



ACTIVITY REPORT

KNOWLEDGE SHARING WORKSHOP

“Cultural Economy in Indigenous Communities: A Path to Sustainable Future”

27– 30 April 2017
Moscow, Russia

*Prepared by Varvara V. Korkina
and Andrey N. Petrov*

Cedar Falls
2017

“Sustainability that Works” Community Knowledge Sharing Workshops
Arctic-FROST-ReSDA Community Workshop Series

Acknowledgements

This report provides an overview of an activity supported by the following National Science Foundation grants: PLR #1338850, PLR #1360365, and PLR #1532655. We also acknowledge collaboration from Resources and Sustainable Development (ReSDA) project (Canada) in co-organizing this and other community workshops in the “Sustainability that Works in the Arctic” series.

We would like to thank all workshop speakers and participants. In particular we are thankful to the members of the workshop program committee and Polar Style Fashion Show organizing team. We are also grateful to MISIS University Vice-Rector Dr. Timothy E. O’Connor and interpreters Anton Gashenko, Ksenia Kashirina, and Olga Voroshina for providing assistance with translation.

The workshop was organized and report was prepared with the leadership from UNI graduate student and Polar Style Executive Director Varvara Korkina.

*Andrey N. Petrov, PhD
Arctic-FROST Principal Investigator
Director, ARCTICenter
University of Northern Iowa
President-Elect, International Arctic Social Sciences Association*

“Sustainability that Works” Community Knowledge Sharing Workshops
Arctic-FROST-ReSDA Community Workshop Series

Introduction

In the recent decades Arctic communities experienced dramatic economic, social and cultural transformations, as well as a rapid environmental change. While some communities were able to partially capitalize on new economic opportunities, assert their rights and preserve ecosystems, others are facing formidable challenges and struggles.

Cultural economy is an indispensable component of both local economy and traditional society. Indigenous communities in the Arctic are uniquely positioned to benefit from economic benefits of cultural activities, while preserving their identity and control over material and spiritual culture. Elements of traditional knowledge, such as arts and crafts, are not only important components of Indigenous culture, but can also be commodities that can bring economic profit (this economic sector is known as ‘cultural economy’). Commercial arts and crafts are a substantial and growing sector of northern economy in some parts of the Arctic (Canada, Nordic countries). It is important, however, that such economic activities are led and controlled by Indigenous people through Indigenous entrepreneurship and Indigenous businesses. This event focused on experiences in cultural economy in the Indigenous communities around the Arctic. We held a “knowledge sharing” session (plenary and panel discussion) that brought together entrepreneurs, scholars and policymakers from various parts of the circumpolar and euro arctic world.



Varvara Korkina (graduate student at the ARCTICenter, UNI) presents the project “Fashioning the New Arctic”

“Sustainability that Works” Community Knowledge Sharing Workshops
Arctic-FROST-ReSDA Community Workshop Series



Aisura Tahanova shows an Altay crafts projects conducted collaboratively by local Indigenous youth and elders

Indigenous perspectives on sustainable development of the Russian Arctic are not well known to the international social scientists, a significant gap that needs to be addressed. Indigenous peoples in the Russian Arctic represent 26 distinct nations who are quite different in their heritage and culture, and include reindeer herders, sea hunters, horse breeders and urban

residents. Many of them are losing traditional territories due to climate change, resource extraction, tourism and existential transformations of traditional lifestyles. Some Indigenous peoples moved to urbanized communities in the Arctic and beyond, and face multiple challenges on how to earn their living while preserving their cultural heritage. Indigenous art has a strong connection with traditional patterns, activities, spiritual beliefs and culture in general. Indigenous artists use traditional knowledge coming from grandfathers and grandmothers and invest considerable time and effort in producing handicraft using hands and traditional instruments. However, the current economic situation and the nature of potential markets for these arts and crafts pressures Indigenous artists to seek new opportunities for designing their products and organizing production and sales. They are looking into ways to better connect with external markets and to make their production accessible and desirable to a larger customer base, while ensuring cultural continuity and restricting commodification of Indigenous arts and crafts by actors outside the Indigenous community.

The purpose of this workshop was to share results of particular studies and personal experiences of Indigenous cultural entrepreneurship from USA, Russia and Canada. The workshop coincided with the largest Indigenous arts and crafts festival in Russia “The Treasures of the North” and attracted festival participants to our audience. The workshop gathered academics, fashion designers, Indigenous artists, businessmen and government representatives to discuss this important issue. In addition to formal presentations and discussion, we also held a panel with the Russian Indigenous speakers. We also had follow-up interviews with Indigenous artists.

“Sustainability that Works” Community Knowledge Sharing Workshops
Arctic-FROST-ReSDA Community Workshop Series

Workshop participants

Aisura Tahanova (Indigenous Youth Organizer, Altay Republic, Russia)

Alisa Gennadieva (Dean of Arts, Russian State Hydrometeorological University, Russia)

Andrey N. Petrov (Director, ARCTICenter, University of Northern Iowa, USA)

Annette Lynch (Director, School of Applied Human Sciences, University of Northern Iowa, USA)

Astkhik Sagayan (Representative, Parsadanelli Art Agency, St. Petersburg, Russia)

Chris Southscott (Professor, Lakehead University and PI, ReSDA, Canada)

Elena Kolesova (Artist, Bomnak Village, Zeya District, Russia)

Madeline Meyer (Marketing/design student, University of Northern Iowa, USA)

Margarita Rogacheva (Director, Amur Designs Studio, Khabarovsk Kray, Russia)

Maria Duvan (Indigenous activist, Amur Oblast', Russia)

Marianna Dorofeeva (Head of the Association of the Indigenous Peoples of the North of Amurskaya oblast', Russia)

Oleg Hrin (Head of the Department of Indigenous Affairs and Agricultural Development, Nadym District, Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Okrug, Russia)

Varvara Korkina (Graduate Student, University of Northern Iowa and Executive Director, Polar Style Fashion Show, Russia)

Victoria Okpik (Chief Designer, Nunavik Creations, Canada)

Interpreters: Anton Gashenko, Ksenia Kashirina, and Olga Voroshina (MISIS University, Russia)



Discussion: Margarita Rogacheva (Khabarovsk Kray) shares her thoughts on the state of cultural economy in the Russian North

Indigenous cultural economy: Opportunities and Challenges



Presentations and discussion at the workshop and in the following day allowed identifying key themes and findings associated with cultural economy in Indigenous communities. The participants emphasized a number of crucial challenges and emerging opportunities.

Victoria Okpik of Nunavik Creations (Canada) prepares to speak about her experience as an Indigenous designer

Opportunities

1. Cultural industry as a new economic sector in Indigenous communities.
2. Employment opportunities created by cultural economy could be considerable for small settlements.
3. Cultural economy maintains and reinforces the connection to land claims and rights.
4. Cultural economy in itself may be instrumental for taking back cultural rights.
5. Income could be generated directly (if employ indigenous artists and crafters) and indirectly (through purchasing handicraft or materials from Indigenous producers).
6. Cultural economy supports sustainable development in Indigenous communities, gives something that stays in these communities (both income and culture).
7. Provides education and training.
8. Involves youth, women and rural residents struggling to find jobs.
9. Allows transmitting tradition to young generations and thus maintains cultural continuity.
10. Cultural economy gives new opportunities to connect to urban Indigenous youth, provides means to maintain cultural identity for Indigenous urban residents.
11. Reinvigorates appreciation of traditional arts and crafts through commercialized products (both among the Indigenous peoples and non-Indigenous populations who gain exposure to Indigenous culture and learn ways to respect and cherish Indigenous heritage).
12. Cultural economy provides an avenue for popularizing Indigenous culture.

“Sustainability that Works” Community Knowledge Sharing Workshops
Arctic-FROST-ReSDA Community Workshop Series

13. Cultural economy protects Indigenous cultural heritage from expropriation by outsiders while ensuring economic benefits to Indigenous artists and communities.

Challenges

1. Market access could be very problematic and market size is still limited (more studies are needed).
2. Cultural appropriation and commodification remains a strong concern.
3. Need to have community consensus on appropriate ways to commercialize traditional arts and crafts.
4. Access to capital is a critical issue (Comprehensive Land Claim Agreements, IBAs, grants are major tools to consider).
5. The ‘middle segment’ problem: how to connect artists to customers.
6. Restrictions on the use of some materials inherent for Indigenous arts and crafts (seal skin, walrus tusk, etc.).
7. Involving and engaging young people in production is a challenge.
8. Cultural economy can’t exist without connection to land and sea; loss of access to land and sea will erode cultural production.
9. Need for money and efforts to fight the government and protect indigenous rights, land/sea access and cultural heritage, instead of focusing on community development. This limits opportunity to invest in cultural economy.
10. Outside interference by the government or the ‘big money’ may be problematic.

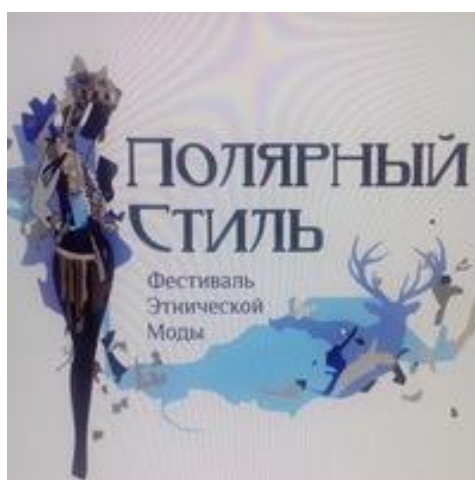
“Sustainability that Works” Community Knowledge Sharing Workshops
Arctic-FROST-ReSDA Community Workshop Series

Post-workshop activities:
Polar Style Fashion Show

This workshop coincided with the Russian Indigenous Exhibition and Festival “The Treasures of the North,” therefore workshop participants were able to meet and talk with Indigenous artists from the Russian Arctic. Some workshop speakers participated in the Indigenous fashion show as contestants and judges: Varvara Korkina and Madeline Mayer presented their dresses collection “Russian Indigenous Chic” (see insert at the end of the report) and Victoria Okpik showcased her collection at the Russian Ethnic Fashion Festival “Polar Style”. Korkina and Meyer received the first prize (gold) and Okpik the silver medal in the “Contemporary Indigenous Fashion” category. This activity was a part of sharing best practices from North America with Indigenous artists from the Russian Arctic.



*Annette Lynch and Andrey Petrov on the Polar Style Fashion Show judge panel (left),
Polar Style Fashion Show participants (right)*



Workshop Program

10:00-14:00

Holiday Inn Sokolniki, Moscow



Dr. Chris Southcott shares the results of the Social Economy of Northern Canada project (left), Dr. Alysa Gennyadieva describes a modern Arctic print with Nenets motives made by an Indigenous young artist (right);

Opening remarks:

Andrey Petrov (USA)

Panel and Discussion

Moderator: Varvara Korkina

Keynote Speakers:

Madeline Meyer and Varvara Korkina (USA/Russia)

Victoria Okpik (Nunavik, Canada)

Aisura Tahanova (Altay Republic, Russia)

Chris Southcott (Ontario, Canada)

Alisa Gennadieva (St. Petersburg, Russia)

Discussion participants:

Oleg Hrin (Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Okrug, Russia)

Marianna Dorofeeva (Amurskaya Oblast', Russia)

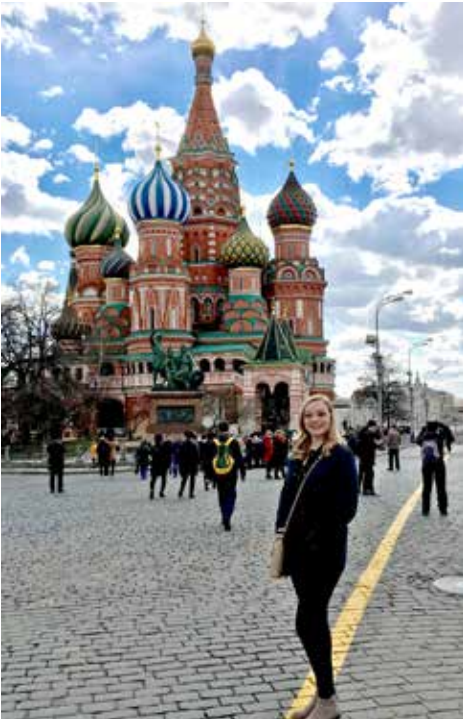
Annette Lynch (Iowa, USA)

Margarita Rogacheva (Khabarovsk Kray, Russia)

Concluding remarks

Andrey N. Petrov (USA)

A CROSS-CULTURAL Collaboration



Fashion is an art form that can break boundaries and bring people together. The collaborative fashion line created by April Torney, Madeline Meyer and Varvara Korkina did exactly that.

The Arctic Chic project informally launched in 2014 when geography professor Andrey Petrov contacted School of Applied Human Sciences director Annette Lynch about having Varvara, who was a visiting scholar, do a beading workshop for a beginning level design class in the textiles and apparel program (TAPP). Based in part on the relationships forged during that visit, Varvara committed to graduate school at UNI. Dr. Petrov and Dr. Lynch now both serve on Varvara's MA committee.

In the spring of 2016, Varvara spoke to a textile print design class about the cultural traditions of indigenous people living in the tundra of Russia and how the way they dressed made it difficult for them to be taken seriously when speaking with local officials. Dressed for tundra conditions, the indigenous people utilized natural resources such as reindeer and fish skin to create durable and warm clothing suitable for their environment. However, their appearance often distracted and dissuaded officials from hearing their concerns. This dilemma became the foundation for a class project to create modern textile print patterns inspired by Russian indigenous culture.

Varvara provided the class with images of traditional dress including beading patterns, fish skin and other decorative techniques. Using these traditional patterns, the students used computer-aided design to create modern textile print patterns. In the summer of 2016, Varvara took swatches of the new modern prints to Moscow to get market feedback. Based on that research, as well as a brand empowerment project completed by April, print patterns were chosen. Many of the designs were created by marketing major and TAPP minor Madeline, who then joined the team.

In the creation of the collection, Madeline and April shared their ideas with Varvara, who provided feedback on what would appeal to their target market of indigenous youth and teenagers. "We

wanted the clothes to express a sense of self-identity that accurately represented their culture," said Madeline. "Varvara's insight made that possible."

The team created five garments that combined aspects of indigenous culture, including print patterns inspired by traditional handwork and fish skin, combined with up to date fashion trend elements, including off-the-shoulder sleeves, kimono-styling and fringe.

In February, the entire research team traveled to New Mexico for the Southwest Popular American Culture Association Conference, where they presented their designs. They also presented at the CSBS Research Conference and the TAPP program's 25th annual Catwalk show.

During the last week of spring semester, Varvara and Madeline traveled to Moscow to show their collection on the runway at the Treasures of the North: Masters and Artists of Russia Exhibition, and won a first place design award in the category of Modern Indigenous Fashion. While in Moscow, they also presented at a cultural economy and sustainability research symposium. While in Moscow, they also presented at a cultural economy and sustainability research symposium, and Madeline conducted focus group research to support the next step, a marketing plan for the collection.

The trio started this project with the intention of making a cultural impact. "Many indigenous artists told me this project changed their views and approaches to their development," said Varvara. "It's the best example of how scientists' collaboration can work for the local communities and help make their lives better." The project had a personal impact on the team as well. "Right now, I'm thinking of starting my own brand or going into technical design," said April, who graduated this past May. "This project changed what I want to do after graduation," said Madeline, who is now looking into strategic marketing research on culture. "It truly opened my eyes to looking at culture and marketing differently."