



ARCTIC CONTAMINANTS  
ACTION PROGRAM

# ARCTIC INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY WASTE MANAGEMENT



ARCTIC COUNCIL



[acap.arctic-council.org](http://acap.arctic-council.org)



[@ACAP\\_Arctic](https://twitter.com/ACAP_Arctic)

## Summary

Indigenous communities in the Arctic region are typically hours away from technical assistance and major disposal facilities, and hazardous waste remains a top environmental and health concern. During the U.S. Chairmanship of the Arctic Council, the Arctic Contaminants Action Program (ACAP) and its Expert Group, the Indigenous Peoples' Contaminants Action Program (IPCAP), are helping indigenous communities share their experiences in developing and implementing effective waste management strategies. Drawing on historic connections between communities of the Bering Strait, ACAP hosted a workshop in September 2016, bringing together experts and indigenous groups from the region to share best practices on household and community solid and hazardous waste management, and to strengthen public participation and community outreach.

## Background: Why Waste Management Matters

Effectively addressing waste management can reduce direct human exposure to toxins from burning garbage, can help reduce contamination to food and water sources, can help to prolong the life of landfills in cases of backhauling, and can reduce clean-up costs. There is no "one size fits all" approach to waste management, which makes it highly beneficial for communities and stakeholders to have training on successful waste management approaches, to learn to develop community profiles and plans for waste management, and to use a sustainable approach for community activities.

## Lessons Learned

Discussions during the workshop identified a series of effective approaches to waste management in remote Arctic areas, including sub-regional waste staging and backhaul. Participants shared information on effective community practices, planning and practical hands-on tips and resources regarding safe handling and packaging of hazardous waste and effective disposal approaches. A reference guide with these resource materials will be available on the ACAP website: [acap.arctic-council.org](http://acap.arctic-council.org)

Key concepts identified during discussions included training for indigenous community representatives in Alaska and Russia to address local solid waste and household hazardous waste management, using a sustainable approach for activities such as: local capacity building, inventory, staging, and backhaul, using safe practices for personal protection, hazardous materials handling, on site controls, and prevention techniques to encourage concrete activities and results.

Indigenous experts, environmental officials, and community leaders encouraged communities to take the following steps:

- Train community leadership, engaged citizens, and local managers;
- Prioritize environmental concerns in the community;
- Strategize how to address the problems;
- Develop local waste management planning for all seasons, incorporating subsistence culture;
- Address this shared responsibility by encouraging changing behaviors and practices through education activities and outreach tools;
- Engage in partnerships with businesses and transport companies and explore fee structures;
- Establish a centralized collection system;
- Highlight successful practices in community updates for further awareness raising; and
- Encourage continued community stewardship of valuable collective resources.

---

## Contacts

Arctic Indigenous Community Waste Workshop  
U.S. EPA project lead  
Katherine Buckley  
buckley.katherine@epa.gov



Waste collected and barged out of Nulato, Alaska (2015)



Waste clean-up on Little Diomed, Alaska. Little Diomed has had successful coastline and waste clean-up efforts through active community engagement and planning, and the help of visiting tourists.



Little Diomed Island

---

For general questions about ACAP  
U.S. ACAP point of contact  
Hodayah Finman  
finman.hodayah@epa.gov