



2019 Policy Brief

Fulbright Arctic Initiative Symposium

A Program of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, U.S. Department of State
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Introduction

The Arctic faces critical policy challenges on many issues including climate, public health and health care infrastructure, energy, environmental protection, sustainable management of the Arctic Ocean, infrastructure, Indigenous rights, and governance.

These challenges require international cooperation and policy decisions that are grounded in Indigenous and local knowledge and western science and informed by Arctic residents. The Fulbright Program, with its 73-year history of creating connections in a complex and changing world, is a natural fit to convene a diverse and accomplished group of interdisciplinary researchers representing the 8 Arctic nations to collaborate on innovative, applied research related to topics important to the Arctic Council, the Indigenous peoples of the North, and the many other stakeholders who are vested in the future of the Arctic.

This Policy Brief reports on the research findings and selected policy recommendations from the second round of 16 Fulbright Arctic Initiative scholars, who began work in Iqaluit, Nunavut, Canada in May 2018 and conclude their 18-month program in a series of events in Washington D.C., October 27–November 1, 2019. In Washington, the Fulbright scholars will share their work with the public and policymakers at venues including the Smithsonian Institution, the U.S. State Department, and a public symposium held at the Woodrow Wilson Center.

Building on the success of the inaugural round of the Fulbright Arctic Initiative in 2015-16, Round 2 scholars completed individual research projects and worked collaboratively in two interdisciplinary thematic research teams. The Resilient Communities group focused their research on health inequities to ensure that Arctic communities can develop pathways to thrive. Through articulating and acknowledging the complexity and diversity of Arctic economies, the Sustainable Economies group focused on how risk can be better assessed, managed, and communicated in the Arctic to enhance sustainability.

➡ This Policy Brief reports on the research findings and selected policy recommendations from the second round of 16 Fulbright Arctic Initiative scholars.

FULBRIGHT ARCTIC CO-LEAD SCHOLARS

We have been privileged to work with both rounds of 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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FROM LOCAL TO GLOBAL: SCALES OF RISK AND PATHWAYS TO SUSTAINABLE ARCTIC ECONOMIES

The Fulbright Arctic Initiative Sustainable Economies Working Group includes members from Denmark, Iceland, Finland, Russia, and the United States. We examined risk as a key element in analyzing and developing Arctic economies. Our multidisciplinary analysis suggests that updating the ways risk is assessed, managed, and communicated is critical for finding pathways to foster sustainable Arctic economies.

Scholars in this working group:

- Eleanor Bors, United States
- Elena Gladun, Russia
- Daria Gritsenko, Finland
- Lára Jóhannsdóttir, Iceland
- Sanne Larsen, Denmark
- Soili Nysten-Haarala, Finland
- Todd Sformo, United States
- Svetlana Tulaeva, Russia

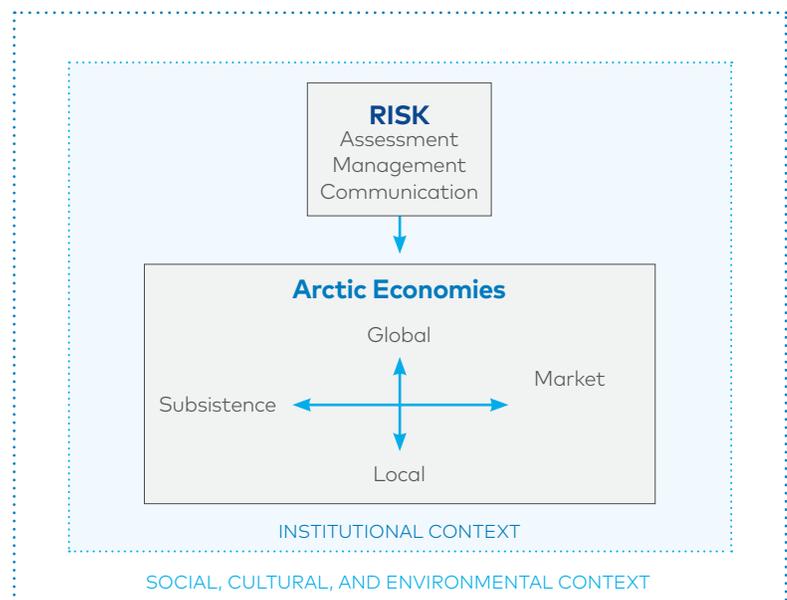
Arctic economies are often complex, mixed systems of subsistence (non-monetized) and market (monetized) activities (see Figure 1). Subsistence activities prominent in Indigenous communities such as hunting, herding, fishing, and gathering figure prominently in community culture and identity. Market activities expected to expand in the Arctic include shipping, oil and gas extraction, mining, tourism, and commercial fishing. Arctic economies function across local to global spatial scales and within Arctic-specific institutional, social, cultural, and environmental contexts.

There are both benefits and risks associated with development. Some examples of possible risks include resource extraction and depletion, environmental degradation related to industrial activities, food insecurity, spread of disease, natural disasters, and technogenic accidents. Key characteristics of the Arctic that need to be considered in order to effectively assess, manage, and communicate risks in the region include the effects of rapid climatic and demographic change, pervasive uncertainty, and the varying scales of risk and impacts from the local to the global level. We endorse a systemic approach, which means considering the whole system of economic relationships, even when national borders are crossed or multiple sectors are involved, to devise pathways to sustainable Arctic economies and maintain the co-existence of subsistence and market activities.

Risks from economic development projects in the Arctic often exist at a transnational level, and yet the risk assessment process often occurs on a project-by-project basis at small, often sub-national or local levels. There is a need for more flexible decision-making tools and techniques to improve the manageability of social and environmental risks and to increase the involvement of local residents in policies affecting their communities and ecosystems. A systemic approach that harmonizes risk assessment protocols across governance scales and economic sectors will enhance sustainability.

Figure 1

Arctic economies are often complex, mixed systems of subsistence (non-monetized) and market (monetized) activities.





Recommendations for Arctic Policy Makers

1

Acknowledge the composition and context of Arctic economies in assessing project risks.

- Monetized and non-monetized components of Arctic economies and their interactions must be considered when making decisions about sustainable economic development.
- Subsistence must become a pillar of risk assessment in the region, especially for communities dependent on living natural resources.

2

Consider the unique dimensions of risk in the Arctic environment.

- The speed and magnitude of change in Arctic climate, demography, and social institutions require flexible and adaptive decision-making.
- Uncertainty is pervasive in Arctic systems and calls for widespread use of the precautionary principle in evaluating risk.

3

Adopt a holistic, system-wide approach to risk.

- The processes of risk assessment, management, and communication should consider the affected system in a holistic manner, while recognizing that each individual project will have its own specific features.

4

Coordinate risk assessment across nations, governance scales, and sectors.

- Transnational instruments are needed to enable region-wide decision-making as domestic risk assessment can miss impacts that cross borders.
- Monitoring activities should be designed to specifically address critical sources of uncertainty to aid in decision-making.

5

Consider the scale of risk when evaluating and managing economic opportunities and investment options.

- Global standards and instruments applied to local risk management should take into account local conditions.
- Subsistence activities in Arctic mixed economies must receive appropriate recognition in local and state policies to better understand and mitigate risks to subsistence.
- Management of Indigenous lands and resources should embrace traditional values and knowledge in all decision-making processes.

6

Deploy strategic risk communication efforts to reach diverse stakeholders.

- Risk assessment and management cannot be the purview of a single stakeholder, and information and data exchange must be encouraged in both research and policymaking.
- Industries must be transparent about their role, responsibility, and liability in new projects, offering a basis for informed decision-making that enhances the resilience of Arctic local communities.
- Decision-making structures and processes for risk assessment, management, and communication need to be developed or amended to incorporate Indigenous and local knowledge and improve the participation of diverse stakeholders.



FROM RESILIENT TO THRIVING: SUPPORTING HEALTH AND WELL-BEING IN ARCTIC COMMUNITIES

The Fulbright Arctic Resilient Communities Group includes members from Canada, Greenland/Denmark, Sweden, and the United States. Our perspectives are informed by decades of research, professional expertise, and stories of working, living, and thriving in the Arctic.

Scholars in this working group:

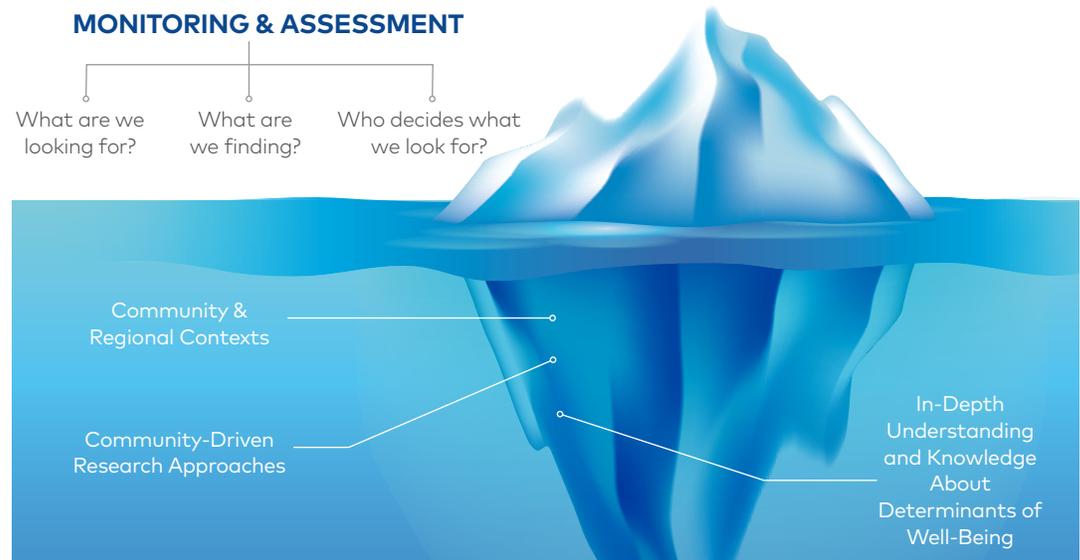
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- Sean Guistini, Canada
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- Christina Larsen, Denmark
- Josée Lavoie, Canada
- Elizabeth Rink, United States
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The recommendations we present build on the Fulbright Arctic Initiative Program — Cohort I (2015–16). We have gathered further evidence during our experience as the Fulbright Arctic Initiative Program — Cohort II (2018–19) to inform our policy recommendations. This work includes conducting a circumpolar sharing circle; interdisciplinary workshops in Alaska, Denmark, Greenland and Iceland; Circumpolar literature reviews; and individual research projects. We listened to a diversity of voices including Arctic community members, organizational representatives, health care providers, researchers, youth, and elders.

We incorporated critical, community-based perspectives on Arctic health and well-being in this document. Our work harnesses strength-based approaches developed in partnership with Arctic communities. Based on our collective research and expertise, the resiliency discourse that governs and shapes Arctic health policy is insufficient. Our work demonstrates a need to 'dive below the surface' of epidemiologic health indicators in the Arctic to promote a culture of health that is meaningful to Indigenous communities. Our Iceberg Model (*Figure 1*) illustrates the small number of epidemiologic indicators that are most frequently collected in the Arctic and the contextual factors that lie below the surface and are often neglected. This leads us to be critical of the processes that determine what we look for and what we are finding. We also acknowledge that there are areas where 'icebergs' are not being monitored, i.e. Indigenous health data is not being collected and there is a need to look for 'icebergs' (inequities) in addition to 'diving below the surface'.

Figure 1

Our Iceberg Model illustrates diving below the surface to promote a culture of health in Arctic communities.





Recommendations for Arctic Policy Makers

We present policy recommendations in four thematic areas to ensure that current and future Arctic communities can develop pathways to address health inequities and thrive.

1

Acknowledge and integrate Indigenous rights and knowledges.

- **Indigenous rights:** Implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) in all countries participating in Arctic research.
- **Indigenous knowledges:** Ensure Indigenous knowledges, expertise, and community perspectives are integrated effectively into policy and health system design in local, regional, State, federal and International levels of governance.
- **Arctic Council:** Expand Arctic Council's Permanent Participants to the same status as States in consensus-building in the Arctic Council.
- **Funding:** Allocate funding for organizations working to advance the rights of Arctic peoples.

2

Take meaningful action to address Indigenous determinants of health.

- **Local innovations:** Begin with what Indigenous and Arctic communities are already doing to support health and wellness, then commit to supporting their initiatives and priorities.
- **Indigenous leadership:** Recognize and enhance Indigenous leadership in communities, the academy, health systems and governance structures.
- **Informing systems:** Create and support pathways for community practices, perspectives, and priorities on determinants of health to be integrated in health care systems and governments.
- **Under-represented groups:** Seek the perspectives of underrepresented groups, such as young people and the elderly, and integrate these into health services and systems.

3

Expand monitoring and assessment programs.

- **Monitoring:** Establish health and well-being monitoring programs in Arctic contexts that follow Indigenous ethical guidelines and build on Indigenous knowledges to track community-defined measures of health and wellbeing over time.
- **Assessment:** Create and expand approaches to the assessment of Arctic peoples' health and wellbeing that include integrated, mixed methods, and innovative research in small populations.
- **Community-driven strategies:** Implement and evaluate community-driven and evidence-based strategies to address health inequities in Arctic communities.
- **Information sharing:** Allocate funding for information sharing between communities throughout the Arctic.

4

Implement community-led critical research approaches.

- **Partnerships:** Ensure equitable and reciprocal partnerships between Arctic communities, key stakeholders, and researchers throughout the research process — from the identification of priorities, to research questions, data collection, data analysis and sharing of findings.
- **Funding community research:** Commit financial and political support for community-led critical research approaches, including designated funding mechanisms.
- **Reciprocity:** Enhance reciprocity within research as negotiated by communities, key stakeholders, and researchers. Reciprocity means direct benefit for both researchers and communities.
- **Ethics:** Adhere to ethical guidelines for research in the Arctic where guidelines exist and support the creation and promotion of ethical guidelines for research where they have not yet been developed. These guidelines and processes should be developed in partnership with, and be endorsed by, Arctic Indigenous communities. Guidelines may require multiple levels of review, including national, regional, and community-based ethics review boards.



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