

Co-Designing Circumpolar Civic Education: Workshop 3 Report (September 2022)

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This report describes the results of the third workshop of *Co-Designing Civic Education for the Circumpolar North*, a two-year project funded by a planning grant from the National Science Foundation's (NSF) Navigating the New Arctic Program. This event was preceded by prior workshops that explored the concept of civic education (Workshop 1 - see report [here](#)) and best practices and challenges associated with designing anticolonial and Indigenous approaches to circumpolar civic education (Workshop 2 - see report [here](#)). The theme of this third workshop was overcoming distance in circumpolar education, and the workshop was held virtually over a two-hour period on 12 September 2022. Participants included the authors of this report.

The University of Washington (UW) research team kicked off the workshop with a brief presentation of the Workshop 2 report, and an invitation to participants to provide reflections and feedback on the findings included. This was done to validate findings as well as to facilitate continuity of conversation across the three workshops. The research team then introduced the new workshop topic and moved participants into small breakout groups. Participants were presented with an individual writing activity in which they were asked to brainstorm approaches for leveraging civic education to expose learners to new circumpolar geographies. Participants were encouraged to think broadly and creatively about how education can be utilized to overcome distance while developing their ideas, and were then invited to share out ideas with the rest of the small group. At the conclusion of these discussions participants were returned to the main Zoom room to discuss the next steps of the project, including itinerary details for the fourth workshop to be held in-person in Finland in October 2022. After the conclusion of the workshop, the UW research team revisited recordings from workshop discussions, the participants' writing responses, and written comments placed in the Zoom chat. Because this workshop focused on the development of individual ideas, we did not subject workshop data to the same level of analysis as was carried out during previous workshops. However, a quick thematic analysis was performed to identify broad themes that connect the individual ideas.

The remainder of this report describes the ideas presented by participants to overcome distance in circumpolar education. These ideas were developed during a working portion of the workshop, and represent early-stage thinking that each participant will be invited to develop further in Workshop 4. Ideas were coded according to theme and were divided across five categories: Jobs and Innovation Training, Transforming Northern Education, Cultural Exchanges, Art Education, and Technology Education. These ideas and potential groupings will be used to catalyze collaborations in small groups during the fourth workshop to further develop proposed activities. The final section of this report reflects upon the importance of cross-disciplinary collaboration in circumpolar capacity-building, as well as the implications of the five categories identified above to support such collaborations.

Jobs and Innovation Training

Timothy Pasch proposed a Massive Online Open Course (MOOC) to strengthen circumpolar relationality and information sharing through video-based showcasing of one's own region, culture, history, language, traditions, threats and challenges. Through this hybrid online and field course, students in Northern communities would partner together to share their own experiences by creating short videos informed by Elders and other community knowledge holders, with equipment and digital skills trainings offered by the program. In addition to fostering intergenerational and cross-community knowledge sharing, this course would also provide opportunities for Northern students to study abroad, gain skills in sustainable entrepreneurship and job training, and participate in field-based class sessions for school credit.

Satu Miettinen brought forth an idea for the creation of an innovation platform/hub targeted towards Northern kids and teens, with the objective of exchanging and developing youth-generated innovation ideas. This platform would support youth staying in their home communities while remaining hopeful about their career and economic futures in the North, and would accompany both formal and informal education. Ideally, the hub would be headed by youth and supported by a local youth association or school that would provide young people with the tools and methods they need to develop their business and innovation ideas. This program would aid in the creation and sustainability of small businesses, and create opportunities for livelihood in the North.

Transforming Northern Education

In order to overcome cultural distances in the classroom, Tia Tidwell proposed an idea to fund Northern educators dedicated to rebuilding student stakes and relationality in the classroom. Educators could Indigenize formal educational settings by encouraging students to bring an “aunt”, tribal member, Elder, etc with them to school to help them meet their self-defined goals. This model would not only reduce the separation imposed upon students by synthesizing a foundational Indigenous way of learning and making them more at home in a traditionally Western academic space, but would also push the institution to redefine what success means to Indigenous students.

Elaine Alvey shared another idea targeting Northern education, which called for the creation of a curriculum lab partnership program to produce culturally sustaining, anticolonial curriculum and teachers in the North. In this program, pre-service teachers would develop place-based curriculum with community partners by traveling to the community and spending time in the local school. These future teachers would be better prepared for their future roles, and the program would build capacity for teachers on the ground who wouldn't have the time to build out curriculum by themselves. Additionally, teachers who go to communities that are new to them are more likely to teach in those communities, so this program could enhance the number and quality of teachers working in the North.

Jodie Lane suggested the implementation of a circumpolar “Pass the Parcel” program to engage youth from different Northern regions. In this program, a school or classroom in the North would partner with a sister school or community in another Northern area (e.g., Alaskan schools could partner with Canadian schools, Finnish schools could partner with Greenlandic schools, etc.) and would prepare and mail their partners a tangible answer to a predetermined question (such as, “what do people in your region wear in the winter?”). This sensory exchange could be accompanied by a video response, photos, homemade goods, etc and would help build connections across the circumpolar North and encourage youth to learn about other Arctic people and places.

Cultural Exchanges

Andy Meyer proposed a regional literature course and study abroad program as a venue to allow Southern students to critique or reinforce their imaginaries of distant (Arctic) places. In this program, Southern K-12 schools or universities would offer a literature course where students study texts, films, and art from a certain region at their home institution, and then finish the course with a week long study abroad experience in the place that was represented in the course. During the trip, students could meet and interact with the local authors, writers, artists, and filmmakers they studied to help guide them into that place.

Anthony Speca intends to develop and implement a youth Model Arctic Council, wherein Northern K-12 students play the roles of ambassadors from their home territories during a simulation circumpolar council meeting. Through their engagement, students would learn communication, interpersonal, and public speaking skills. The program would allow students from different parts of the circumpolar North to build connections and work together, as well as connect Southern students with the North.

Due to a lack of travel exchange opportunities in the North, Michael Hawes called for a student exchange program with the goal of rebuilding the number of southern students visiting and becoming invested in the wellbeing of the North. Through this program, students in high school or college would receive funding to spend a semester or longer living and learning in the Arctic (i.e., living in a community, working with an NGO, attending a Northern university, etc).

Art Education

Elena Bell proposed an idea which would engage students in creating short videos in a given topic (such as civics), which would be shared with a sister school who returns their own response to the same topic. The term “videoplomacy” was coined; through this program Northern students of any age or cultural background could participate and be empowered to learn about their selected subject, build responsibility across the North, and interact with their home and local knowledge holders to make their videos.

Modeled after “Helsinki Curious”, Bree Kessler raised an idea to expand this project and understandings of different Northern communities through art. In her idea, art or design students in a Northern community would be paired up with someone from another Northern community they’ve never traveled to and know little or nothing about. After having a conversation with the person from that community about their home, the artist will then create a piece rendering their understanding of the place as informed by their partner. The artist would then travel to that place to experience it in person, meet their partner, and feature their work in a gallery exhibition.

Technology Education

Heather Nichol expressed a desire to develop and offer disaster response simulation training in Northern communities. This program would first facilitate discussions about climate change and disasters in Northern undergraduate classrooms, provide response trainings, and support students as they respond to a simulated disaster in teams. The simulation would be followed by a debriefing about real-life incidents in the students’ home community, place-based challenges to responding to those emergencies, and stories of responders’ experiences. This program would leverage Western, local and traditional knowledges with the overall goal of fostering knowledge mobilization and youth empowerment. It could also support student careers in emergency services.

In order to expand the notion of “remote sensing”, Mia Bennett proposed to implement a remote sensing skills exchange program. Southern students working with GIS and remote sensing tools would travel to a Northern community and go out into the field with local students, Elders, and other knowledge holders who could share their understandings of and experiences with forms of observation about the land without making contact with the thing that’s being observed. Questions could include: how do local knowledge holders predict the weather? How do they read the land before and while hunting seals? If the community has computing facilities, local students would then be invited to learn about geospatial technologies such as GIS, or travel to the Southern institution to gain a different perspective on remote sensing.

Future Development of Ideas and Implications for Future Work

The ideas described above will be used to catalyze discussions at Workshop 4. Participants will be asked to form small teams according to their interests, in which they will collaborate to further develop a project or projects. Ultimately, our hope is that these ideas will provide the framework for future grant applications, and that many of these projects will go on to be built upon and implemented by groups formed within this team.

These ideas represent a range of educational types and activities in the Circumpolar North that span formal, informal, and virtual education; age groups; and scales of involvement (from the individual student to the school to multi-community partnerships). All the ideas presented serve to increase solidarity and capacity-building across Northern spaces, though participants approached these goals from different

disciplinary and cultural angles. Within the five categories we used to group projects (Jobs and Innovation Training, Transforming Northern Education, Cultural Exchanges, Art Education, and Technology Education), it is interesting to note that the participants included in each of these categories represent a wide array of expertise, from international studies to remote sensing to art and design. Thus, for this project and for broader work in circumpolar education, it is important to continue to foster cross-disciplinary collaborations that allow for generative discussions and partnerships that are backed by a variety of skills and experiences.

The five categories we used may also help to illuminate needs in circumpolar education moving forward. In many project ideas, there was particular emphasis on increasing youth access to tools and opportunities that would build confidence and hope among young people living in the North, as well as provide venues for their innovation and engagement in growth in their home regions. These tools and opportunities were identified in the forms of entrepreneurial, geospatial science, disaster response, and video-making trainings; study abroad exchanges and Model Arctic Council interactions; better curriculum, onboarding, and support for Northern teachers; and the incorporation of culture and art into education. In order to fully support circumpolar youth, it will be critical to provide these opportunities and identify other gaps where educational interventions are necessary.