

2023 Policy Brief

Closing Meeting
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Editors: Dr. Greg Poelzer and Dr. Elizabeth Lynne Rink

About the Fulbright Arctic Initiative

The Fulbright Arctic Initiative brings together a network of scholars, professionals and applied researchers from the United States, Canada, the Kingdom of Denmark (including Greenland and the Faroe Islands), Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia and Sweden for a series of three seminar meetings and a Fulbright exchange experience to address key research and policy questions related to creating a secure and sustainable Arctic.

The scholars stimulate international research collaboration on Arctic issues while increasing mutual understanding between people of the United States and member countries of the Arctic Council. Using a collaborative, multidisciplinary approach, the Fulbright Arctic Initiative addresses public-policy research questions relevant to Arctic nations' shared challenges and opportunities.

Outstanding scholars and practitioners from the U.S. and the other 7 Arctic Council member states participate in the program as Fulbright Arctic Initiative Scholars. Co-Lead Scholars provide intellectual leadership and support throughout the Program, in addition to mentoring program participants, connecting program scholars to other international experts, and facilitating discussion and collaboration among the Scholars.



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The Process is the Solution to the Arctic Policy Making

BRINGING COMMUNITY-CENTERED AND PARTNERSHIP-BASED APPROACHES TO ARCTIC SECURITY, SUSTAINABILITY TRANSITIONS, AND PUBLIC HEALTH

When work began on organizing the launch of Fulbright Arctic Initiative III the world was a very different place. There was no COVID-19 global pandemic and no war in Ukraine. These two events have had profound consequences for global cooperation and the Arctic has not been immune. At the same, climate change, the largest environmental challenge to our planet, has not taken a break.

Undertaking research and policy work under these conditions have created unprecedented challenges for collaborative policy work in the Arctic. The nineteen scholars of FAI III, however, were up for the challenge. Coming together as a cohort right as the world shut down due to the COVID-19 global pandemic, they worked virtually for the first 12 months of the program. When Russia invaded the Ukraine, their scholarship took on a whole new meaning. When FAI III was extended an additional 6 months to ensure they had the time to complete their individual and group projects, an 18 month program became a 24 month program, and impacted the scholars' personal and professional lives. For these reasons as well as their respective areas of expertise, the FAI III Scholars are an impressive, deeply committed group of academics and practitioners, representing the diversity of voices that constitute the Circumpolar North, including Indigenous scholars and practitioners from North America, Russia, and Fennoscandia. Working in the three sub-groups, the Scholars have produced a set of policy briefs that address three of the most pressing issues confronting the Arctic today—Arctic Security, Infrastructure, and Community Health.

The three policy areas are distinct, but also highly inter-connected in the Arctic region. Identifying policy problems, policy goals, and policy instruments requires interdisciplinary approaches and a recognition that the Arctic paradoxically is both very local and very international. Sound policy recommendations in the Arctic need to be grounded in place— good policy requires listening to the needs of local community residents and co-designing processes that ensure not only that Arctic communities have a seat at the table but also that their participation is efficacious. Within each of the three groups, scholars and practitioners were able to draw on their collective decades' experiences with and within Arctic communities to ensure Arctic voices are reflected and grounded in their recommendations.



FULBRIGHT ARCTIC CO-LEAD SCHOLARS

We have been privileged to work with the Fulbright Arctic Scholars and have seen the creation of new and lasting partnerships that cross borders to help advance a more sustainable future for Arctic peoples and the global environment. We hope the recommendations presented here are useful to Arctic communities, policy makers, and researchers in setting priorities for future work and for making policy decisions.

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The Arctic Security group held a set of town hall meetings—an Arctic first—across multiple Arctic communities from Alaska and Northwest Territories in North America to Norway and Iceland in Fennoscandia to the Sakha Republic in Russia. The findings of these town halls show that the Arctic is not a monolithic place. More importantly, it shows that Arctic residents are keen on Arctic policy issues that affect their home communities and the Arctic as a whole. By including community perspectives, regional and national policy makers have a colossal opportunity to do business differently, strengthening legitimacy of policy decisions and lower transaction costs on policy implementation. This is an important lesson for any policy sphere in the Arctic.

The Infrastructure group adds another vital insight around policy making in the Arctic. Anyone who works in the Arctic region is fully aware of the physical infrastructure deficit, whether broadband communications, energy services provision, transportation, or housing stock. With a focus on implications, challenges, and opportunities of the Green Transition in the Arctic, this group identified that it is not only a *physical infrastructure* deficit that challenges the Arctic, but perhaps even more importantly the *policy infrastructure* deficit. Now is the opportunity to co-create policy processes and structures that meet urgent energy security needs at the community level on one hand and address national climate change goals on the other in ways that enhance the well-being of Arctic residents, respect traditional lands, water, and resources, and chart pathways toward long-term sustainability.

The Community Health group brings forth another powerful dimension to policy making—place-based policy making requires both attention to local communities and attention to Arctic region as a whole. Inclusion has always

► This Policy Brief reports on the research findings and selected policy recommendations from the third round of Fulbright Arctic Initiative scholars.

been the heartbeat of Arctic peoples; inclusion needs to be foundational in health policy in the Arctic. The factors that affect health cannot be focused on individuals alone or even arguably primarily. Community may be the right starting point and the factors that affect health such as food cross international borders. Arctic-wide cooperation, therefore, in the development and implementation of community health recommendations is a *sine qua non* to address ongoing challenges such as cultural differences and historical inequalities. It also requires paying attention to the human-animal-environment nexus, knowledge sharing among diverse groups, collaboration across national and subnational borders and including the voices of youth, elders, and newcomers. This makes for strong and lasting policy outcomes.

Collectively, the three policy briefs that follow represent the state of the art. They identify succinctly not simply policy problems, but also policy instruments that are grounded in community experience and community voices which hold the promise—if implemented—to strengthen the vitality of Arctic communities, advance national priorities, and provide models for other communities and regions around the world.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN ARCTIC SECURITY POLICY: CO-CREATING POLICY WITH RIGHTS AND STAKEHOLDERS IN THE ARCTIC

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SUMMARY

- Arctic communities consider security beyond the scope of military concerns.
- All forms of security are interconnected; no form should be considered in isolation.
- National and regional policies impacting Arctic communities require collaborative approach and co-creation to be successful.
- Effective collaboration starts with the correct rights- and stakeholders, a clearly defined issue, an inclusive engagement schedule, community-centric communication modes, a process to co-create policy, and an implementation and follow-up plan.
- Most Arctic policies include the language of community engagement but do not provide policymakers with the steps for HOW to do this.

Recommendations for Arctic Policy Makers

Include all relevant forms of security, such as food, environmental, energy, gender, health, economic, and cultural security, when developing security policy through active and meaningful engagement of Arctic communities.

Challenges

Arctic security is often understood in terms of military security. The focus solely on military security draws attention away from other essential and pressing aspects of Arctic security. Indeed, recent national Arctic strategies acknowledge other forms of security but actionable recommendations on how to concretely engage Arctic communities are still required.

Arctic communities are rarely included and engaged in developing conventional security policies that directly impact their lives, communities, culture, and human security. This includes long-term strategic decisions on national defense policy, cooperation with other states' military forces and the development of critical infrastructure to underpin policy decisions (e.g. ports, airports, roads, telecommunications, housing, energy sources, food supplies, medical needs and search and rescue). Creating such Arctic security policies without the involvement of affected communities has largely resulted in implementation problems and increased tension and conflict between communities and all levels of government.

The active participation of Arctic communities, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, in developing and implementing Arctic security policy results in stronger, more comprehensive policy. It does so by strengthening shared ownership of those policies and by reducing opportunity and transaction costs that arise from communication failures between government and communities.

Discussion

Over the course of 18 months, the Fulbright Arctic Initiative III Security and Cooperation working group facilitated eight town hall-style meetings across the Arctic to identify key factors for security-centric community engagement. Our key findings from those discussions include:

1. Communities are eager to engage with and co-create Arctic security policy;
2. Communities are interested in a diverse range of security issues;
3. Knowledge embedded in Arctic communities, whether Indigenous or local, must be considered on par with scientific knowledge;
4. Community-based expertise and resources lead to more effective implementation outcomes, also of national policies;
5. Continuous communication and follow-up are essential for long-term policy significance.



FULBRIGHT ARCTIC INITIATIVE | POLICY BRIEF

The Arctic town hall discussions revealed six important actions on HOW to co-create policy with Arctic communities:

WHO:

Identify relevant rights- and stakeholders both inside and outside the communities affected by policies and decisions in question. Think beyond formal requirements for consultations. Ensure broad participation of different genders, age groups, expertise etc. Include community point people who have the trust of formal decision makers and rights- and stakeholders, and possess an in-depth knowledge and understanding of local socio-cultural, economic, and political dimensions.

ISSUE:

Identify the core issues in question through community hearings. Do not assume you know what the issues are in advance. Be ready and willing to engage in extensive discussions and consensus decision-making processes.

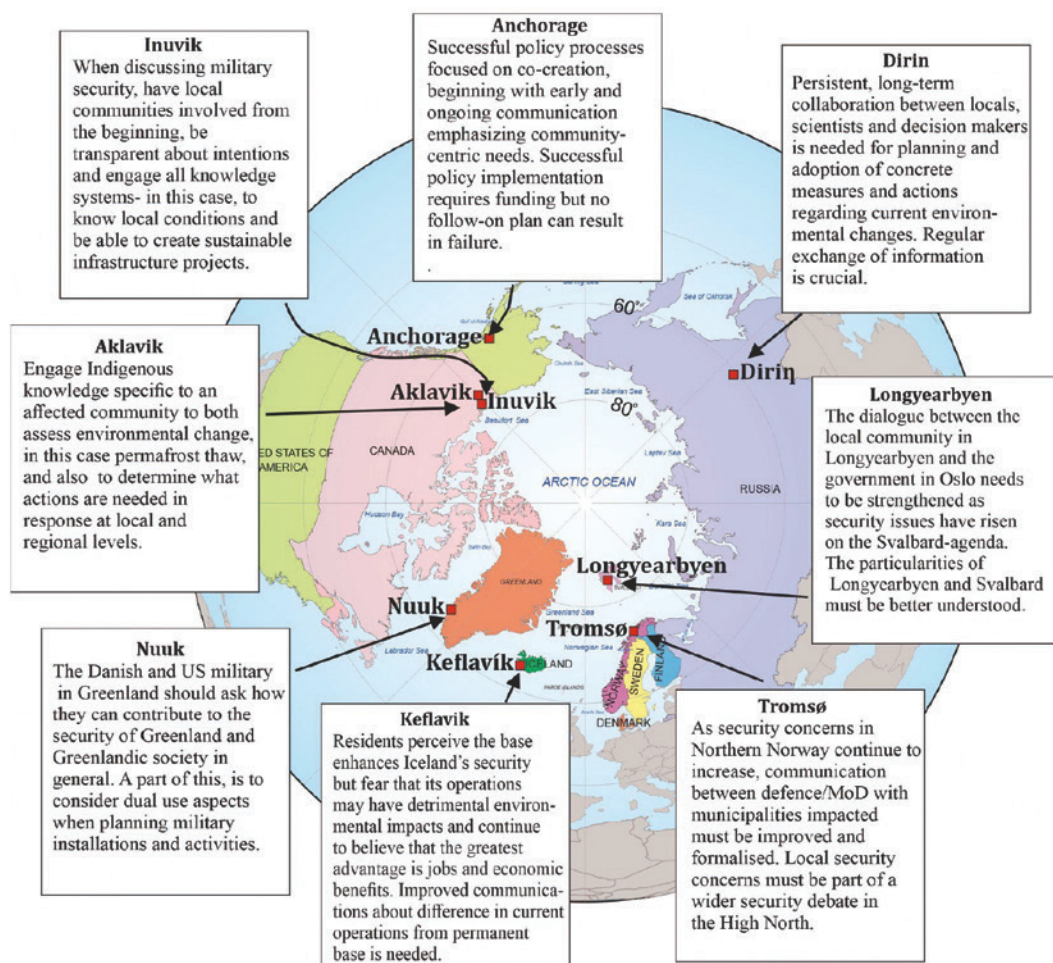
SCHEDULE/TIMING:

Ensure there are no scheduling conflicts with the community's seasonal activities (harvesting, hunting, fishing, etc.) or other community events. Do not assume your time schedule is theirs.

COMMUNICATION:

- Align the level and type of communication and information to the intended audience, their interests, concerns and any pressing issues. Ensure interpretation to and from local languages where appropriate and/or necessary.
- Leverage existing communication modes and networks, including community meetings, social media, broadcast, or print media.

Figure 1 Town Hall Highlights: The circumpolar map below succinctly highlights key findings from each town hall meeting.





➡ Scan the QR code
to learn more.



CO-CREATE:

Work collaboratively to draft policy and develop implementation and monitoring plans to reflect the security needs of all rights- and stakeholders.

- Review the basics of policy drafting with participating community members.
- Enable internal community deliberations on the selected policy topic.
- Workshop community discussions and findings into a joint policy draft and ensure a community review process for the draft.

FOLLOW-UP:

Determine a follow-up schedule and process:

- What will be shared by whom, when and where.
- Which community members will be trained to participate and implement the policy.
- How updates will be done and communicated.
- How community feedback will be incorporated into ongoing policy-making.

Benefits of Community Engagement in Security Policy Creation

Both formal decision makers and Arctic communities can benefit from the co-creation of an inclusive security policy process, especially in terms of decisions and implementation. Benefits of an inclusive process include:

- Builds long-term communication channels between decision makers and Arctic communities.
- Better aligns goals, priorities, interests, and benefits of all parties.
- More equitably shares opportunities (e.g. economic, social, environmental, educational) across the community.
- More equitably involves all relevant knowledge systems (Indigenous, local, and scientific).
- Strengthens corporate and public social responsibility.
- Increases community resilience and security.
- Enables more effective implementation of national security policies



A GREEN TRANSITION IN AND FOR THE ARCTIC: CONSIDERATIONS ABOUT THE LACK OF INFRASTRUCTURE(S) FOR THE GREEN TRANSITION IN THE ARCTIC.

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SUMMARY

- The Arctic has a new strategic role because of the Green Transition.
- Many Arctic communities lack physical as well as knowledge and policy infrastructure for a successful transition
- The Green Transition is not one size fits all in the Arctic. Different communities have different opportunities when it comes to energy needs and options, including renewable energy. These needs and opportunities are not static and should be aligned with what the citizens want.
- There is high level of path-dependency, meaning future policy choices and opportunities are shaped by present institutional arrangements, in the energy transition, which makes it important to start with a holistic overview early in the transition. Infrastructure investments made today will stay for decades and the kind of energy investments that are implemented will impact the type of complementary energy solution that is needed.
- The way that various technologies and sectors work together is complex and so is understanding the impacts from a chosen pathway. There will be tradeoffs between different impacts that need to be considered on a local level.
- There is a knowledge gap both in terms of what Arctic communities need from the transition and how these needs could be best met.

Challenges

The Arctic is undergoing transformational change. Over the last 50 years, the Arctic has warmed three times faster than the world as a whole (AMAP 2021). Thawing permafrost, sea-level rise and rising temperatures are changing the landscape and living reality for the people of this ecological vulnerable region. In parallel and in response, the Green Transition agenda has been advanced by governments and industry. These efforts have been accelerated further with the war in Ukraine, a global economic recession, and continuing extreme climate events, such as flooding, local forest fires, and extreme heat waves.

To meet the global challenge and the 2015 Paris Agreement goals, the world's energy systems must transition away from fossil fuels. The Arctic could be an important provider of both resources (material and energy) and carbon storage needed for the global transition and thus take up a new strategic role because of the green transition. However, local engagement and consideration must be paramount in the process. Government initiatives that encourage, facilitate, and ensure robust local participation in decision-making, long-term benefits, and equity consideration need to be strengthened and expanded.

As of today, in many, if not most regions Arctic lack physical as well as knowledge and policy infrastructure for a successful engagement in the Green Transition. Building and planning new infrastructure in an Arctic setting given the challenges of thawing permafrost, extreme weather events and lack of connectivity, makes road construction and power lines expensive and challenging to develop. In parallel, robust policies and inclusive knowledge processes to advance local needs and priorities, will ensure efficacy of local voices, more complete understandings of the risks and opportunities, strengthen evidence-based decision-making, and reduce frictions that may slow the Green transition locally.

Indigenous peoples, especially in North America, populate a large portion of the Arctic region. Currently, it is important that national government policy ensure Indigenous peoples' priorities are fully considered when it comes to the Green Transition and climate change policies. Furthermore, the policies need to include an understanding of climate change, geopolitics, and ethical considerations that is Arctic specific. Thus, this policy brief recommends developing a better knowledge infrastructure, physical infrastructure (built environment) as well as policy infrastructure for a successful Green Transition in the Arctic.



Fingerprint Highlights

Over the course of 24 months the Fulbright Arctic Initiative III infrastructure group visited several Arctic communities in Greenland, Iceland, Alaska, Canada, Sweden, and Norway and formulated national fingerprints related to the evolving global green transition agenda.



Figure 1 Photograph Lill Rastad Bjørst, solar cells in Nuuk, August 2022



Figure 2 Photograph Lill Rastad Bjørst, Carbfix in Iceland, June 2022

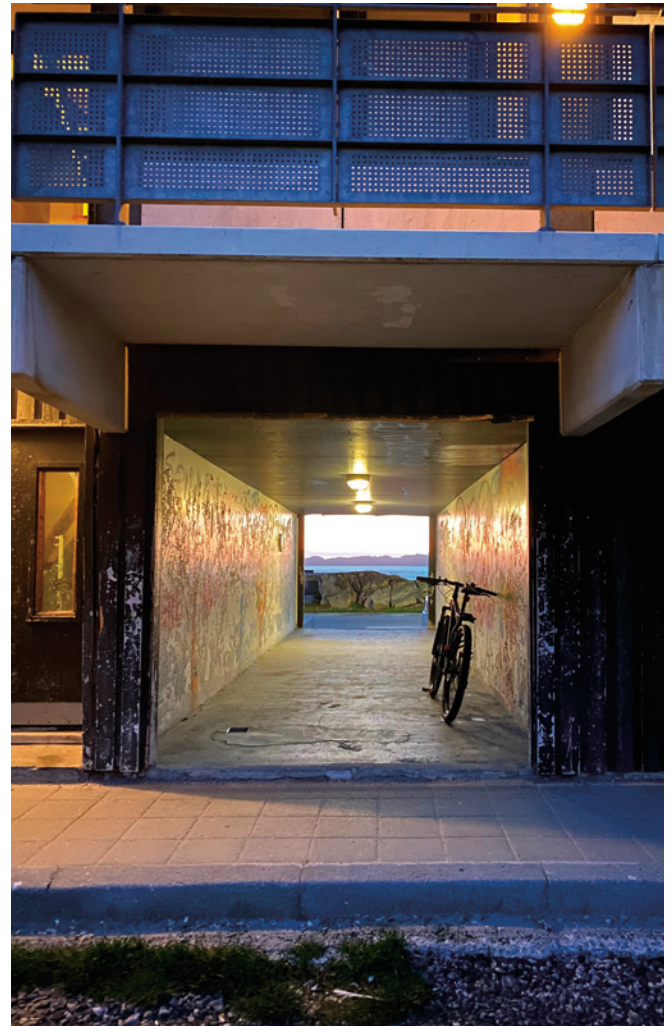


Figure 3 Photograph Lill Rastad Bjørst, Nuuk, Greenland August 2022



Scan the QR code to learn more.



Recommendations for Arctic Policy Makers

1

Energy Infrastructure: Accommodate and support community needs for sustainable energy solutions that enables future local development and growth. Both facilitate energy supply solutions as well as buildings and transportation infrastructure that interact with and are a part of the comprehensive energy system:

- Implement integrated renewable energy and storage systems to facilitate energy sovereignty and autonomy.
- Enable buildings that interact with the surrounding environment and energy systems (electricity and district heating).
- Ensure master planning of integrated infrastructure when making larger changes and/or developing new areas to consider new kinds of energy solutions as well as new kinds of transportation needs.
- Consider alternative public transportation solutions between and within smaller communities/conditions.
- Provide new funding models and/or financial incentives for capital improvements, specifically for different sustainability efforts such as energy efficiency measures, to ensure preservation of Arctic histories and educational opportunities.

2

Policy Infrastructure: The Arctic nations should implement infrastructural strategies that can support a just and Green Transition for and with the local Arctic communities to navigate the Arctic from the inside (and not from the outside).

- Facilitate policy processes that assign priority status to Arctic communities to avoid perpetuating former colonial methods in project and infrastructure development.
- Revise building codes to accommodate for the uncertainty of the Arctic environmental conditions due to climate change, particularly in the case of thawing permafrost and resulting migratory population changes, to ensure new builds and retrofits are capable of meeting present and future energy infrastructure demands.
- Target local circumstances and identify capacity-building actions for Arctic communities in developing pivotal policy formulations, ensuring a just transition.
- Require responsive environmental and social impact assessment processes for new projects in response to potentially new and novel environmental risks.

3

Knowledge Infrastructure: Empower local people with knowledge about benefits and consequences of different actions, technologies and infrastructure to make it possible to choose among alternative pathways.

- Provide national investment to create knowledge hubs and support services for local energy transition analysis.
- Inform key people within communities about sustainable energy solutions and support capacity building with inclusion of Indigenous knowledge at a local level.

- Prioritize citizen involvement and use of local knowledge in the transition away from fossil fuels. A green transition in the Arctic could be socially transformative for arctic communities (eg. living next to Power-to-X (PtX) which is a collective term for conversion technologies that turn electricity into carbon-neutral synthetic fuels, such as hydrogen, synthetic natural gas, liquid fuels, or chemicals; carbon capture and storage (CCS), a solar power plant, or wind farm) accommodating both global and local needs for energy and resources.
- Create a system that transfers knowledge between cultural leaders and sustainability professionals.



INCREASING HEALTH AND WELLBEING FOR ALL ARCTIC COMMUNITIES: A COMMUNITY-ORIENTED, NON-CLINICAL APPROACH

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SUMMARY

Increasing human health and wellbeing in the Arctic can only be achieved within communities. While many transnational, national, and regional policies and practices address individuals, community health and wellbeing are achieved collectively and with the understanding that the human-animal-environment nexus is crucial to overall community resilience. A focus on community-oriented, non-clinical approaches that aim to prevent disease, reduce health disparities, and improve overall wellbeing is needed to address health challenges in the rapidly transforming Arctic of the 21st century. We identify important social, behavioral, environmental, and economic factors that currently challenge community health and recommend a multi-pronged approach to assist different communities and demographic groups in the Arctic. We provide a vision for the holistic implementation of policies and practices towards increased community health and wellbeing.



Challenges

Most Arctic health and wellbeing studies have focused on individuals, addressing medical and mental health issues. This epidemiological approach is valuable for individuals, but community health and wellbeing remain largely neglected. Additionally, many studies and policies lack attention to the human-animal-environment nexus, which is increasingly understood as vital to resilient Arctic communities. Refocusing attention on community health—by including non-clinical approaches and with natural and built ecosystems in focus—aims to improve health, prevent disease, and reduce health disparities. This approach requires addressing the social, behavioral, environmental, economic, and medical determinants of health. Across the North American, European, and Eurasian arctics, communities may seek, need, or have access to different kinds of knowledge, support, and assistance to improve their health and wellbeing. Communities across the Arctic include critical demographic groups—youth, elders, Indigenous peoples, and newcomers, such as recent (less than 10 years) migrants—with different health priorities. Thus, a community-based, multi-pronged focus is necessary for developing circumpolar health and wellbeing policies and practices that address the needs of diverse Arctic groups and communities.





Recommendations for Arctic Policy Makers

Our multi-pronged approach provides short-term and long-term policies and practices to increase the health and wellbeing in the Arctic. Our six policy recommendations (see table) address culturally, ethnically, and socioeconomically diverse groups and the geographic heterogeneity of Arctic communities. Examples of policy recommendations highlight the needs of critical demographic groups—youth, elders, Indigenous peoples, and newcomers. Recognizing that recommendations and their potential implementations will vary across North American, European, and Eurasian arctics, we provide a final scenario that envisions how our recommendations could increase the resilience of Arctic communities.

SHORT-TERM STRATEGIES		LONG-TERM STRATEGIES
<p>Incorporate traditional medical knowledge and health practices in the healthcare sector.</p> <p>EXAMPLE: In Northern Canada, a commission of Indigenous communities, local leaders, scholars, and government decision-makers examines the major socioeconomic, cultural, political, and spiritual determinants of health and wellbeing for Indigenous communities and publishes it in multiple formats and venues.</p>	<p>Empower Indigenous community health practices</p>	<p>Transform social and built environments to create equity-driven and barrier-free access to traditional medicine.</p> <p>EXAMPLE: Across the Arctic, Indigenous peoples receive government-funded health career scholarships to train a new generation of professionals capable of communicating in local and Indigenous languages and incorporating traditional knowledge into healthcare in medical facilities where cultural needs are understood.</p>
<p>Engage regional and local leaders to promote knowledge about, access to, and use of traditional and innovative local foods.</p> <p>EXAMPLE: In Alaska, state funding increases direct-to-consumer food supplies, connecting farmers markets, food hubs, farmstands, and community-supported agricultural operations to ensure access to culturally acceptable, nutritious, and local foods.</p>	<p>Create food security</p>	<p>Promote food independence by supporting initiatives to strengthen local stewardship and food security practices in a changing climate.</p> <p>EXAMPLE: In the Faroe Islands, Denmark provides financial and organizational support to expand community food supplies via aquaculture, greenhouses, and animal herding while assisting communities to preserve hunting traditions.</p>
<p>Involve northern Indigenous communities in decisions about land use.</p> <p>EXAMPLE: In Norway, circumpolar and international Indigenous rights and environmental protection organizations stand with the Sami and promote Indigenous rights and access to land before infrastructural projects are implemented on Indigenous lands.</p>	<p>Ensure Indigenous rights and access to land</p>	<p>Ensure Indigenous communities' desires and needs are essential in land use planning and management.</p> <p>EXAMPLE: In Sweden, legalize Sámi involvement in all stages of infrastructural projects, from planning to implementation, that impact traditional livelihoods and access to land.</p>
<p>Establish best practices to address the wellbeing of critical demographic groups, such as youth, elders, indigenous people, and newcomers.</p> <p>EXAMPLE: In Iceland, non-profit and governmental organizations provide local municipalities with best practices for the integration of specific newcomers, such as asylum seekers, into small, close-knit Icelandic communities.</p>	<p>Engage diverse communities</p>	<p>Develop and implement a strategy for the health and wellbeing of diverse community members and demographic groups.</p> <p>EXAMPLE: For Arctic youth, circumpolar organizations provide organizational and financial support to host digital networks, in-person exchanges, and Youth Summits to prepare future leaders capable of addressing current and future concerns, including rights, equity and climate change.</p>
<p>Identify community priorities for the reconstruction of decayed built and social infrastructure, especially housing.</p> <p>EXAMPLE: In Russia, elders in small villages create maps of critical built and social infrastructure (sidewalks, roadside lighting), and re-design of indoor community social spaces, sharing their desires and needs with regional administrators for implementation.</p>	<p>Build community infrastructure</p>	<p>Incorporate community consultation and cultural considerations into the planning, design, and implementation of infrastructure.</p> <p>EXAMPLE: In Finland, community members, decision-makers, and funders co-design culturally appropriate infrastructure that is desired and needed by tradition and other communities.</p>
<p>Monitor for zoonotic diseases.</p> <p>EXAMPLE: On tundra landscapes, scientists and government agencies monitor for outbreaks of anthrax and other pathogens and provide health officials with outbreak information for inoculation planning.</p>	<p>Mitigate climate change</p>	<p>Develop and implement warning systems for extreme climate events.</p> <p>EXAMPLE: On Greenland, communities and researchers develop local and regional warning systems for extreme climate events, such as coastal landslides and tsunami-like waves.</p>



Envisioning Healthy Arctic Communities Through the 21st Century

These recommendations and examples—some that are already being implemented and some that vision what could be—aim to strengthen circumpolar health and wellbeing for the diversity of Arctic communities and potentially vulnerable demographic groups, such as youth, elders, Indigenous peoples, and newcomers. Arctic-wide cooperation in the development and implementation of community health recommendations is vital to address ongoing challenges such as cultural differences, integration, and historical inequities. Increasing health and wellbeing for the overall resilience of Arctic communities requires paying attention to the human-animal-environment nexus, knowledge sharing among diverse groups, and collaboration across national and subnational borders. This inclusive approach celebrates the uniqueness of individual communities while simultaneously providing a path forward for the diversity of Arctic places. Making space for traditional and local knowledge holders, non-traditional stakeholders, youth and elders in the visioning of a healthy, resilient Arctic brings equity to all Arctic residents.

➡ Making space for traditional and local knowledge holders, non-traditional stakeholders, youth and elders in the visioning of a healthy, resilient Arctic brings equity to all Arctic residents.





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