



**Friends of the Earth U.S.**, founded by David Brower in 1969, works to defend the environment and champion a healthy and just world. To accomplish our mission, we work at the nexus of environmental protection, economic policy and social justice to fundamentally transform the way our country and the world value people and the environment. We are supported by 1.5 million activists across the U.S.



Photo: NOAA

Our current national campaigns focus on promoting clean energy and solutions to climate change, ensuring the food we eat and products we use are safe and sustainable, and protecting marine ecosystems and the people who live from and work near them. Our Oceans and Vessels Program is aware that until we wean ourselves off fossil fuels, we must ensure that the best available technology and practices are continuously updated to reduce the risks posed by their transportation. The greatest risk of an oil spill is complacency. We have been working on Arctic shipping issues for over a decade –most instrumentally regarding the Polar Code, which establishes mandatory environmental and safety rules for Arctic shipping. In 2016, Friends of the Earth has expanded our work to include the protection of Arctic waters from shipping impacts by working with Arctic indigenous peoples and organizations, including Alaska Native tribes, by creating better marine policies at the International Maritime Organization.



*Indigenous Representatives addressing IMO*  
(photo: Verner Wilson)

### **Arctic Indigenous Peoples Perspectives in International Maritime Law: Arctic Indigenous Representation at the International Maritime Organization (IMO):**

Globally, shipping is a major contributor to greenhouse gas emissions, transfer of invasive species, discharges and other environmental impacts. At the same time, shipping is central to current Arctic economies and may present future economic opportunities. Increased shipping may significantly affect specific waters, food security, subsistence activities, water quality and wildlife. Arctic communities, arctic food security, and Indigenous Peoples' cultures stand to be impacted by

increased shipping.

Many issues and concerns surrounding increased shipping are discussed across multiple regional, national, and international government bodies. However, the IMO, a specialized agency of the United Nations, is the only agency which sets international maritime law.



With increased international vessel transits through Arctic waters, there is a need to set standards that protect the livelihoods of Arctic Indigenous Peoples. However, there is a glaring lack of direct input or independent representation by Arctic Indigenous Peoples in creating or advising on the development of international maritime law for the region.

### **Our Work to Bring Arctic Indigenous Perspectives to IMO Decision-making:**

For over two years, Friends of the Earth has partnered with indigenous organizations, foundations and other environmental organizations to discuss achieving official consultative status for Arctic Indigenous peoples at the IMO. Several Arctic Indigenous representatives in past years have attended IMO meetings as members of the Canadian delegation and as members of several Non-Governmental Organization delegations (NGOs), including Friends of the Earth International (FOEI).

In October 2016, several Arctic Indigenous Peoples representatives from Alaska, Canada and Russia addressed the IMO. The panel discussion was well attended and it was the first time that the IMO had been directly addressed by Arctic Indigenous Peoples. Attending as members of NGO delegations, they were also able to speak to papers under consideration concerning food security in the Arctic. In addition, the representatives met with the IMO's Secretary General and his staff, as well as several member state delegations, including the United States and Canada.

IMO member states and the IMO Secretary General are highly interested in Arctic Indigenous Peoples input. Presently, there is no independent representation by Indigenous organizations or governments in any IMO process. Alaska Native representatives as well as tribes and regional Native consortiums such as Kawerak and Bristol Bay Native Association (who serve a combined total of 51 federally recognized tribes in Western Alaska) have stated support for indigenous Arctic representation at IMO. Friends of the Earth and our partners are standing with them to achieve this important goal, which would be historic and precedent-setting.

### **How would Indigenous Communities benefit from Official IMO Consultative Status?**

Organizations with consultative status can present papers for discussion, including raising the need for the IMO to consider new issues. They can also respond during IMO meetings or via papers to matters raised by member states. However, only proposals made by member states can be assigned to a working group to develop regulations.

### **Matters of regional and global matters which affect the Arctic are under active consideration:**

Matters of interest to the Arctic include developing Arctic regulations for **heavy fuel oil** which poses a catastrophic risk if spilled. The IMO is also developing rules for the requirement that ships **avoid**



**marine mammals** in the Arctic. IMO issues of global interest that may also be of interest to Arctic Indigenous Peoples include **regulating greenhouse gases and black carbon**, both contributors to climate change. If international shipping were a country, it would be ranked as the sixth largest polluter between Japan and Germany. Other issues being presently addressed by IMO that may impact food security of Arctic Indigenous Peoples include **underwater noise, sewage and greywater discharge, and invasive species**. Arctic Indigenous Peoples may identify other issues of concern, and the best way to identify these would be to participate in the IMO process.

**For additional information, please visit our website [www.foe.org](http://www.foe.org). You may also contact:  
Verner Wilson III, Senior Oceans Campaigner, [vwilson@foe.org](mailto:vwilson@foe.org);  
or John Kaltenstein, Senior Policy Analyst, [jkaltenstein@foe.org](mailto:jkaltenstein@foe.org);  
Or Marcie Keever, Director of Oceans and Vessels program, [mkeever@foe.org](mailto:mkeever@foe.org)**