

Practical Workshop on Intellectual Property, Traditional Knowledge and Traditional Cultural Expressions for Countries from the Arctic Region

organized by
the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)

and

the Government of Canada

in cooperation with
Nunavut Tunngavik Inc.

Iqaluit, Canada, May 14-16, 2019

Opening Remarks

May 14, 2019

Wend Wendland, Director, Traditional Knowledge Division, WIPO

First, I greet the Inuit whose rugged and dramatically beautiful land we are on, and thank you for your warm welcome and for allowing my colleagues and I from WIPO to be your guests during this Workshop.

We very much look forward to engaging with you in the next few days, and to both learning from you and sharing our information and experience with you.

I thank Ms. Sinea Kownirks for having conducted the Qulliq Lighting Ceremony.

Director General Mark Schaan, Marketplace Framework Policy Branch, Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada,

Director General Julie Boyer, International Trade, Canadian Heritage,

On behalf of the Director General of the WIPO, Dr. Francis Gurry, I warmly thank you for co-organizing this groundbreaking Workshop with us.

This is the first time that WIPO organizes such an inter-regional event above the Arctic Circle and on indigenous lands, and we are both delighted and honored to be here with you.

Mr. Schaan, our collaboration with you and your team, in particular Laura Woodward and Eric Savard, has been both immensely enjoyable and efficient.

I take this opportunity to, again, thank the Government of Canada for its recent contribution to the WIPO Voluntary Fund for Accredited Indigenous and Local Communities.

I recognize also the presence and roles of:

- Ms. Kilikvak Kabloona, CEO, Nunavut Tunngavik Inc, which is the local partner in the organization of this event, and
- Ms. Monica Eil-Kanayuk, President, Inuit Circumpolar Council of Canada, who will be the facilitator for this first day of the workshop.

We are also very pleased to have officials and indigenous representatives from Finland and Sweden with us. Because you are here too, the Workshop allows for a braiding together of perspectives and experiences from distinct countries and contexts within the Arctic region.

Your participation enables this to be an inter-regional workshop, with Inuit and Saami, and with officials from the three countries Canada, Finland and Sweden.

The International Trademark Association (INTA) represents trademark and brand owners worldwide. We work with INTA to provide *pro bono* practical advice and assistance to indigenous peoples. I am very pleased that Marion Heathcote, Representative and Principal, Davies Collison Cave, Sydney, Australia, is with us here on behalf of INTA.

As some of you know well, WIPO is a specialized agency of the United Nations, with 192 Member States.

Our mission is the establishment of a balanced and effective international intellectual property (IP) system that enables innovation and creativity for the benefit of all.

WIPO's work on traditional knowledge and cultural expressions started back in 1998, when the organization began to examine the interface between IP systems and the rights and aspirations of indigenous peoples for greater protection of their traditional knowledge (TK) and traditional cultural expressions (TCEs): whether protection BY the IP system or protection FROM the IP system.

One of the very first activities we undertook at that time was a fact-finding mission to Canada. This mission took place in November 1998 and included a visit to Iqaluit. Therefore, this is not the very first time that WIPO is here. This mission, together with similar missions to other regions and countries, led to a comprehensive report, which then shaped WIPO's future work on these issues.

It also led to WIPO providing assistance to the Pauktuutit Inuit Women's Association related to the protection of the Inuit Amauti using the current IP system. This item of traditional clothing exemplifies innovative adaptation to a harsh Arctic environment and the vibrant artistic elements of Inuit culture.

The Igloo Tag Trademark and the Saami duodji trademark are other examples of how indigenous peoples from the Arctic region have used the IP system.

The objectives of this Workshop are to learn more about how IP tools can be used to protect TK and TCEs; to get to know each other (within and between countries); and share experiences and best practices.

On substance, the primary focus of this Workshop is on gaining a better understanding of how the existing IP system interfaces with the protection of TK and TCEs.

The discussion will not be unidirectional. The program is designed to facilitate the sharing of experiences and information and applying information through practical case studies.

An area of great importance is customary law, and learning from you about how sophisticated Inuit and Saami customary legal systems regulate the creation of and use and access to TK and TCEs.

It is critical that we hear from you in your own words.

Women's knowledge is especially important and I am pleased to see the high number of women participants in this Workshop.

While there will not be formal outcomes, I hope that participants will share and learn from each other, and be able to return home and use what information you have gathered to improve the practical protection of TK and TCEs.

This Workshop will also see the launch in this region of Inuktitut and Northern Saami versions of our short animation. We are proud to offer this short awareness-raising tool in indigenous languages during the International Year of Indigenous Languages.

In conclusion.

We recognize that the needs and aspirations of Indigenous Peoples go beyond the protection of TK and TCEs, and that the IP system provides a partial response to your concerns regarding the preservation and protection of the vibrancy and sustainability of your traditional cultures.

We recognize too that IP and the protection of TK and TCEs raises some complex questions and that navigating within the IP system is not always straightforward.

Knowledge of how the IP system functions in practice is valuable, however.

If I may use the metaphor of the building of an igloo, this Workshop aims to begin to build knowledge about IP – block by block – and to create a foundation for continued learning and working together.

Finally, my colleagues Daphne Zografos Johnsson and Rebecka Forsgren and I are thrilled and honored to be here, and we look forward to working together with you.

Thank you all again for coming and I wish us all a successful Workshop.
