Editors, updated February 2006