

# ARCTIC FUTURE

The Circumpolar International Internship Newsletter

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## Circumpolar Young Leaders Gather in Sweden

*By Allie Winton, Project Assistant, University of the Arctic, Rovaniemi, Finland – IISD's Circumpolar Young Leaders Program, 2008–2009*

Participants in IISD's Circumpolar Young Leaders (CYL) program were recently reunited in Sweden for a debriefing. Holding the debriefing in Sweden gave them the opportunity to take in the Jokkmokk Winter Conference—“Leadership in the Age of Uncertainty”—February 1–4, held in the lovely northern town of Jokkmokk.

With a focus on climate change in the North, the conference brought together about 70 participants from across the Arctic for three busy days filled with educational presentations, workshops and panel discussions with government representatives. “The conference was a wonderful opportunity to participate in discussions that we had not connected on before,” said CYL participant Jessica Kotierk, who has been working with Schools on Board, in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Although the CYL participants were kept quite busy with the conference, they were able to experience Jokkmokk's historic winter market, which intern Jennifer Dunn described as “incredible.” The market included traditional Swedish dancing, horse-drawn sleigh rides, blacksmith demonstrations, a snow church, and many wonderful arts and crafts.

For Samantha Darling, who was placed with Students on Ice, in Ottawa, a visit to northern Sweden was almost like returning to Canada's North: “Jokkmokk is a beautiful place that actually reminds me a lot of home, which made the stay there even more refreshing. I loved the kicksleds, the cold, the dry snow and the sun on the snow-laden trees!”

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“It was great to hear what everyone else has been working on,” said Allie Winton (far left). “I was able to find many connections between my work and theirs and was also comforted and amused by everyone's stories of adaptation to their workplaces.”

## Circumpolar Young Leaders Gather in Sweden

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The Jokkmokk Winter Conference was a rare opportunity for the CYL participants to meet youth from all over the circumpolar world, and the experience was well-appreciated by them.

“I took away from the conference a renewed commitment to promoting the circumpolar North as a distinct social, environmental and political region,” said Jennifer Dunn, who is working at the Canadian Embassy in Oslo. “The problems facing the circumpolar world can only be addressed in a regional context, because in any other context the concerns of the North are just swallowed up.”

As the Jokkmokk Winter Conference drew to a close, the CYL participants packed their bags and headed to Stockholm to continue their debriefing. In Stockholm, the interns were enchanted by the historic old town,

and equally impressed by the presentations they had during their debriefing exercises at the Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI).

At SEI, each intern gave a presentation about their experience thus far, which allowed them to explain the work they have been doing, what they have learned and what their plans are for the future. The participants were then able to meet former alumni of the program Ian Caldwell and Teslin Seale, who spoke about life after the CYL program, which looks bright, judging by their experiences.

For most, the highlight of the day was a presentation on Arctic Science and Policy in the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment, by Annika E. Nilsson, from SEI. As participant Jessica Kotierk put it: “The best meeting happened with Annika Nilsson who brought all the topics we’d been discussing over the week together in a presentation about the relationship between Arctic policy and climate change science.”

With his internship winding down, participant Joel Benoit, who has been working with UNEP-GRID in Arendal, Norway, is able to see the impact the experience has had and will continue to have on him. “You begin to see how the world really works and how you can’t be judgmental, no matter how hard that may be to tell yourself. You always have to keep that open-minded approach and be honest,” he said.

One of the biggest revelations of both the conference and the internship for Samantha Darling was “the idea that you don’t have to go home to be in the North. Previous to this, I’ve always maintained that the Yukon is the only place for me. I’ve come to the realization that what I like so much about the Yukon is the attitude, and that this attitude is shared by all people from northern regions.”

After a busy week in Sweden, the interns returned to their respective placements to finish the last six weeks of their internships.

## Robin Urquhart: Making a difference in the North

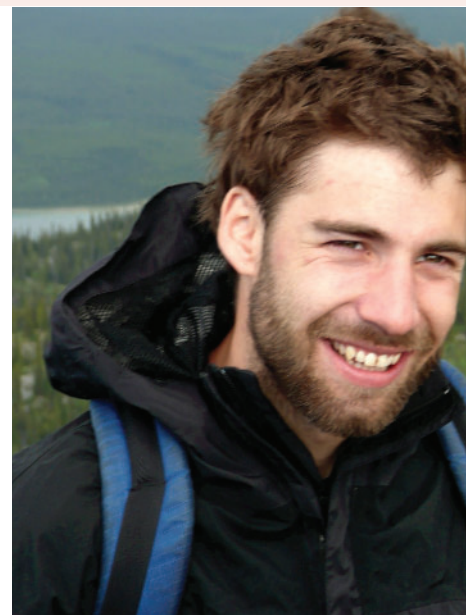
*By Laura Normand*

Have you ever wondered where you will be in five years? Or how you can become a leader in your community? These are questions that I have often asked myself, wondering how individuals manage to transform opportunity into meaningful action, and I found some answers through the example of Robin Urquhart. Robin Urquhart, a Circumpolar Young Leader (CYL) alumni, is 26 and is making a difference in the North. He has managed to take an opportunity and turn it into his life’s work.

Urquhart, a Yukonite who never lost his connection to the North, spent his undergrad years studying history and philosophy at Queen’s University. Upon graduation in 2005, Robin applied to the CYL program. It was a seemingly simple decision—Robin wanted an opportunity to learn more about the political frameworks and decision-making processes that shape

the North and it seemed that the CYL program was a perfect fit.

For the CYL placement, Robin was matched with the University of the Arctic in Rovaniemi, Finland, where he worked on a number of communication and administrative tasks and collaborated with international organizations to create positive change in the circumpolar world. He gained insights into the processes that shape and affect circumpolar decision-making, and saw first-hand how policy for the circumpolar world is developed. Robin noted that “the experience garnered from working in an international office and coordinating projects, reports, committees, etc., across the circumpolar world has given me a new understanding of international cooperation between governments and NGOs. This experience has made me more confident in my desire to make a change in the circumpolar world.”



“This experience has made me more confident in my desire to make a change in the circumpolar world,” said Robin Urquhart.

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## Some Thoughts on Arctic Governance

By Jackie Price<sup>1</sup> – IISD's Circumpolar Young Leaders Program, 2000–2001

*The living person and the land are actually tied up together because without one the other doesn't survive and vice versa. You have to protect the land in order to receive from the land. If you start mistreating the land, then it won't support you... In order to survive from the land, you have to protect it. The land is so important for us to survive and live on; that's why we treat it as part of ourselves.*

– Marino Aupilaarjuk<sup>2</sup>

As a young person who is fascinated with debates directly related to Arctic governance, and who also pays close attention to discussions on climate change, sustainable development and Arctic sovereignty, I like to keep the quote above near me. Aupilaarjuk's words provide a straightforward reminder of the important role Inuit knowledge and experience can play in global debates. This reminder is often necessary as Arctic governance debates often take on forms that are different to the lessons and approaches represented by Aupilaarjuk's words. For example, debates on seabed mapping are often nestled with

in a complex web of political and legal structures, instruments and perspectives that span numerous nation states, and such debates occur within the forum of the Arctic Council and its network of institutions. While such debates are fascinating, and solicit a wide variety of perspectives, sometimes it is easy to get caught up in the international flare of these debates, and to sometimes, temporarily, place community-based understandings to the side. For those of us who have experienced such challenges, and have the desire to bridge this gap, not only are we fortunate to draw from a broad range of experiences from active northern individuals, we are reminded that these earlier successes provide valuable lessons, critical reference points and carry within them new opportunities for the future.

1 Jackie is in her first year of a PhD program at the Scott Polar Research Institute at the University of Cambridge. Her research will focus on means to regenerate Inuit governance to support a stronger collaboration with the various environments of Inuit: homeland, northern settlement and global world.



Jackie Price: "...sometimes it is easy to get caught up in the international flare of these debates, and to sometimes, temporarily, place community-based understandings to the side."

2 Quote from Bennett & Rowley (eds.) *Uqalurait: An Oral History of Nunavut*. Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004, pg 118.

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## Robin Urquhart: Making a difference in the North

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The internship fuelled Robin's passion and commitment to circumpolar issues, and provided him with the professional networks and experience to springboard him to the next level of his career.

Through the internship placement with UArctic, Robin had been introduced to the Arctic Athabaskan Council (AAC), an introduction which soon blossomed into a working relationship. The AAC "is an international treaty organization established to represent the interests of United States and Canadian Athabaskan member First Nation governments in Arctic Council fora, and to foster a greater understanding of the common heritage of all Athabaskan peoples of Arctic North America."<sup>3</sup>

Upon completion of his internship, Robin applied to be a graduate student at the University of Northern British Columbia, and began to work with the Arctic Athabaskan Council and the community of Old Crow in northern Yukon on climate change risk assessments that incorporate traditional ecological knowledge as a tool to characterize environmental changes.

Through his contacts at the Arctic Athabaskan Council, Robin learned of and acted upon another unique opportunity. He was nominated by the Arctic Athabaskan Council to be part of the first cohort of youth advisors to Canada's delegation to the Arctic Council. As a youth delegate, Urquhart will attend Canadian Arctic Council Advisory Committee (ACAC) meetings, and will present youth perspectives to the committee while promoting the work of the

Arctic Council and the importance of circumpolar issues to Canada's youth.

Alongside this work and his graduate studies, Robin co-founded a theatre company called Dream North in early 2007. The company provides northerners with the opportunity to experience theatre, and is creating a bridge between the arts communities of the North with those in the South.

Robin loves the Yukon, and wants to continue building capacity in the North for dealing with the complex issues that are changing the face of the future of the circumpolar world. His vision is of a North that maintains a regional identity within the larger pan-Arctic identity.

3 <http://www.arcticathabaskancouncil.com/>

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## If Youth are the Leaders of Tomorrow, We Must be Meaningfully Engaged Today

By Jesse Tungilik – International Polar Year Project Assistant & Youth Coordinator for Students on Ice

With youth comprising the vast majority of the northern population, it's not difficult to understand why politicians would say "youth are the leaders of tomorrow." But are youth actually being engaged as meaningfully as they should be in policy decisions that they will inherit? This issue and other issues such as cultural identity, education, sovereignty and economic development were discussed by Jesse Mike, Natan Obed and Ceporah Mearns in a panel discussion entitled "From Igloo to Ipod" at Carleton University in Ottawa on February 26, 2009.

A main theme that came out of the discussion focused on the added pressures on today's generation of young Inuit. Not only are Inuit youth expected to excel academically and professionally in this modern world, but they're also expected to maintain strong cultural and linguistic ties. Many young Inuit today feel that they have to choose between keeping their language and sacrificing educational or professional opportunities and leaving Inuit Nunaat to pursue higher education and, as a result, lose some of their language and culture.

Another issue that was raised in the discussion was education and economic development. The main concern brought up was that the education and training systems in the North are so heavily geared towards developing a labour force, particularly in the trades and other professions centred on resource extraction. Indeed, jobs are desperately needed, especially in smaller communities, but there is concern about the long-term sustainability of this system. Yes, mining will create jobs in the short term, but what will happen 20 or 30 years down the line when the mines run out of ore and companies leave? What options will today's generation have then?

A point was made that somewhere along the line, people have largely lost their trust in the youth to make sound decisions. Obed pointed out that the leaders of today who are now in their 40s and 50s were the ones that negotiated the land claim agreements such as the one that established Nunavut when they were in their early 20s. And yet the youth of yesterday seem to disregard those destined to take their places.

The platitude "youth are the leaders of tomorrow" is thrown around a lot by politicians everywhere. The North is

certainly no exception. Indeed, the youth of the North have been pummeled over the head with this phrase repeatedly for the past decade. The youth of today will bear the consequences of the decisions that are made by the leaders of today. They need to be given the chance to meaningfully participate in the decision-making processes now if there is any hope of continuity in the future. They need to be given the opportunity today to become the leaders of tomorrow.



Jesse Tungilik: "Not only are Inuit youth expected to excel academically and professionally in this modern world, but they're also expected to maintain strong cultural and linguistic ties."

## Robin Urquhart: Making a difference in the North

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He strongly believes that the future of the Arctic must be integrated into domestic as well as global policy. “This is vital because the region is key to global ecological issues. Decisions that are being made in the Arctic are occurring through pan-regional cooperative mechanisms. The Arctic Council plays a prominent role in foreign policy decisions, yet most Canadians don’t know about it.” Robin hopes that as a

Youth delegate, he can broadcast the work of the Arctic Council further and that the youth of the North will want to be more involved in these issues.

We asked Robin, what it takes to be a leader in the North, and he responded that “to be a leader requires commitment to issues that affect the North. The issues are complex and multi-dimensional and take time and patience to address. You need a strong connection to the North—even if you didn’t grow up in the North, ‘it’s about attitude, not latitude’. Leaders must have the ability to

communicate and network and be open to new opportunities, like the Circumpolar Young Leaders program. There are a lot of opportunities out there and the more you can learn about the North, the more suited you are for leadership.”

Robin is a testament to how one transforms opportunities into action. The seemingly small decision to apply for the CYL program four years ago has propelled Urquhart onto his current path where he has become a young leader in the circumpolar world.

## Some Thoughts on Arctic Governance

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A good example is the project that inspired my own Circumpolar Young Leaders placement, as well as the events that were also occurring at this time.

In 2001, I travelled from Iqaluit, Nunavut to Rovaniemi, Finland, to participate in a project to support the inclusion of indigenous voices and experiences in climate change debates. The inspiration for this project stemmed from a larger project in which IISD was involved. In 1999, IISD’s staff met with community members of Sachs Harbour, NWT, to begin exploring changes being experienced due to a changing climate. Sachs Harbour’s small population is largely Inuvialuit and going out on the land to hunt and fish was, and still is, a visible part of community life. The community’s deep understanding of the land in which their community is nestled, and their ability to articulate changes, is well represented in the video *Sila Alangotok: Inuit Observations of Climate Change*, released in 2000. At the centre of this experience was Sachs Harbour resident Rosemary Kuptana, a former IISD board member.

As Rosemary worked with IISD to share her community’s experiences, Mary Simon was in the middle of her term as Canada’s first Ambassador for Circumpolar Affairs, a post she held from 1994 to 2003. Mary is Inuk from Nunavik, and while she held this post,

she played a central role in Canada’s contribution to the development of the Arctic Council. Mary also played an active role in the early years of the Council, beginning with the Council’s inaugural meetings in Iqaluit in 1998. While this international forum was being established, important work was occurring at a national level. Sheila Watt-Cloutier, who is also Inuk from Nunavik, was elected as president of the Inuit Circumpolar Conference (ICC)<sup>4</sup> Canada, from 1995 to 2002, until she was elected as International Chair of ICC until 2006. In 2007, she was nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize in recognition of her work on behalf of Inuit on issues relating to climate change and global warming.

It is easy to see why these experiences are so inspirational. Not only does each experience provide an important benchmark to the growing role of indigenous voices on global issues in a global arena, the nature of each experience provides very practical advice to those of us interested in engaging in similar global debates. These experiences remind us that each individual brought their own style and perspective to their own forum. This fact serves as a testimony that there is no fixed role or place for northern or indigenous experience and perspectives. These voices and perspectives must be present at all levels of the debates, and in all areas of discussion.

The near simultaneous accomplishments of each of these individuals reveal that

each individual had limited direct experience from which to draw. They had to work with partners who not only supported them, but also guided them as they waded through new and dynamic challenges. No doubt confidence and humility supported them as they brought these messages to the new arenas, forums and audiences and shared with them a particular way of understanding global experiences.

If anything, these experiences are important reminders that having a solid understanding and respect for home, in terms of history and contemporary realities, provides clarity of purpose, which is a necessary trait for involvement in global debates. This, along with a willingness to learn new skills, ensures that one is willing to take every opportunity to approach new audiences and arenas. And since individual successes reaffirmed the collective accomplishments, and vice versa, it is only through a collection of experiences, that Arctic governance debates, and debates related to it, continue to be relevant and engaging for northern communities. These lessons are embedded in the experiences already passed, and experiences that are a natural part of the Circumpolar Young Leaders experience.

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<sup>4</sup> ICC is now known as Inuit Circumpolar Council. This is an international non-governmental organization that represents Inuit in four countries: Russia, the U.S., Canada and Denmark/Greenland. This organization also has individual offices within each participating country.

## Reacting to a Warming Climate: Arctic states moving forward

By Harry Borlase, MA Candidate, Polar Law Program, University of Akureyri, Iceland – IISD's Circumpolar Young Leaders Program, 2007–2008

While the world awaits the consequences of our warming climate, the Arctic has already begun its preparations. No longer the globe's peripheral North, the acceleration of climate change has sparked newfound interest in the region's vast opportunities from both Arctic and non-Arctic actors. The opening of the east and west waterways for commercial use, the accessibility of valuable non-renewable resources, and contentious delineations in the Arctic Ocean from its coastal states are just a few of the geopolitical ambiguities that have sparked circumpolar debate and global attention. Indeed, it hasn't been since the Cold War that the Arctic has created such international buzz.

This begs the question: "How will the Arctic states react?" There appear to be two main points of departure for this debate. On one hand, there has been increasing doubt from academics, NGOs and non-state actors in the current political regime. Skeptics cite the lack of legal authority from the Arctic's political institutions to properly facilitate and resolve these new challenges. Many have called for the development of an Arctic Treaty that would bind the Arctic states to a set of legal principles, similar to that of the Antarctic Treaty. On the other hand there are those who defend the existing framework of intergovernmental fora, regional cooperation and international conventions that have been responsible for the conceptualization of the Arctic as a peaceful and stable region. Rather than requiring a comprehensive treaty, these supporters argue that the existing patchwork has yet to be undermined by state misdemeanor and therefore remains capable of dealing with unresolved disputes.

In a way, the debate has already ended. A pledge of commitment to the exist-

ing framework from the five coastal states in the 2008 Ilulissat Declaration gives reason to believe that the Arctic Council will remain the ultimate forum for circumpolar cooperation. Furthermore, the United Nations Law of the Sea continues to be the guiding authority for disputes related to the Arctic Ocean and there is no evidence that states will contest its status. This also supports the validity and strength of regional cooperatives, like the Nordic Council, which have established a number of objectives and initiatives specific to the region in question.

In fact, this might be the best and easiest solution. Though it lacks the legal backbone of a hard-law treaty, the existing framework has promoted the representation and active participation of a number of indigenous, non-governmental and sub-national actors. A move towards binding agreements would likely compromise this inclusivity. Second, there is something to be said about the flexibility of soft-law agreements, which require consensus of governments without the formalities of binding arrangements. Third, the possibility for such a negotiation and resolution is purely speculative, since states have neither shown the interest nor the impetus for engaging in discussion.

Nonetheless, some level of change is necessary. If indeed the Arctic Council is to remain the forum for circumpolar cooperation, states will need to do more than just pledge hollow commitments. Expanding the mandate of the council to include sensitive topics of consideration, improving the financial capacity of its working groups and incorporating non-Arctic states like the EU and China into its composition are urgent matters that require fundamental changes and absolute support.



Harry Borlase: "...states must believe that the solution to current geopolitical problems in the Arctic lies with cooperation and not alienation."

Perhaps more important however, states must believe that the solution to current geopolitical problems in the Arctic lies with cooperation and not alienation. Perceived security threats and a race to resources are two scenarios that have the capability of dividing states based on competing interests. States must recognize the value in negotiating multilateral agreements for creating regional order, rather than independent strategies that are intentionally divisive. This is a time of opportunity! In consideration of the positive changes initiated following the Cold War, there is no reason to believe that innovative collaboration and practical solutions can't be achieved.

## Vegetarian Culture Clash in the Arctic?

By Jeni Dunn, Northern Affairs Policy Officer, The Canadian Embassy in Norway – IISD's Circumpolar Young Leaders Program, 2008–2009

In February 2009, this year's CYL participants attended the Jokkmokk Winter Conference in Sweden, an opportunity for circumpolar youth to discuss leadership in the increasingly uncertain Arctic. Curiously enough, one of the fiercest debates that erupted during our discussions was about something which is not ordinarily associated with Arctic issues: vegetarianism.

The debate about vegetarianism grew out of a more general discussion on mitigation strategies for climate change. The vegetarian proponent argued that choosing not to eat meat is one of the simplest and most effective ways to personally reduce your carbon footprint, as eating meat contributes to the amount of greenhouse gases released into the atmosphere. I feel that this is an extremely relevant point in a general global context, but frankly, I was surprised to hear it at a supposedly Arctic youth conference.

In truth, I found this argument absurd when applied in an Arctic context. Many Arctic communities are so remote that basic food prices are hugely inflated, so many Arctic residents are dependent on subsistence hunting to supplement their diets. Perhaps more important, meat is the cornerstone of many Arctic cultures. It is impossible to separate reindeer from Sámi culture, whales from Inuit culture or caribou from Gwich'in culture. Meat is a vehicle of those cultures' traditions just as much as language is.

Fortunately, as the debate progressed, my internal rant began to slowly defuse as I started to realize that our disagreement was not really the result of conflicting opinions, but rather of cultural miscommunication.

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"...Meat is the cornerstone of many Arctic cultures," writes Jeni Dunn.

## The Northern Identity Crisis

By Samantha Darling, IPY Assistant, Students on Ice Expeditions, Gatineau, QC – IISD's Circumpolar Young Leaders Program, 2008–2009

I was fortunate to have a preview of another article included in this issue, *Vegetarian Culture Clash in the Arctic?* (see page 7). Upon reading it, I realized that the Scandinavian/Canadian Arctic culture clash is comparable to the internal North/South culture clash that I first discovered at the Circumpolar Young Leaders (CYL) training in September and have been faced with during the last six months in Gatineau as a CYL intern with Students on Ice.

A “northern identity crisis” plagues me, as I defend my status as a white western northerner, as eastern Arctic-minded southerners ask me to justify my claim. I have found that this is the basis for many misunderstandings that are present in southern Canada. I’m forced to ask myself what the “North” is, who should identify themselves as “northerners,” and am I among them?

Since the beginning of my internship, I have been a contributor to a constant battle over the definition of “the North.” From what I’ve seen, southern Canada appears to disregard the western portions of the Arctic entirely. Meanwhile, northern Canadians from east and west, in their fight for recognition, end up ignoring each other. More than once, I have been asked about characteristics of “northern” life, such as tundra and seal hunting, Arctic char and whale. I am unable comment on this lifestyle; where I come from, the Yukon, there are trees and moose, salmon and caribou. At the CYL training session in September, these differences came to light in many of the discussions we had. In speaking to our own experiences, we create our own versions of what we generally call “the North.” Southern public opinion of what is “Northern,” however, seems to

be dictated by the stereotypes of icebergs and polar bears. These clichés are often reinforced in the education programs designed to promote awareness of circumpolar issues. In reality, the circumpolar regions, AKA the “North,” are as diverse as southern Canada. Looking at a map, it is reasonable to expect this diversity in such a broad region: comparing Dawson City, YT, (latitude 64.04°N) to Iqaluit, NU, (63.45°N) is much like comparing Victoria, BC, (48.25°N) to St. John’s, NF, (47.62°N). Differences are inherent, and those differences do not make Dawson City less northern. If anything, the regions of the North should be celebrated in the same way that all of Canada is celebrated: each region unique under the larger umbrella of the North.

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“...the regions of the North should be celebrated in the same way that all of Canada is celebrated: each region unique under the larger umbrella of the North,” writes Samantha Darling (left).



## The Class of Ice and Snow

By Jessica Kotierk, Project Assistant, Schools on Board – IISD's Circumpolar Young Leaders Program, 2008–2009

Nyla Innuksuk and I have had our paths cross before but this interview was a perfect opportunity to better understand what she thinks and feels about being an Arctic youth. Over the course of our hour-long phone call, we found that we are, in fact, leading similar lives. With our shared background in film, Nyla and I discussed her upcoming 45-minute documentary titled *The Class of Ice and Snow*. Like mine, Nyla's family is originally from Igloolik and she went to school in Iqaluit before moving south when she was seven years old. She is now 22 and in her final year studying film production at Ryerson University, in Toronto. It seems fitting that Nyla has a passion for documentary as she is named after the wife of Nanook, star of *Nanook of the North*, the first documentary in film history and the birth of a media stereotype.

Nunavut is under pressure to meld the Inuit culture and southern systems and this clash is most obvious in the territory's capital. It is here where examples



A new generation is taking an active interest in traditional knowledge.

are abounding of both successful and not so successful cross-contributions. Iqaluit youth have a unique experience to share. Nyla plans to interview former Iqaluit classmates and show their experiences with issues that recur throughout the community: substance

abuse, suicide and the family impacts of residential schools. It will be a portrait of northern youth with the intention to enrich the image of lives that are often seen as depressing statistics.

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## The Northern Identity Crisis

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In some cases, these differences in perception of the North cause conflict, as western Northerners attempt to assert their identities, while southern outreach remains based on incomplete perceptions. With my involvement in the development of the Polar Perspectives youth forum series' educational content, I had a first-hand look at this conflict. A common occurrence is in the context of First Nations groups. The broadest definition of the circumpolar regions incorporates more than 18 different groups of First Nations in the northern Canadian territories and Alaska alone. These groups are distinct from Inuit. Looking to Scandinavia, the Sámi people dominate the indigenous populations, again, while Russia has over 30 differ-

ent indigenous groups. In the case of Polar Perspectives' Yellowknife and Whitehorse events, requests for the adjustment of the educational material came through, as museums in these locations acknowledged the cultural diversity of their territories. These requests were met with surprise and followed by a long in-house discussion about what groups could be reasonably included, which turned into a discussion about the definitions of the Arctic and of the term "circumpolar." It seems as though the widely accepted Canadian model of a multicultural mosaic is not something automatically associated with northern Canada.

The clashes of culture, directly affect the resolution of disagreements on both national and international levels. "Northern" strategies are made and "northern" policies are implemented,

but it seems that these processes take place with an odd combination of blanket stereotypes on one level and perceived divisions on another. How could there not be confusion? Canadian students are not only undereducated about the North, but the attempts at education are plagued by clichés and misconceptions. These dilemmas are important to acknowledge and understand if circumpolar issues are to move forward productively. Personally, I did not really pay attention to these ideas until I was faced with a challenge of my status as a northerner. Now I know unquestionably: I may not be Aboriginal and I may be from the western Arctic, but I am a northerner first and everything else drops by the wayside.

## The Class of Ice and Snow

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During the Christmas holidays Nyla and a southern crew of two, who had never visited the North, shot interviews that will be posted on Isuma.tv, an online portal for indigenous film-making. Nyla was able to witness the crew's stereotypes be challenged by the living reality. After many years away from Iqaluit, Nyla found, "It was a great learning experience to go up North and learn these things again."

The community has great things to offer. Nyla noticed that one of the strengths is the youth's cultural pride in Inuit traditions. "I think people are very, very proud of Inuit culture. This isn't expected by southerners, considering our parents were not allowed to speak Inuktitut and were taught to be ashamed of our culture. Things are looking forward, changing," says Nyla. She sees that this generation takes an

active interest in traditional knowledge, combating a history of shame. This feat isn't expressed in popular media portrayals and Nyla plans to change this.

Nyla will also interview community residents like performer, law school graduate and clothing designer Aaju Peter, for their knowledge on community life and changes that may give insights into the creation of youth circumstances since their experiences provide a useful perspective.

Currently in the planning and funding stages for the major production, Nyla is sending out proposals with the help of her industry-experienced professors. She is also preparing for the Banff Centre workshop for emerging Aboriginal artists in June 2009. Igloolik Isuma Productions has already agreed to back this project, providing assistance in maneuvering through the film business and organizing the pro-

duction of the film. Being a student has helped with the production of this project, as Nyla has access to equipment and is close to skilled classmates. She will show a short preview of the film at Ryerson's end-of-year student festival.

Nyla hopes the film will be useful for northern students since they will see themselves acknowledged as complex social contributors and southern students can receive a more complete image of northern youth life. Nyla is an Arctic youth working in film to promote the realities of living in Iqaluit, Nunavut. Nyla believes acceptance and time are the ingredients most needed for community healing but with this work, communication will increase and hopefully lead to understanding. It can be a jumping-off point for further information on youth issues.

## Vegetarian Culture Clash in the Arctic?

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Most of the pro-vegetarian proponents were from Scandinavian countries, while most of the meat proponents were Canadian. Both groups were defining meat differently, each according to their own cultural context. Although it was never really vocalized, it was apparent that in the minds of the northern Canadians present, the meat we were referring to was hunted game, while the Scandinavians were referring to meat in terms of commercially produced industrial meat. These differing definitions are understandable when considering them in the context of the Scandinavian Arctic vs. the Canadian Arctic. The Scandinavian Arctic regions are much more accessible, more industrialized and indigenous peoples make up a much smaller proportion of the population than in the Canadian Arctic.

Viewing the debate in this light, I suddenly realized that our apparently

minor cultural miscommunication was in fact a microcosm of a much larger exercise in cultural head-butting: the great seal debate between Canada/Greenland and Europe. Europeans have a hard time wrapping their heads around the Canadian/Greenlandic definition of the seal hunt as both a cultural tradition and an industry, because according to their definition, one cancels out the other. In Canada and Greenland, however, we are able to define the seal hunt by this seeming contradiction because we are aware of the struggles most small northern towns that take part in the seal hunt experience. These small communities are keeping traditional culture alive just by existing, yet without the seal hunt "industry" to keep them going these communities will simply dissolve, along with their traditional cultures.

If the cultural miscommunication at the core of our humble vegetarianism debate in Jokkmokk is mirrored and magnified into such a serious international disagreement as the seal debate,

then it is a prototype we should be very much concerned with when discussing the future of the Arctic. What levels of cultural miscommunication and unclear definitions will we encounter if (more likely, when) non-Arctic powers such as South Korea and the EU are granted Observer Status at the Arctic Council?

I think we should be wary of applying blanket global definitions to an Arctic specific context. This is especially true in a cross-cultural setting such as the Arctic Council that is, as we experienced in our debate on vegetarianism, such fertile ground for miscommunication.

## Upcoming Events

### 2030 North: A National Planning Conference

**Ottawa, Ontario, Canada  
June 1–4, 2009**

This conference will bring together over 350 Aboriginal leaders, scientists, academics, policy-makers, NGOs, industry and government representatives to generate the foundations of a comprehensive northern strategy for Canada. Debate and discussion around five original commissioned papers will guide the conference. The themes are: Climate Change Impacts; The Pace of Change; Land Claims Agreements; Northern Science Policy for Canada; and Canada's North: A New Strategy

Contact: Christian Cloutier  
Phone: 613-237-3613  
E-mail: [cloutier@consilium.ca](mailto:cloutier@consilium.ca)

### ACUNS – APECS: Communities of Change – Building an IPY Legacy

**Whitehorse, Yukon, Canada  
October 2–5, 2009**

The Association of Canadian Universities of Northern Studies (ACUNS) has partnered with the Association of Polar Early Career Scientists (APECS) to hold an international polar conference for students and early career researchers. College, undergraduate, graduate and postdoctoral scholars and early career faculty in the natural, health, and social sciences and humanities will be invited to submit presentations considering: changes to polar flora, fauna and marine communities; changes in human communities through increased development, climate change and growing populations; changes in research communities and how research is undertaken in the polar regions; and changes in communities as a result of polar law and governance (i.e., land claims and self-government, policy).

Contact: Clint Sawicki  
E-mail: [csawicki@yukoncollege.yk.ca](mailto:csawicki@yukoncollege.yk.ca)

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Co-Editors: Carolee Buckler, Jessica Kotierk and Laura Normand

Graphic Design: Don Berg

Contributors: Harry Borlase, Samantha Darling, Jeni Dunn, Jessica Kotierk, Laura Normand, Jackie Price, Jesse Tungilik, Allie Winton.

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E-mail: [info@iisd.ca](mailto:info@iisd.ca)  
Web site: <http://www.iisd.org>

161 Portage Avenue East  
6th Floor  
Winnipeg, Manitoba  
Canada R3B 0Y4  
Tel: +1 (204) 958-7700  
Fax: +1 (204) 958-7710

MIE 2  
9, chemin de Balaxert  
1219 Châtelaine  
Genève, Suisse  
Tel: + (41-22) 979-9353  
Fax: + (41-22) 979-9093

340 Albert St, Suite 710  
Ottawa Ontario, Canada  
K1R 7Y6  
Tel: +1 (613) 238-2296  
Fax: +1 (613) 238-8515

300 East 56th Street #11A  
New York, New York 10022  
United States of America  
Tel: +1 (646) 536-7556  
Fax: +1 (646) 219-0955



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