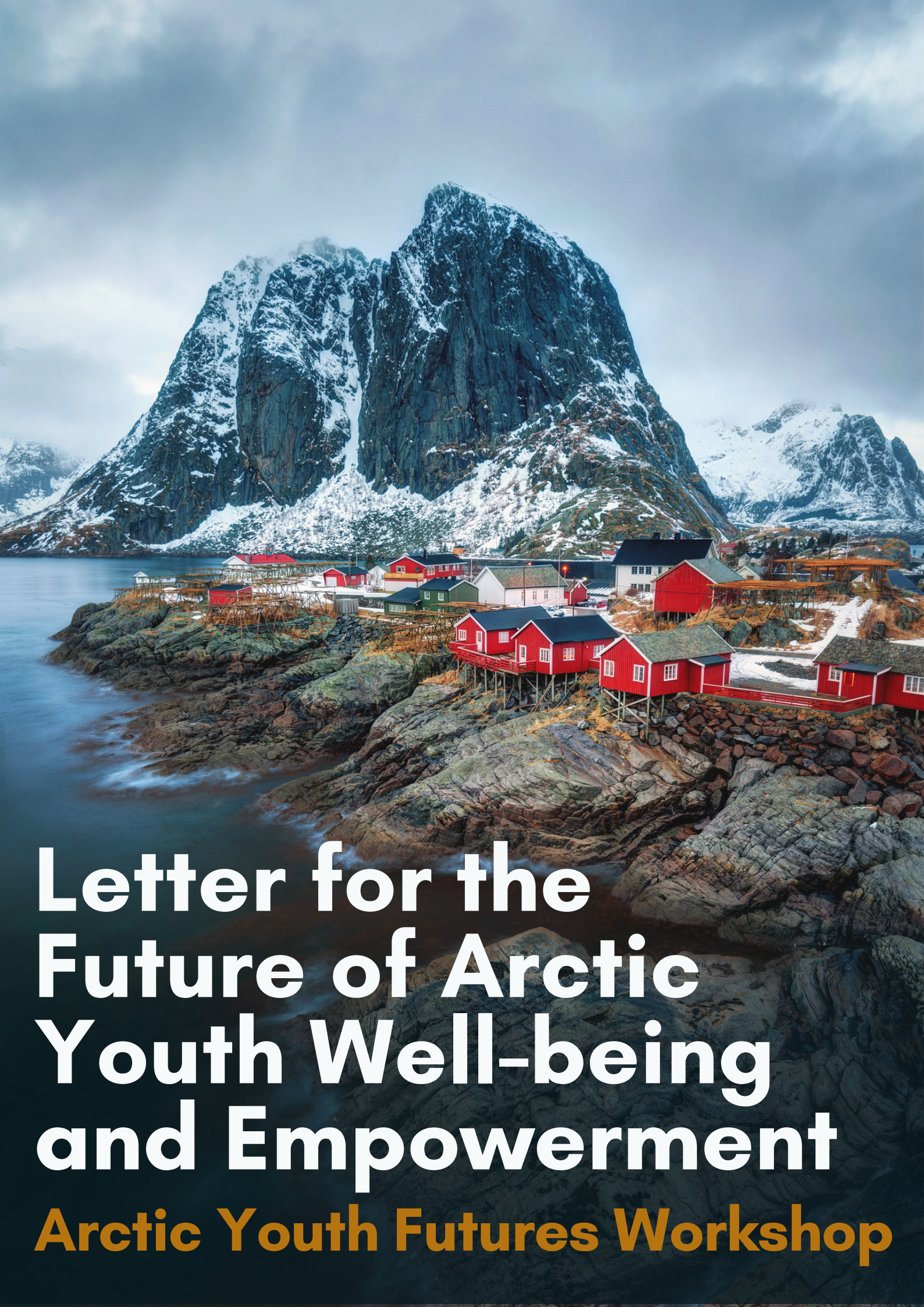




Letter for the Future of Arctic Youth Well-being and Empowerment

Arctic Youth Futures Workshop

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Message from the organizers

Arctic Mayors' Forum, the Fulbright Arctic Initiative, and the Harvard Kennedy School Arctic Initiative collaborated to bring 14 youth from across the circumpolar North together ahead of the 2025 Arctic Circle Assembly for the first Arctic Youth Futures Workshop. Over two days of conversations facilitated by Dr Allison Crawford from the Canadian Association of Mental Health, participants spoke honestly about both the strengths and the challenges related to well-being and empowerment facing their Arctic communities, and imagined their dream for future Arctic youth.

Guided by the questions "What should Arctic youth well-being and empowerment look like in 2025? And what do we need to do to get there?" participants wrote a letter for the future of Arctic Youth Well-being and Empowerment. Their letter is comprised of a set of detailed calls to action, outlining what current and emerging Arctic leaders need to do over the next 25 years to realize their vision. These calls to actions are not only for current leaders, but will also guide youth as they move into positions of power in the Arctic.

It was an incredible honour to host youth from the Arctic throughout this process. We, as organizers, are inspired by their dedication, their vision, and their insight. It is clear to us that empowering youth to participate in shaping policy is an invaluable tool for surmounting the challenges that face the Arctic.



Photo by Jesse Delgorsse, The Capital Collective. October 2025.

Dear Arctic Leaders of Today and Tomorrow,

We, as humanity, are at a crossroads in decision-making. The Arctic represents both a sustained collective of community and an untapped frontier of resources. Leaders of today will be remembered for the steps taken or otherwise, in how engagement occurs with the inhabitants of this land.

The future of the Arctic is not created tomorrow, it is created today.

We are 14 youth from across the circumpolar north, who have come together in Reykjavik, Iceland, in October 2025 to participate in the Arctic Futures Youth Workshop to envision well-being and empowerment of youth in 2050. We believe that youth well-being and empowerment is interconnected with the opportunities, cultural access, and climate protection afforded to us.

In pursuit of this future, we have developed a set of policy recommendations that are rooted in our shared experience.

Significant Youth Representation in Politics and Decision

In 2050, we envision a transformative future for Arctic governance that centers on youth empowerment and representation in political systems. We should work towards a future in which younger generations not only participate in, but hold permanent, institutionalized positions within Arctic governance systems and decision-making bodies.

In addition, youth should receive comprehensive, accessible, and culturally relevant civic education designed to support and encourage their meaningful engagement in political processes and governance from an early age. Through capacity building, youth should be equipped with the necessary knowledge and resources to participate in policy making.

Arctic Indigenous knowledges and local knowledge are thriving

In 2050, youth thrive in environments where knowledge is universally accessible and reflects the community's diversity. From schools to governments, decisions should be made with involvement of youth knowledge holders. Funding should be made accessible to empower youth to share, protect, and honor culture on their terms.

Furthermore, the well-being of youth depends on well informed residents, visitors and industries, who understand and respect Arctic Indigenous Peoples. This requires holistic education that accurately represents the region's histories, cultures and values. To assist Arctic youth who have been separated from their cultures, funding should be allocated to reconnection programs that focus on regaining their ancestral knowledge and connections.

Infrastructure that supports Arctic youth and our communities

In 2050, all basic human needs, such as housing and food security, should be met through infrastructure for youth and their communities in the Arctic. More affordable housing should be available for young people, and actions taken to ensure equitable, affordable and accessible food across the Arctic.

Moreover, social spaces should be co-created with Arctic youth that give us a fuller life and inspire us to follow our aspirations. These spaces will help create community as well as build connections that are organic and within reach. This will strengthen our social lives and support our mental health. Social spaces should have room for self-driven and informal activities (eg. workshop spaces for mechanics, studios for art and sports arenas).

Relationship to the Environment and Climate Resilience

In 2050, the Arctic Council should lead the international community to integrate Traditional Ecological Knowledge into legal environmental agreements regarding Arctic land and seas. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) should be the basis upon which such treaties are formed, and Arctic states should ratify Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) into law.

At a local level, self-sufficient Arctic communities should develop and lead sustainable economic opportunities in conjunction with the public and private sectors. Economic and social programmes should be launched to support Arctic youth in developing new industries and technologies, exemplified by a pan-arctic entrepreneurial investment fund. Arctic youth should be given the opportunity to contribute to the development of the blue economy to sustain the resilience and well-being of local communities.

Culturally relevant youth mental health supports

In 2050, everyone should have timely access to equitable, relevant, and culturally grounded mental health care that includes traditional practices and cultural activities. These services should honour each person's intersecting identities, including Indigenous, neurodivergent, gender, and sexual identities, and be rooted in the cultures and communities they serve.

Secondly, every school should have a position dedicated to mental health care (eg. social worker, mental health professional or para-professional) who is locally rooted, culturally informed, and focused on prevention, outreach, and ongoing care. Mental health education should also be woven throughout school systems and included as a core part of the curriculum, designed to meet the unique needs of each community.

Meaningful, safe integration of technology

In 2050, a digital hub should be used to educate Arctic youth in formal educational courses, cultural knowledge and skill sharing. This serves to both preserve the rich heritage of Arctic communities and mitigate inequities in accessing education.

Furthermore, technology should be leveraged to facilitate communication between youth and policy makers in order to integrate youth perspectives in decision-making. Technology will support social connection and well-being, but with safeguards that protect mental health.

Nothing about us, without us.

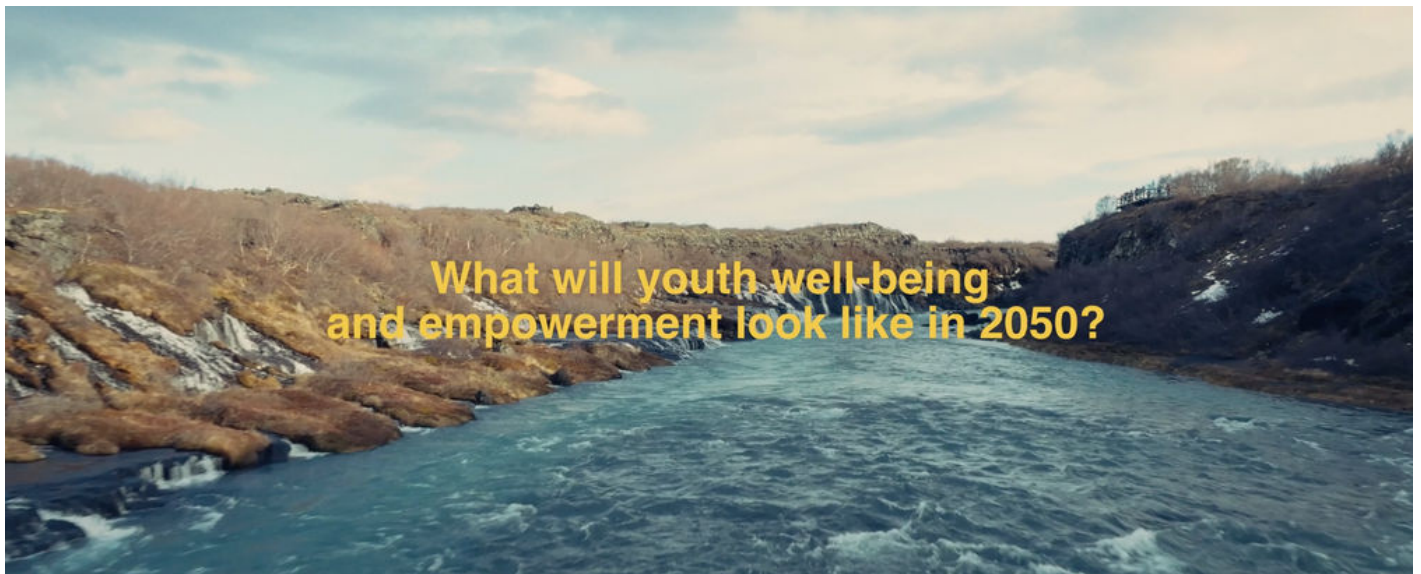
As 14 young people for whom the Arctic is home, we call on you to invest in youth empowerment and prioritize our lived realities in decision-making. These recommendations ensure that the Arctic can flourish now and into the future.

We expect your support now, so that we can empower youth to thrive in the Arctic. In fulfilling these recommendations, we can ensure an Arctic that is strong, resilient and interconnected to the prosperity of its youth.

Signed by:

A row of 14 handwritten signatures in various colors and styles, representing the young people mentioned in the text. The signatures are arranged in two rows of seven.

Find the video on the Arctic Mayors' Forum website, or [by clicking here.](#)



The Arctic Youth Futures Workshop is proudly organized by:



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