



Arctic Borderlands Ecological Knowledge Co-op Communications Strategy

Prepared by Kirsten Madsen
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Background: Why a communications strategy?

The Arctic Borderlands Co-op is an organization that gathers information. The Co-op develops and tracks indicators of ecosystem change. The Co-op conducts community-based ecological monitoring to record and synthesize local knowledge about the environment. The Co-op also develops and facilitates special projects as requested by Co-op members at the Annual Gathering.

The information gathered by the Co-op through its programs, once analyzed, must be communicated. Internally, it should be communicated to Co-op members, the board of directors and the people who participated in the surveys. Externally, this information should be used in several ways. It should be distributed to the communities where the information was gathered and for whom the information is most relevant. It should also be distributed to the academic and research community, in the interests of sharing knowledge and spurring further research. It should be available to a wider audience, in the Yukon and elsewhere, through the Co-op's website, and through public information campaigns. Finally, the information gathered by the Co-op should be shared with governments, co-management organizations, and other policy and decision-makers, so as to influence policy and improve management decisions.

The sharing of information should be a two-way exchange. The Co-op takes direction from people at the annual Gathering. This is how the Co-op sets its activities.

A communications strategy was presented at the Co-op Gathering in Fort McPherson, NWT, in the spring of 2002. This strategy incorporates the comments and ideas that came out of the discussion at that Gathering. It includes communications goals for the Co-op, target audiences and objectives, as well as a summary of the status of existing communications and ideas for expanding and improving on the Co-op's sharing of information. In plain language, this strategy hopes to answer the following questions:

- Who needs to know about the Arctic Borderlands Co-op and its programs?
- What do people need to know?
- How would they like to learn it?

Communications Goals:

- To communicate what the Co-op is doing and what the Co-op is learning (the results of the Co-op's programs)
- To keep the profile of the Co-op high (in communities and with governments and funders)
- To streamline and formalize the Co-op's internal communications structure (including the process for making decisions, releasing reports, and the ownership of information)

A clearly outlined set of goals is critical to this communications strategy. These goals provide us with a natural time-line, help define our target audience, and provide us with the tools to measure the success of our communications.

Target Audiences:

- Co-op members
- Co-op directors
- Communities
- Schools
- Academic and Research Institutions
- Funders
- Governments and Co-management Organizations (Policy Makers)
- General Public

Communications Objectives for Each Target Audience:

Co-op Members: Co-op members should know about and contribute to the Co-op's ongoing programs, and attend Annual Gatherings. They should see the results of monitoring and other programs. People who were interviewed want to know what was said in their community and in other communities.

Co-op Board of Directors: Should be involved in the business of the Co-op. Currently, the Directors participate in teleconferencing. The role of the Directors should be clarified and their participation could be expanded.

Communities: Should be able to inform, shape and participate in the Co-op's monitoring work. Should know the results of that work and the possible effects to the environment.

Schools: People have said they'd like to see young people more involved in the monitoring done by the Co-op. Students could become more involved in the work of the Co-op by learning about indicators and how monitoring projects work.

Academic and Research Institutions: Should have access to the results of monitoring done by the Co-op and have an awareness of the unique model used by the Co-op. This awareness may spur further research and aid in the sharing of information by researchers who work in the North.

Funders: Should be updated regularly on the Co-op's ongoing work and the results of studies they have funded. The Co-op's profile should remain high in the eyes of funders and they should see results.

Governments and Co-management Organizations: Should see the results of the monitoring programs of the Co-op. HTC's and RRC's need information about results of monitoring in their communities. This may also streamline and simplify the way the information is gathered. Information from the Borderlands Co-op can help governments learn more about what is going on in member communities, and inform policy and research decisions that will affect community residents.

General Public: Raising the profile of the Co-op in the minds of the general public educates a wide audience about what is happening in Northern communities. At the same time, broad-ranging communications products reach all the other target audiences.

Communications Guidelines:

- The Co-op has budget limitations and takes a cost-effective approach. In-kind donations from agencies can aid in the efficiency of communications – for example, a product could be sent to a Co-op Director at an a government agency for printing and distribution in a certain region.
- Guidelines for the format of materials: Messages should follow the Co-op's guidelines – keep it simple and be relevant. They should be in clear and plain language for all audiences.
- Consider language difficulties: maybe have an interpreter at meetings or translate products into elders' language – or produce a summary in their language, using lots of photos and maps.
- Communications products and messages should be pre-tested where possible to ensure their effectiveness.
- Examination must be given to the issue of ownership of information, especially where local knowledge is concerned, both at the individual and community level.
- Timing of messages is very important.
- The Board of Directors should be more involved and participate in communications decision-making.
- Efforts should be made to find a formal way to avoid overlap in information collection (this is a big issue for researchers).

- Meetings should continue to be held in different communities.
- Communications products should show clear, practical examples of how the information gathered by the Co-op is used.

Present and Ongoing Co-op Communications Products:

The Annual Gathering

- Invites go out to all members
- Summary of the Gathering – sent out to all participants and Friends of the Co-op. This was done for the first time last year and was very well received. Included in this package should be a list of participants at the Gathering and a list of the Board of Directors as elected at the Gathering.
- The Complete Proceedings are sent out to participants

Community Monitoring Report

This summary, based on the reports of community monitors, is sent out to all participants in the community monitoring project. It should also go out to HTC's and RRC's, funders and other target groups. The report should be prepared annually.

Indicator Report

Based on key indicators from the website, this report is given out at Gatherings, where indicators can be added to and updated.

Pamphlet

Joan Eamer has created a simple pamphlet that introduces the Co-op and its programs. A pamphlet such as this is a good way of spreading information about the Co-op at meetings and conferences, and could also be sent out to funders and governments, to keep the Co-op's profile high.

Co-op website

The Co-op has an excellent website that can be accessed by students, researchers and the general public. It is a good central source of information and receives a huge number of 'hits' from around the world. The website should be maintained and updated as a central information point on the results of the Co-op's programs. It has been suggested that an 'Elders Page' be added to the website. The website can also be used creatively (as discussed by Gary Kofinas at the 2002 Gathering) to share the results of the community monitoring project. While the Co-op's Internet site is a major vehicle for exchanging information among certain audiences, it may not be used by all target audiences.

Co-op Information Binder

This was given out to key organizations, and included reports and proceedings from the Co-op's Gatherings. It also included at CD-ROM of the website. If the

binder has proven useful to organizations, it should be regularly updated as reports are produced.

Community Monitoring Poster – Four-year Summary Poster

This poster was prepared for presentation at an Arctic Science conference. This type of poster could be used at other meetings and conferences, and adapted for use in communities.

Mailing List

The Co-op has a regular mailing list of participants at gatherings, and also a 'Friends of Co-op' list. The Co-op should formalize what goes to who when in order to maintain regular contact. The Board of Directors should receive regular updates on Co-op activities and opportunities should be created for Directors to be involved in and comment on programs and results of programs. Governments and other funders should also receive regular Co-op updates. A mass-mail out can also be done relatively cheaply in a small community. This may be a way of communicating monitoring results on key indicators to community residents.

Suggestions for New Co-op Communications:

Media

The Co-op could increase its media exposure.

- Press releases could be sent out to media outlets announcing the Annual Gathering or the release of results from annual monitoring or special projects.
- Media representatives could be invited to attend the Gathering (ICS TV crew was at the most recent Gathering) or observe some community monitoring work.
- The Co-op could produce another 'Your Yukon' column, updating newspaper readers about recent projects.
- An interview could be arranged with local CBC radio and newspapers to discuss the Co-op's unique model and upcoming Gatherings.
- Other local radio stations can provide coverage, particularly around the time of the Gatherings.
- The rolling channel can be used for effective advertising in Inuvik.

Schools

- Send pamphlet about Co-op to school principals – and have the community monitors phone them, maybe come into schools to do a presentation.
- Inform school boards, CLCs and other school workers about the Co-op
- Have Co-op interviewers and/or elders go into classrooms and discuss the community monitoring program
- Involve older students in interviews and have them make presentations to their classrooms
- Invite students to Gatherings

- Involve college students from Renewable Resource programs
- A simple classroom project exercise could be developed to allow students to monitor several chosen indicators on a long-term basis.
- The Co-op's website is a good reference for students.

Products

Co-op CD ROM

- An updated version of the Co-op web site sent out free every year, to schools, libraries, academic institutions and others – good for communities with poor internet access, because you don't have to be online to use it.

Posters

- Posters that display the results of the Co-op's programs could be created for academic audiences. A series of simple posters could be created for each participating community on the results from the community monitoring project. Interviewees need to know results – focus on this. Something tactile –simple, attractive, short posters, sent out right away. Small posters (11x17) are a good way to share information.
- A series of posters and small reports could be created on a variety of subjects. For example: 'What the Co-op has learned about...Fish.'
- Acknowledge elders – through posters or small book with their biographies – "Who is the ABEKC?"

Summary reports

- Researchers who work in the Borderlands should get summary information from the Co-op – this could be on the web site, or in a plain paper report. This also helps sell the Co-op's programs to funders.

Video

The Co-op could choose to have a short video made, one that would introduce the Co-op and the community monitoring program. The video could follow the community monitors as they do their interview work with community experts.

- Such a videotape could be taken home from Gatherings by participants to show people in communities. There could also be an annual video product of the Gathering (ICC video of 2002 is one).

Calendar or Logbook

A calendar or logbook could be produced to distribute results of monitoring to communities and participants. It could have the dual purpose of sharing past results and reminding participants to watch for key indicators at certain times of the year.

- RRB puts out a calendar every year – could dedicate a month to the Co-op

Newsletter

- The Co-op could produce a newsletter, or add a section to other newsletters that go out to members and communities. A newsletter could go out as infrequently as 2x per year – as a simple update.
- Short 'Co-op updates', including program activities and results, could be sent out regularly (for example every three or every six months) to members, directors, governments and funders.
- Use other organizations' newsletters to put information in – regularly send a small update blurb on the Co-op to the Gwich'in newsletter, IRC newsletter and others.

Presentations

The Co-op could raise its profile by increasing its presence at meetings, conferences and academic institutions. Presenters could share information about the Co-op model and results of the Co-op's programs. This is one good way to involve Co-op Directors.

- Have community monitors or Directors make a presentation to:
 - Elders Councils
 - Village councils
 - First Nation Annual Assemblies
 - Governments and funding agencies – need a good salesperson to show what we're doing
- Make presentations in all communities
- Go to community meetings that are already happening (HTC meetings, Industry meetings) and explain what's going on and how the Co-op fits in
- Beaufort Sea and other conferences – put up a poster

Mailing List

- Make an effort to maintain a mailing list and expand it to keep everyone on. Expand the mailing list – keep mail-outs short and sweet – refer people to the Co-op website for more information.
- Suggestions for additions to the mailing list: Tsiigetichic, Dene Nation, Gwich'in Steering Committee, CYFN, Tribal Councils, Ducks Unlimited.
- Send out examples of how information collected by the Co-op is going to be used to make better decisions – this builds support.
- Communicate with corporations and people who work in animal management, such as ANWR and PCMB. Think – 'what do we have that they should know?' and get feedback.
- Keep an email distribution list for researchers (Arctic Info and North Sci are two examples).

Arctic Borderlands Co-op Communications Strategy Timetable (Multi-year)

Abbreviations: Admin Coord = Administrative and Communications Co-ordinator; Program Coord = Program Co-ordinator; CBM Coord = Community-based Monitoring Program Co-ordinator. (Note: these are not 3 positions - they are 3 Co-op core functions, and can be a mix of donated time from participant organizations, Co-op staff, interns or contractors)

Product	What/How	Target Audience(s)	When or how often should it be done?	Who will do it?
Annual Gathering: Invites, Summary, Proceedings	Sent out by mail	Invites go to a broader list, summary and proceedings go to those who attended	Annually Invites go out: Summary goes out: Proceedings go out:	Admin Coord
Community Monitoring Report	Based on reports of community monitors and additional info; copy in packages at Gathering, sent out to all participants	Co-op participants, local experts who were interviewed, communities, gov'ts and co-management, funders	Should be produced annually	CBM Coord
Indicator Report	Based on key indicators from the website, copy in packages at Gathering	Co-op members and any one expressing an interest	Annually	Program Coord
Co-op Website	Info about the Co-op, its activities and programs; results of Community Monitoring to be added	Co-op participants, general public, gov't, academic and research institutions	Ongoing	Program Coord
Pamphlet about the Co-op	Done; to be distributed by mail and at meetings and conferences	General public, funders, academic and research institutions	Where useful	Admin Coord
Co-op Binder	Binder with full set of records and information; done; should be updated	Key participant agencies	Annually	Admin Coord
Mailing Lists	Co-op Members and 'Friends of the Co-op' Databases should be created	Participants and others who are interested or should be kept informed	Update and contact as necessary	Admin Coord
Media: press releases, newspaper, radio, TV, advertising	Media contact should be initiated	General public, communities	Around the time of the Gathering; when projects are completed	Admin Coord

Product	What/How	Target Audience(s)	When or how often should it be done?	Who will do it?
Schools: Presentations, Involvement in Interviews, Classroom Exercises, Invites to Gatherings	Contact initiated through letters to principals	School staff and students		Co-op Directors and Participants and Admin Coord
Co-op CD ROM	Updated Version of the Website	Communities, Co-op participants, libraries, academic and research institutions	To be sent out annually or as necessary	Program Coord
Posters	A series of posters – results from the community monitoring program on a variety of topics	Boards, agencies, councils, committees	Annually for updates; some on request or for projects	Program Coord
Summary Reports	Report version of the posters	Researchers, academic institutions	Annually for updates; some on request or for projects	Program and CBM Coords
Video	Videotape of Gathering; Video about the Co-op	Communities in Co-op region and other regions	One time project	Admin Coord
Calendar or Logbook	Indicators to watch for at various times of year	Participants in community monitoring study	Annually	CBM Coord
Newsletter	Co-op Updates and results of programs to be added to other orgs' newsletters OR Co-op Newsletter	General public and Co-op participants	Periodically (several times a year)	Admin Coord
Presentations	At meetings, conferences and academic institutions	Funders, gov'ts and managers, academics and researchers	As appropriate	Co-op Directors and Participants