



CAPACITY BUILDING TO INCREASE KNOWLEDGE ABOUT INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE

The Darwin Initiative project ‘**Integrating traditional knowledge into national policy and practices**’ has been building capacity in Indigenous communities to have a deeper understanding of the issues and solutions for traditional knowledge and to have greater voice and representation within the management of biodiversity and protected areas. Equally important has been the project’s efforts to build capacity at the decision-maker level. Communication between Indigenous communities and decision-makers has always been a challenge – sometimes simply related to logistics or the lack of cultural understanding and language barriers. More so, being often marginalized due to poverty or education status, many may not believe that Indigenous communities would have much to contribute to decision-making processes. Well, as we have highlighted in the previous articles, this certainly is not the case. Indigenous peoples possess unique values, knowledge and understanding of their lands and biodiversity. They have, and can make, meaningful contributions if given the opportunity.

It is therefore necessary for government agencies, especially staff at all levels that engage with or support Amerindian communities in their work, to have training. This needs to focus on topics including the challenges faced by communities, good examples of collaborations, methods of engagement and local/international legislation and policies that support the rights of Indigenous people and that call for better inclusion in decision-making processes. Under the Darwin Initiative project, such a training course was developed and piloted in February 2019. The training was well received, and participants from agencies such as Environmental Protection Agency, Guyana Wildlife Conservation and Management Commission, Guyana Lands and Survey Commission, Guyana Forestry Commission and the Centre for the Study of Biological Diversity, concluded that the course provided a much greater understanding of how to work with Indigenous peoples. They expressed an increased appreciation for consultation with Amerindian villages through video-mediated dialogues by the application of participatory video techniques. A training manual and other course resources will be available for use in providing training to professionals within all governmental agencies and others organisations to use for building the capacity of their staff in this area.

Additionally, a consolidated database of all publications, videos and other related records associated with Amerindians in Guyana would help to recognize the contribution of traditional knowledge to conservation, and allow for better analysis and reporting on progress with respect to traditional knowledge and efforts to safeguard its use. Having easier access to such resources or details on who to contact (in the case of sensitive information) can ensure that new research and projects are aimed at improving and building on work that has already been done.

In next week’s article, we will continue to share with you information based on a drafted Traditional Knowledge Action Plan (TKNAP) for Guyana. If you would like to learn more about some of the work that has been done in communities by the project please visit the following website: <https://cobracollective.org/tag/darwin/>. Also, how do you feel about traditional knowledge and the role it plays in conservation? What do you think about a Traditional Knowledge National Action Plan for Guyana? Please share your thoughts via 592 650 6632 (WhatsApp or SMS only).

Additionally, you can share your ideas and questions by sending letters to: “Our Earth, Our Environment”, C/O ECEA Programme, Environmental

Protection Agency, Ganges Street, Sophia, GEORGETOWN, or email us at: eit.epaguyana@gmail.com. Follow us on Facebook and Instagram and subscribe to our YouTube channel.