

2023

arctic policy hackathon

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

THE FUTURE OF THE ARCTIC:

KEEPING NEXT GENERATION LEADERS IN THE ARCTIC

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Global Affairs
Canada

ARCTIC POLICY HACKATHON

In partnership with Global Affairs Canada and the Arctic Mayors' Forum, The Gordon Foundation ran the second Arctic Policy Hackathon in Reykjavik, Iceland. At this event, emerging leaders from across the circumpolar North developed policy recommendations to address the topic of The Future of the Arctic: Keeping Next Generation Leaders in the Arctic. Participants discussed, questioned, challenged, and brainstormed ideas about specific policy issues, leading to the development of creative policy recommendations.

Hosting emerging leaders at the Hackathon allows Arctic states and stakeholders the opportunity to engage with the next generation, bring new voices to the forefront, and encourages current leaders to listen with open minds to cutting edge policy recommendations on a crucial issue facing the entire Arctic.

Potential outcomes of the Hackathon include:

- Participants build policy skills;
- Participants expand their networks, leading to increased pan-Arctic collaboration;
- Participants gain a new model for policy development that can be taken back to their communities and organizations; and,
- A list of pan-Arctic recommendations developed and presented to key stakeholders.



OPENING STATEMENT

THE FUTURE OF THE ARCTIC: KEEPING NEXT GENERATION LEADERS IN THE ARCTIC

We came together from Arctic Indigenous and local communities across Alaska, Canada, Finland, Greenland, Iceland, Norway, and Sápmi to share our own perspectives and experiences to inform policy recommendations on keeping our next generations of leaders in the Arctic.

Our future is dependent on young people in the whole region taking on leadership roles. The next generation must guide the development of the Arctic in a sustainable way such that we respect and honor the existing natural and cultural values, while at the same time creating opportunities and contributing to solving the biggest challenges facing our societies and the world at large. We believe that diversity and inclusion are the cornerstones to keeping and recruiting the next generation of leaders in the Arctic.

We live in the Arctic because of our traditional and professional livelihoods, and culture. We want to live in areas where we can practice and be immersed in our culture and share it with others. We feel a connection to community, family and our ancestors. We feel immense emotions about the North, a place where we feel seen and that is an integral part of our identity. We are proud of being Northerners and feel a sense of responsibility for the North that is rooted in the continuation of practicing and sharing Arctic and Indigenous cultures. The Arctic is where we are motivated to make change and feel that we have room to grow. This is our home where we want to live, create, and exist.

The Arctic is facing colonization, oppression of language and culture, exploitation of natural resources and depopulation. These issues are largely the result of decisions made outside the Arctic without our participation or consent. This must change and we, the young leaders and Indigenous Peoples of the Arctic, must own our own future. We will create an attractive region for all, with an abundance of opportunities and the fundamentals for living good and rewarding lives.

The following recommendations provide empowering solutions that focus on the self-determination of Arctic leaders. After two days of deliberation and consideration we have concluded that the foundation for building the next generation of Arctic leaders must be built on Culture and Community, Sustainable Development, and Holistic Wellness. Therefore, these were chosen as our main areas of focus for our recommendations.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

THEME: CULTURE & COMMUNITY

ACCESS TO CULTURAL PURSUITS

Issue: Cultural pursuits are not viewed as equal or valuable pathways to future education and employment as a way of life. This results in youth leaving their home for education or, alternatively, youth who ‘drop out’ of secondary education in order to follow a career path in their cultural and traditional knowledge practices (fisheries, art, hunting, handicraft, reindeer herding).

Recommendation: Recognize cultural pursuits as valuable and respectable livelihoods equal to higher education. This will be done through equitable certification and recognition, or programs that are created through their families and/or communities to support youth to follow their career path, starting in secondary schools or earlier. Access to cultural programming and time on the land must be encouraged by places of schooling and employment. This results in local verified experts in cultural knowledge who can stay in their communities and hold careers with the same value as higher education degrees.

Example: Aqqiumavvik Wellness Society, Arviat, Nunavut, Canada,¹ offers a variety of programming developed, instructed, and delivered by local elders for youth to connect with their culture, land, heritage, and community.

SUCCESSION PLANNING

Issue: Current Arctic organizations and industries do not take into account effective succession planning in employment for Indigenous and Arctic youth, leading to youth leaving for desirable employment opportunities that are unattainable in their homelands.

Recommendation: Require places of employment to have a succession plan in place that includes mentorship and training opportunities for Indigenous and Arctic youth, with the goal of attaining employment, retention and inclusion. This looks like decreasing restrictive credentials in job applications, and incorporating an Arctic lens that recognizes local experts and knowledge keepers as holding equal credentials.

Example: First Alaskans Institute² has a variety of youth internship and fellowship programs that gives Alaska Native and rural youth the opportunity to work in various agencies, including the State Legislature or National Congress.

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

Issue: The lack of acceptance of diversity in rural Arctic areas is resulting in youth migrating from their homes, seeking acceptance and safety in urban areas.

Recommendation: Increasing exposure to diverse populations and perspectives, through awareness and learning opportunities led by youth for their community, such as public awareness campaigns (2SLGBTQQA+, gender identity). Creating more opportunities for positive interactions will create a sense of safety and belonging in lives and community.

1. <https://www.aqqiumavvik.com/>

2. <https://www.firstalaskans.org/>

Additionally, creating these safer spaces will allow for acceptance and inclusion of diverse multicultural identities, promoting a holistic sense of community that is attractive and welcoming to all.

Examples:

- Samtökin '78 – the National Queer Association of Iceland³ has an extensive refugee welcoming program.

3. <https://samtokin78.is/english/>



THEME: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

TRANSPARENT DECISION-MAKING

Issue: Construction and large projects can affect many different groups that sometimes get forgotten in the discussion. Even though decisions need to go through a process within government agencies and companies where the impact on the environment and how it creates value is examined, these processes may still consider value in a very narrow sense and may not take into account cases such as effects on minority groups, local people and on existing values.

Recommendation: In order to ensure that stakeholders can react to the intentions of companies, the state and institutions, they need to be public and prominent. Information about the goals of the projects and what will be needed to achieve those goals must be included, i.e. territories and resources affected. In order for it to be as effective as possible, the existing processes must be adapted to new cases that arise, and in this way, transparency can teach us not to make the same mistakes again when new projects and developments are under discussion. This can increase the possibility of people being able to continue living in the Arctic.

Next Steps:

- Government agencies responsible for monitoring the impact of projects constantly develop their processes based on new discussions.
- The legislator guarantees the right of stakeholders like locals to information about plans.
- Companies must be incentivized and held accountable to show responsibility in their projects.

LOCAL OWNERSHIP, YOUTH AND INDIGENOUS INVOLVEMENT

Issue: Not enough of the value chain benefits or stays in Arctic communities. For example, companies are extracting raw materials from Arctic communities but not providing any local benefits or secondary effects; this also leads to exploitative practices such as fly-in, fly-out employment.

Recommendation: Local ownership, youth and Indigenous involvement ensures that value generated in industry stays in the local community and is being re-invested locally. Local youth, Indigenous groups, and other social minorities need to be given real power in decision making. Examples include boards, political leadership, and regulatory bodies. This will also provide exciting opportunities and challenges for Arctic youth, encouraging them to stay.

Next Steps:

- Companies should actively focus on hiring local personnel instead of fly-in, fly-out personnel.
- Municipalities should actively include young people in decision making and hire youth.
- Municipalities and companies should consider not demanding several years of experience or higher education in job advertisements, and rather focus on personal suitability in order to keep youth in the Arctic (see Succession Planning).
- Projects need to create lasting value for local communities and cultures, countering exploitative practices. There are many potential benefits to be gained from Arctic exploration and development; it is critical that each project includes a diversified portfolio for investing these benefits back into the Arctic.

- New energy production must also be connected to other investments that provide economic value and growth to the local communities.
- Energy producers must provide support and investment in the municipalities that host them.

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

Opportunity: There is a greater opportunity for community-driven Arctic research, development, innovation and growth. Ethical research and innovation can produce cultural and economic value, without extracting resources or damaging local environments and communities while providing solutions to the large issues facing the Arctic and the world.

Recommendation: We need to cultivate an environment that breeds innovative and sustainable growth and spread of Arctic ideologies. This requires continual engagement of local communities, safe and inclusive work environments, multiple industry opportunities, and respect for the value that every individual may bring for growth. The region should focus on being a hub for research and innovation and export ideas and technologies; economic, technological, and cultural development must be a part of the Arctic's future.

Next Steps:

- Provide infrastructure and resources for research and development in the Arctic that is owned and led by young people from the region.
- Actively build a culture that provides research opportunities and development.
- Invest in research and development within industries already present in the Arctic such as space, fisheries, and mining.
- Provide opportunities for young researchers and experts that incentivizes them to stay and work in the Arctic.
- Invest in programs that allow Indigenous groups to own the research that is done on their areas such as the Guardians programs in Canada.
- Create and/or uphold ethics research frameworks relevant to the community.

WELCOMING AND SAFE TOURISM

Issue: The Arctic has been attracting a lot of tourists and often faster than the infrastructure and locals can keep up with. At the same time that we want more people to be able to enjoy being in the Arctic, locals living there need to be able to enjoy living there and nature should not be permanently disrupted.

Recommendation: Tourism also has the opportunity for showcasing, preserving, and exchanging knowledge about local practices. Basic facilities must be available in all places where there are large numbers of tourists, in order to guide people to safer travel habits for tourists themselves and the environment.

Next Steps:

- Spreading information about respecting culture and how to safely explore the Arctic.
- Providing basic facilities such as toilets and roads, where appropriate, to minimize the impact on the environment.
- Consider tourism taxation, as well as rent control and housing regulation.

THEME: HOLISTIC WELLNESS

HEALTHCARE

Issue: There is a lack of accessible, culturally-relevant, and socially cohesive services in mental health and medical care. These include mental health support, cultural support, housing support, employment support, rehabilitation and wellness support, etc. There are significant barriers to accessing these services because they are not focused on the needs of the people.

Recommendation: Allocated, long-term, sustainable funds determined by and for each community are needed to create holistic, wrap-around health services. This funding can be used to create regional or community centres that provide all socially-cohesive services in one place. All service providers must work cooperatively for the health and wellness of the community.

EDUCATION QUALITY & ACCESS

Issue: The quality and access of education (including cultural ways of education) in the Arctic is limited. This leads to people leaving the region to pursue their own education, or the education of their children. More training opportunities for educators in the Arctic will increase the quality of education. Furthermore, it will enhance the experience of the educators, leading to an improvement of retention and recruitment.

Recommendation: To ensure education in the Arctic is of high quality, context-relevant training opportunities must be created and utilised by educators including, but not limited to: cultural safety training, anti-racism training, ethics, technological training, and pedagogical training.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Issue: The impacts of climate change have and continue to make it harder to live within the Arctic in healthy, safe, and sustainable ways. Climate change is having detrimental effects to the access and engagement of cultural practices. Climate change is a global issue, and the Arctic must take a leadership role in solving climate change.

Recommendation: Climate change disproportionately impacts Arctic peoples, particularly Indigenous livelihoods and cultures, therefore there must be support and adequate subsidisation of innovative, community-led climate change adaptations which can support economic diversification.

Recommendation: The Arctic has an opportunity to take a leading role in solving the biggest problem humanity has ever faced. Our region will be heavily affected by climate change and our societies, cultures and traditions are at risk. To save ourselves and exposed communities around the world, we must find solutions and adaptations to the growing climate crisis.

The Arctic must be a driving force in reducing emissions both through regulations and the development of new technologies and solutions. By building on existing expertise in the region and wielding our natural resources, we can make green policy and technologies a major export of the High North.

To uphold the required energy production to sustain life in the Arctic and in the world the energy output of the area must increase. This must not come at the cost of existing cultural and environmental values. The Arctic needs trans-national cooperation, reliable grid infrastructure, increased production, accurate systems for trade and working and legal processes where new production does not come at a cost for local communities and the environment. The Arctic can take a leadership role in development of new technologies, systems and legal practices in the transition to zero emissions.

Next Steps:

- Empower youth to be the ones making decisions regarding the resources they will soon inherit.
- Collect data on the environmental changes in the Arctic and ensure local ownership of this data.
- Increase Arctic representation in international and national policymaking with particular focus on youth and Indigenous people.
- All decisions regarding developing energy production must be based on transparent and inclusive practices with youth and Indigenous involvement in the decision-making process.



ATTENDEES

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