

Family-Based Reindeer Herding and Hunting Economies, and the Status and Management of Wild Reindeer/ Caribou Populations

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Preface

Reindeer husbandry is embedded in a traditional way of life and is of great economic and cultural importance for many indigenous peoples in the Arctic. The life of the reindeer herding and hunting families has always been challenging and today they face some of the greatest challenges ever. It is therefore natural that the Arctic Council takes a special interest in reindeer husbandry and reindeer/caribou hunting.

This project, "Family-Based Reindeer Herding and Hunting Economies, and the Status and Management of Wild Reindeer/Caribou Populations", was approved by the Arctic Council as a project under the Sustainable Development Programme at the Third Ministerial Meeting in Finland in October 2002. It is a direct follow up of the project, "Sustainable Reindeer Husbandry", which was approved by the Arctic Council in 2000. The report from the project on Sustainable Reindeer Husbandry received a very positive response and gave reindeer husbandry a natural place on the Arctic Council's circumpolar agenda.

The new project expands the scope of inquiry in a number of areas. Instead of focusing exclusively on the herders, as the previous project did, it examines the role of the entire family in reindeer husbandry. It also studies wild reindeer/caribou populations as well as those who hunt wild herds. The report documents that herding and hunting economies face major challenges, which, in fact, in some regions threaten their very existence.

The project is a genuine circumpolar effort by a joint Norwegian-Russian initiative with strong support from Canada, United States, Finland and Sweden. This circumpolar nature of the project is also reflected in the composition of the project's International Steering Committee. The project has benefited from close contact with the organisations of reindeer herding and indigenous peoples.

The report is based on several fieldtrips and interviews with reindeer owners, herders and hunters, family members, officials and researchers in all of the Arctic countries that accommodate a stock of reindeer. Also pre-collected data has been utilised. Moreover, two seminars have been organised by the project, the first in Moscow in 2003, and the second in Yakutsk in 2004.

On the basis of the findings of the project, the International Steering Committee has put forward specific recommendations to the Arctic Council, to national authorities and to the industry itself. These recommendations are included as an appendix to the report.

This project has cooperated closely with the Association of World Reindeer Herders. The Association has been an active and positive partner throughout the project, and has made valuable contributions to the discussions in the International Steering Committee besides being the main organiser of the two seminars in Russia.

The report is intended to be generally accessible for people without detailed knowledge of reindeer/caribou herding and hunting economies. It is therefore written with only a minimum of references to scientific literature.

We hope that the effort during the last four years, as reflected in this report and the previous report on Sustainable Reindeer Husbandry, has established a solid basis for the future activities of the Arctic Council concerning questions pertaining to reindeer/caribou.

This report is published in both English and Russian.

Tromsø, September 2004

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