

## Chapter 4

### IPY and Local Competence Building in the Circumpolar North



During a travel by dog sledge, an Inuk from Clyde River, Baffin Island, Nunavut, Canada, is building from inside an igloo house on the sea ice because of an incoming storm. He is installing the last piece of the igloo's roof.

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#### Introduction

For centuries, reindeer herding peoples have lived and worked across wide areas of Eurasia in extremely harsh environments. Today, reindeer herding communities across the Arctic and Subarctic are facing profound changes impacting on their societies and they are at the forefront of climate change induced transformations. The challenges of climate change, globalisation, and increased economical development are of such proportions that people around the world need to utilise available knowledge resources in order to prepare themselves for the future. Scientific research has been and will continue to be very important to meet these challenges and to sustain indigenous peoples' communities in the circumpolar north. Beyond scientific inquiry, however, knowledge embedded within reindeer herding communities—Traditional Knowledge—is also needed as a foundation for adaptation to changes in northern polar regions.

In the circumpolar north, Traditional Knowledge developed through centuries of close observation of reindeer, pastures and the environment, and was handed down from generation to generation. It is a rich and unique resource on the natural environment in which reindeer herding peoples live.

This essay explores the challenges reindeer herding peoples in the circumpolar north face today, and stresses the significance of Traditional Knowledge for adaptation processes to these challenges. We give you background information on reindeer herding communities, describe the IPY project EALÁT—a landmark initiative that gives a voice to indigenous communities in the Arctic—and finally, we address the need to preserve, develop and utilise Traditional Knowledge to be able to face future global climate variability and change.