

Indigenous peoples

About four million people live in the Arctic. Around 10% of the region's inhabitants are indigenous people, many of them living in areas that have been inhabited as far back as several thousand years. In some areas the majority of the population is indigenous in origin. Some are traditional herders, hunters and gatherers. Others lead more contemporary ways of life. All have a long history of traditional culture based on a strong relationship with the natural environment.

- The oil and gas industry aims to operate sustainably in the Arctic, working with indigenous peoples to develop the region's natural resources in a manner compatible with the environment and their traditional way of life
- The oil and gas industry has interacted with Arctic indigenous peoples since the early 20th century, when they served as guides to help in the discovery of the Norman Wells oil field in Canada's Northwest Territories
- The industry works with indigenous peoples to evaluate and mitigate the potential impacts of operations on the environment and social/cultural aspects of the community. This may include consideration of timing and location of planned activities relative to biological activity (whale migration or fish spawning periods), traditional hunting activity and transportation routes across ice, to name a few

The oil and gas industry respects the land, environment, rights and cultures of the indigenous peoples and recognises their historic roles. The extent of their legal rights of ownership and decision-making vary across the Arctic states.

Local communities are a valuable source of traditional knowledge with respect to such things as fluctuating ice conditions and the habitats and behaviours of many species. Capturing this knowledge is essential to ensuring that operations are conducted in a safe, environmentally responsible, and sustainable manner that also preserves local traditional culture.

Early dialogue with local populations is key to identifying opportunities and resolving any potential issues in areas that may have an impact on communities and subsistence culture, the physical footprint of development, the influx of outside workers, revenue distribution, long-term employment, health, education and transport – all within the parameters of sustainability. Through this dialogue, plans can also be developed to proactively address and manage the changes that can be triggered by development activity.

To that end, upstream operators – both individually and through industry associations such as OGP – are increasingly integrating best practice principles on working with indigenous peoples into social impact management processes. These include assessments of potential impacts on local inhabitants, mitigation and benefits agreements, and grievance mechanisms that include mediation. Such activities are in addition to full adherence to national and international laws and involvement with relevant stakeholders. Depending on the indigenous people involved, these can include the Arctic Council and its member organisations, national, regional and local governments, academia and non-governmental organisations.

Indigenous peoples, as the traditional inhabitants of the Arctic, are key stakeholders and are integral to any development assessment and strategy.



About OGP

OGP represents the upstream oil & gas industry before international organisations including the International Maritime Organisation, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Regional Seas Conventions and other groups under the UN umbrella. At the regional level, OGP is the industry representative to the European Commission and Parliament and the OSPAR Commission for the North East Atlantic. Equally important is OGP's role in promulgating best practices, particularly in the areas of health, safety, the environment and social responsibility.