

arctic policy hackathon

FINAL POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

OCTOBER 2022 | REYKJAVIK, ICELAND



Global Affairs
Canada

ARCTIC POLICY HACKATHON

In partnership with the Canadian International Arctic Centre and the Arctic Mayors' Forum, The Gordon Foundation ran the first Arctic Policy Hackathon (APH) in Reykjavik, Iceland. At this event, young leaders from across the circumpolar North came together to discuss, question, challenge and brainstorm ideas to address the topic of food sovereignty in the Arctic. Their work resulted in a number of creative policy recommendations.

Bringing the policy recommendations from these young leaders to the 2022 Arctic Circle Assembly allows Arctic states and stakeholders the opportunity to engage with the next generation, to bring new voices to the forefront, and listen with open minds to cutting edge policy recommendations on a crucial issue facing the entire Arctic.

Outcomes of the APH include:

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



OPENING STATEMENT

Arctic Policy Hackathon: Food Sovereignty in the Arctic

We came together from Arctic Indigenous and local communities across Greenland, Sápmi, Finland, Iceland, Sweden, Canada, and Alaska to share perspectives and personal experiences on Food Sovereignty.

Our survival as Arctic peoples, particularly Arctic Indigenous Peoples, is based on a nomadic and seasonal clock of food, hunting, gathering, and herding that govern our lives. Our traditional ways of interacting with the land are at times criminalized and challenged by resource management bodies in our Nation-States. The mismatch of regulations compared to our traditional practices has impacted our mental, physical, and spiritual health, while creating collective and ongoing forms of trauma.

Now, we are shifting the conversation to empower Arctic Indigenous Communities towards self-determination. In a time of competing interests, the advantages of self-governance in the Arctic have become self-evident. Our self-governing communities set the standard for resource management, food security, economic development and environmental regulation across the circumpolar region and are based on Local and Indigenous Knowledge.

Climate change adds urgency to the issues facing the Arctic by creating collective environmental anxiety while current regulations often inhibit adaptation. As Arctic Indigenous Peoples we continue to fight for basic human rights in a time of increasing activity in the Arctic. We propose the right to Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) be implemented for Arctic policies. When tensions between traditional livelihoods and modern development arise communities must have the final say.

Together we built these recommendations on our shared youth perspective of a sustainable stewardship model which includes the 4 R's of respect, reciprocity, responsibility, and redistribution of our food resources.¹ Bringing together local and Indigenous representatives on food sovereignty recommendations has aimed to rectify the gap of misunderstandings and move forward with policy that benefits the many stakeholders in the circumpolar region. The following recommendations shift the power to communities to dictate their own well-being through food sovereignty and should be a priority in Arctic policy discussions.

What follows are the key themes and recommendations from our two days together in October, 2022.

¹ Harris, L. D., & Wasilewski, J. (2004). Indigeneity, an alternative worldview: Four R's (relationship, responsibility, reciprocity, redistribution) vs. two P's (power and profit). *Sharing the journey towards conscious evolution. Systems Research and Behavioral Science*, 21(5), 489–503. <https://doi.org/10.1002/sres.631>

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

USE WHAT YOU HAVE

When Arctic peoples have access to local and traditional foods it improves their quality of life and physical and mental well-being.

When Arctic peoples are supported locally to hunt, trap, fish, grow/harvest and herd, it improves their quality of life and mental/physical well-being.

Our local and traditional Arctic economy will benefit.

ISSUE: Nutritional guidelines and dietary recommendations do not take into account local and culturally appropriate and accessible foods.

Recommendation

Public health officials customize dietary recommendations that are relevant to and guided by local and culturally appropriate values, protocols and practices in partnership with local communities, including local experts, Indigenous governments and relevant organizations.

Example: Greenland's dietary guidelines recommend eating less meat and more fish and beans as a source of protein when the Greenlandic diet is rich in reindeer, seal and birds.

ISSUE: Knowledge on the nutritional value of various local and traditional foods is lacking and/or not taken into consideration when making dietary recommendations.

Recommendation

Relevant levels of government:

- Invest in research on the nutritional value of various locally grown, harvested, hunted, fished and herded foods in partnership with local experts, Indigenous governments and appropriate organizations.
- Invest in research on the specific nutritional needs of local peoples in partnership with local experts, Indigenous governments and appropriate organizations.

ISSUE: Current recommended foods according to dietary guidelines are not always accessible due to high costs and lack of quality.

Recommendation

Relevant levels of government lower the tariffs on duty and transportation for nutritionally important foods that are imported into regions where said foods are not available.

Example: Iceland's dietary guidelines recommend that two thirds of the plate should come from foods like fruits and vegetables and whole grains, most of which is imported.

ISSUE: Climate change is already affecting food systems, e.g., with more extreme weather events and changing migration patterns of wildlife. The reliance on food imports is neither sustainable nor benefitting local economies.

Recommendation

Relevant levels of government implement incentives to support local food systems and their ability to adapt to climate change, e.g., subsidies, cross-cultural knowledge-sharing hubs and networks, and implementation of adaptive management systems.

Example: Local Yukon First Nations in Canada are not able to fish salmon as they have done for generations due to falling populations due to climate change and man-made mechanisms, i.e. hydroelectric dams. Local businesses have been forced to outsource salmon from other parts of Canada and Alaska.

ISSUE: Arctic Indigenous Peoples, harvesters, and farmers are being criminalized for selling locally grown, harvested, hunted, fished and herded foods while large-scale businesses benefit.

Recommendation

Relevant levels of government support and subsidize Arctic and Indigenous harvesters and small-scale, locally owned and operated businesses to sell their products while enabling consumers to make informed decisions around who they decide to purchase their food from.



TAKE ONLY WHAT YOU NEED

ISSUE: Regulation

Regulations often do not fully take into account Arctic Indigenous Peoples' practices or knowledge and prevent the free and fair access to subsistence resources for Indigenous Peoples in the Arctic.

Relevant levels of government should strive to ensure regulations regarding Flora and Fauna are place-specific and informed by Arctic Indigenous values and realities. The traditional, customary, and time-tested ways in which local communities engage with the natural world should not be inhibited by government regulation.

Recommendation

Relevant levels of government:

- Ensure that the rights to subsistence are enshrined in law for Indigenous Peoples.
- Fund programs that support Arctic Indigenous food systems, especially regulations regarding Arctic Indigenous Peoples' land use, trade, and food practices.

Example: A best practice has been identified in the Canadian government's funding of the Harvester Support program for Inuit Land Claim Organizations. The Canadian government dispersed funds for programs determined by Inuit Land Claim Organizations, with minimum financial reporting and oversight.

ISSUE: Environmental Health

Environmental assessments have historically overlooked the downstream impacts of anthropogenic actions on flora and fauna and the subsequent impacts on those Arctic Indigenous communities that rely on them for food. Indigenous Peoples have a right to free-prior and informed consent with regard to projects that could threaten safe access to food and land, including the right for Indigenous Peoples to refuse.

Recommendation

- All nation-states adopt, ratify, and implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
- Relevant levels of governments adopt the One Health approach to environmental monitoring and regulation. The interconnected model that One Health sets forth acknowledges the holistic nature of our natural world and ensures accurate, effective, and place-based, regulations are put into place.

Example: The legal personhood of the Whanganui river by Maori in New Zealand.



SHARE WHAT YOU HAVE

ISSUE: Pan-Arctic Food Co-operation

There are significant barriers to circumpolar trade.

Recommendation

Establish a Pan-Arctic Food Knowledge and Trade Framework and Steering Group that will:

- Draft a Circumpolar Agreement on food trade (e.g., east-west as opposed to south-north trade).
- Support cross-border food cultivation amongst Local and Indigenous communities (e.g., Flora and Fauna predate nation-state borders and often span over vast spaces).

Recommendation

Relevant levels of government provide incentives for equitable access to nutritious and culturally appropriate foods (e.g., Local and Indigenous foods at stores, co-ops, and subsidies; promote Indigenous and locally owned and operated businesses).



SHARE WHAT YOU KNOW

ISSUE: There exists a significant risk to achieving equitable integration of Indigenous Knowledge as it is being interpreted by western pedagogy and economy.

Access to traditional foods is critical to the mental health, well-being, and cultural integrity of Arctic Indigenous Peoples.

Recommendation

Relevant levels of government:

- Ensure natural resource management (e.g., agricultural waste) and wildlife practices have the full and effective participation of Arctic Indigenous Peoples and methodologies in these regimes.
- Acknowledge the cultural heritage of Arctic Indigenous Peoples concerning laws related to food practices by making said laws and regulations with Indigenous Peoples at the table.
- Make a scheme based on the EU Product of Designated Origin and Protected Geographical Indication programs which involves protecting food produce and cultures. Implement a similar program that extends to the culture and traditions related to food products across the Arctic, acknowledging the importance of certain food traditions and cultures to Arctic Indigenous Peoples and other local Arctic communities.

ISSUE: Youth who have lost the connection to their traditional lands and waters experience mental health issues and are predisposed to collective and ongoing forms of trauma. Empowering youth will secure the food sovereignty and well-being of Arctic communities.

Youth are leaders. It is vital for resilient communities to share and transfer knowledge with younger and future generations. Food knowledge has to be passed to youth to maintain the traditional knowledge practises.



Recommendation

Relevant levels of government:

- Place special priority on community-led food programs that seek to involve younger generations in traditional food methodologies.
- Fund programs for youth regarding food sharing and knowledge, also ensuring the full and active participation of Arctic Indigenous youth in decision-making environments.

Example:

- *Culture camps that bring youth and knowledge holders together, while incorporating language and cultural identity.*
- *Youth focused policy development programs like EALLU project.*

ISSUE: Undue burden is often placed on communities in the Arctic by research and data collection that does not directly benefit the communities being studied.

Recommendation

Relevant levels of government and research institutions:

- Co-develop research questions informed by community-identified needs, such as food safety monitoring (e.g., mercury level).
- Fund data collection and research that is community-driven and community-minded.
- Integrate Arctic Indigenous People and Indigenous strategies and ways of knowing of data collection by hiring community members, particularly youth, to do paid work.
- Ensure data collection is respectful to the well-being of Flora and Fauna.
- Adhere to the principles of Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession (OCAP) of Arctic Indigenous Peoples to protect information, such as traditional fishing, hunting, harvesting, and herding areas.



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We also note that these statements and recommendations do not encompass the totality of our participants' individual views, nor of the views of the entire Arctic region.



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