



Polar Knowledge Canada

Regional Planning and Knowledge Sharing Workshop

Setting a foundation for respectful relationships



March 10 – 11, 2020

Canadian High Arctic Research Station,
Cambridge Bay, Nunavut, Canada



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Savoir polaire
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Executive summary

Polar Knowledge Canada (POLAR) is mandated to strengthen Canada's leadership on Arctic issues and advance knowledge of the Canadian Arctic. Through leadership, partnerships and collaboration on polar science and technology, one of the federal agency's major functions is to create and synthesize knowledge and share information for decision making, for the benefit of northern communities and all Canadians.

In March 2020, POLAR hosted a Regional Planning and Knowledge Sharing Workshop at the Canadian High Arctic Research Station (CHARS) campus in Cambridge Bay, Nunavut, Canada, as a first step towards codeveloping a broader knowledge sharing forum.

The workshop focused on perspectives of Indigenous knowledge holders, knowledge producers and knowledge users in Nunavut and the Northwest Territories to identify key thematic sessions of relevance to communities, while

establishing guidelines for communicating and sharing knowledge within a northern context. This report outlines workshop outcomes that will guide forum development and continued dialogue with northern and Indigenous organizations, research institutes, and other government departments.

The knowledge sharing forum will bring together Indigenous knowledge holders, researchers and decision makers from across Canada's North to discuss new knowledge of relevance to northern communities, and feature results from POLAR's 2015-2019 Science and Technology Program. The forum will provide a unique opportunity to build relationships, increase coordination, collaboration and synergy among participants, and inspire ideas for future knowledge creation and mobilization.



Setting a foundation for respectful relationships

The Arctic is facing unprecedented environmental, social and economic change. Northern communities are increasingly in need of new knowledge to inform decision making, address pressing issues, and adapt to ongoing change. Established in June 2015, Polar Knowledge Canada (POLAR) is a federal agency responsible for advancing Canada's knowledge of the Arctic, strengthening Canadian leadership in polar science and technology, and promoting the development and distribution of knowledge of other circumpolar regions, including Antarctica. POLAR's work aims to improve economic opportunities, environmental stewardship and the quality of life of northern residents and all Canadians. Relationships with Indigenous communities are fundamentally important to achieving this mandate and POLAR endeavours to build connections with Indigenous knowledge holders based on equality and mutual respect.

POLAR is currently planning an inaugural knowledge sharing forum that will bring together Indigenous knowledge holders, decision makers and researchers to engage in two-way discussion on topics of relevance to northern communities. A key focus of the forum will be to showcase knowledge generated during POLAR's 2015-2019 Science and Technology Program. POLAR also plans to use this forum as a catalyst for increased co-creation and knowledge sharing with Indigenous communities.

To inform the planning and development of the forum, POLAR recently launched a co-development process focused on respectful dialogue with northern Indigenous communities. The goal of this process was to allow Indigenous partners to guide the design of a meaningful, relevant and participatory forum.

The Regional Planning and Knowledge Sharing Workshop, a first step in this co-development process, took place on March 10-11, 2020 at POLAR's headquarters, the Canadian High Arctic Research Station (CHARS) campus, located in Cambridge Bay, Nunavut. During this initial workshop, Indigenous partners, decision makers and research collaborators worked together with Polar Knowledge Canada representatives ([Figure 1](#)) to co-develop a shared vision for the forum, collectively identifying key themes of relevance to northern communities and generating recommendations for successful knowledge sharing.

The key outcomes of this planning workshop are synthesized in this brief report and will be used as a roadmap for continued dialogue and to guide the planning of the knowledge sharing forum, for the mutual benefit of northern Indigenous communities and science-based organizations. The workshop included Indigenous participants from the Inuvialuit region of the Northwest Territories, and the Kitikmeot and Qikiqtaaluk regions of Nunavut, Canada. POLAR plans to extend the co-development process to other areas of Canada's Arctic and North, all of which comprise its mandate area. As POLAR hears additional perspectives from other northern and Indigenous organizations, research institutes and levels of government, these will be shared back with workshop participants as the vision for the forum evolves.

"...What we're doing here is very important with climate change that's happening. And we are feeling the effects of climate change today. So are our wildlife — and the marine is one of the first places being affected — our oceans. And it's just something we got to watch for our future because there'll be a lot of traffic and our wildlife is being affected. And with this Polar Knowledge [Canada] we are able to share all our information."

Willie Aglukkaq, Gjoa Haven Hunters and Trappers Association, Nunavut, Canada



Identifying relevant session themes for the forum

Over its first five years of operation (2015–2019), POLAR-led and POLAR-supported research has encompassed a broad range of topics, including: climate change, ecosystems and biodiversity monitoring, physical sciences research, community-led wildlife research and monitoring, *Inuit Qaujimagajatuqangit*, changing sea ice, permafrost and snow conditions monitoring as well as improving northern-built infrastructure, alternate and renewable energy and applied technologies. While many topics are important to Northerners, POLAR invited the Indigenous delegates and other partners at the workshop to identify five key topics that could serve as meaningful session themes for the knowledge sharing forum.

Participants worked from a comprehensive list of emerging pan-northern and regional research priorities that POLAR had previously gathered through Indigenous engagement efforts in 2018–2019 ([Annex A](#)). These emerging priorities are consistent with Goals 1 and 2 of POLAR’s [2020–2025 Science and Technology Framework](#):

“The themes of importance to us is what we eat. Caribou and char...”

Bobby Anavilok, Kugluktuk, Angonaitit Association

GOAL 1

Improving knowledge of dynamic northern terrestrial, freshwater and marine ecosystems in the context of rapid change

GOAL 2

Increasing understanding of the connections between northern community wellness and environmental health

GOAL 3

Advancing sustainable energy, technology and infrastructure solutions for the unique environmental, social and cultural conditions in the North.

Together in interactive groups, the participants carefully weighed the different topics and considered which would be most appropriate for the forum, so as to allow for the sharing and exchange of diverse ways of knowing: Indigenous knowledge and science.

Topics that directly impact food security, safe access to traditional hunting areas, and wellness of the community were of key concern. Caribou and arctic char were considered especially important because they provide vital country foods to communities across the Arctic. Notably, Indigenous participants felt that sharing knowledge with



scientific researchers on these subjects would yield the most value for their communities. Participants communicated that other listed topics, while not selected specifically as themes for the forum, such as shipping regulations and water quality, could also benefit from knowledge sharing, and acknowledged that not all northern communities received the same degree of communication from researchers and government. As well, they emphasized to POLAR the importance of enhancing information sharing back to the communities on knowledge creation, as well as on POLAR's science programs and activities.

After meaningful discussion, the participants selected five themes of highest relevance for the forum:

Caribou population abundance and migration

Arctic char and other fish population dynamics

Whale populations and marine ecosystem biodiversity

Climate change research and monitoring

Environmental change – snow, ice, precipitation.

To further refine themes, each participant was invited to write down a key question of relevance. The facilitator collected over 40 questions that were compiled as part of the co-development and engagement process. These are detailed in a companion workshop technical report (Polar Knowledge Canada, In press). Examples of some of the workshop key questions of relevance included:

- “What can IQ [Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit] tell us about factors leading to the decline of caribou?”
- “Where do char feed, what they feed on when are they in the marine environment? Are some of those prey species and habitats threatened, potentially as a result of climate change and human presence?”
- “In light of loss of sea ice and shipping impacts what mitigation measures may be required to maintain sustainable marine mammal populations for Inuit food security?”
- “What are possible impacts on infrastructure and possible economic risks and benefits associated with environmental change?”

The workshop and report provide a point-in-time reference to guide future discussions and enable exchange of ideas towards a shared vision for the knowledge sharing forum. As POLAR engages with other regions across Canada's North, the final themes for the forum are expected to evolve as engagement sessions capture the diversity of northern Indigenous community perspectives.



Creating an inclusive space founded on respect: knowledge sharing best practices

A core focus for POLAR is to create an engaging and unique environment for discussion at the forum that respects different ways of knowing. Most scientific exchanges follow a familiar format of structured oral presentations (typically using slides) with a brief opportunity for questions. This conventional meeting format can make it difficult to experience equal two-way exchange of knowledge and can create barriers for the full participation of Indigenous knowledge holders.

POLAR endeavours to create an innovative and inclusive forum that meets the needs of Indigenous communities by facilitating relationship-building and meaningful exchange. Accordingly, workshop participants were asked to identify best practices for sharing and receiving information which could guide the format of the forum. These best practices are explored in detail here.

Ensure that the perspectives of elders and youth are heard

Local community representatives highlighted that elders are respected teachers and knowledge holders while youth are the next generation. Both elder and youth perspectives are seen to be vital to the well-being of Indigenous communities. Forum planners should ensure that details about the event are communicated clearly to elders so they have the opportunity to attend and share their perspectives, and that planners keep the needs of elders and youth in mind when structuring the meeting pace and format. Hunters and Trappers Organizations (HTOs) and similar community organizations were identified as a valuable resource for finding elders, youth, and other community members who would be comfortable speaking at a large meeting.

For any topic being discussed, forum planners should find creative ways to include the perspectives of elders and youth. For example, a knowledge sharing event prior to the meeting can be an opportunity to collect video and audio

“Respect the elders first — think it’s better that way. They’re the ones that are going to correct you anyway, because they have more knowledge. Respect the Elders first, then anyone else can come along.”

Bobby Anavilok, Kugluktuk, Angonaitit Association

of elders and youth speaking about the subject, which can then be shared later at the meeting with their permission. Including a photo contest for youth which allows them to include a small statement is one creative way the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) has involved Indigenous youth in larger meetings.



Incorporate Indigenous world views through connections to the land

“We did tents in an open house style — tea on the stove — where people could come in and out. Had a lot of participation and people felt they could participate. Some just came and listened.”

Jennifer Fresque-Baxter,
Government of Northwest Territories

The interconnectedness of living and non-living things and the importance of the land are key Indigenous values that should be reflected in the forum. Gathering on the land can help create a more welcoming space for storytelling and relationship building. Allowing participants to take breaks outside and engage in more informal, conversational settings without strict barriers separating topics can also stimulate greater participation. One option is to have an igloo, tent or fire set up outside with tea, coffee and bannock

where participants can gather and engage in breakout groups.

Presentations conducted indoors should endeavour to highlight personal connections to the land and the community. For instance, researchers presenting their work should be encouraged to include photos of themselves and their team out on the land, to tell stories about field work, and to highlight collaborations with community members. These measures will enable community participants to relate to researchers as people first. Workshop participants also suggested incorporating large visual displays and posters.

Group activities on the land can also help build relationships and foster opportunities for knowledge sharing, future cooperation and collaboration. For example, organizing a group fishing trip prior to the meeting depending on the time of year can help to connect people and build trust.

Create varied opportunities for two-way sharing

Indigenous knowledge is a critical foundation for the creation of new knowledge, and Indigenous community members can offer helpful critiques and perspectives. Forum presenters can show that they value community perspectives and two-way sharing by creating opportunities for participants to ask questions and share new ideas. For example, presenters can take a more conversational approach to a presentation and solicit feedback at intervals throughout. Keeping information approachable by avoiding technical language or complicated graphs will also help encourage sharing.

It is also important to acknowledge that not everyone will prefer the same style of engagement. Some may be very comfortable voicing their opinion in front of a large crowd, some may prefer having dialogue in smaller groups or one-on-one interactions, and some may prefer to just listen and reflect. Having a variety of activities with different group sizes throughout

the event can create more opportunities for participants to speak in a setting they find comfortable. Creative techniques that introduce a level of anonymity are recommended to increase participation—for example, inviting participants to contribute ideas onto a slip of paper to then attach to a poster, or use ballots or stickers to “vote” anonymously on topic options.

Indigenous community members generally prefer to meet face-to-face. Internet speeds are often slow in the North, and as a result video conferencing can be difficult to arrange and may inhibit participation of those without access to technology. Sharing in a circle where all participants can see each other and be heard equally can make the meeting more engaging, comfortable and inclusive.

Include decision makers

Workshop participants suggested that decision makers from multiple levels of government should be present and willing to participate in discussions. The forum may provide a unique opportunity for decision makers to share knowledge and hear concerns from community members outside of a higher-stakes and more formal consultation process. Decision makers can assist in identifying relevant policy tools to address questions or ideas that emerge in discussion. The interaction of decision makers with Indigenous knowledge holders and researchers may also spark new insights and ideas for knowledge creation, collaboration and application.

Provide lead time to Indigenous representatives

Workshop participants suggested that information about the meeting content, including the agenda and other materials, should be translated and provided to HTOs and participating community organizations at least a month in advance. This would ensure they have sufficient time to discuss the topics with their boards and prepare relevant comments and questions for the forum based on the concerns of their community.



Plan for translation and interpretation

Language interpretation is an essential part of making all participants feel included, especially elders. Successful interpretation includes using the right technology for the meeting format and having sufficient coverage of the regional dialects of attendees. For example, whisper interpretation may not be suitable for larger groups because only one interpreter can speak at a time— a simultaneous interpreting setup where multiple interpreters can work from booths may be preferred. If the interpreter is only hearing speech delivered into a microphone, then care should be taken to ensure participants speak clearly into the microphone. Similarly, acoustics need to be considered. While the circular qalgiq room, called the Knowledge Sharing Centre, at the CHARS campus has exceptional acoustics designed to pick up all speech, activities in other rooms or in outdoor settings will require customized solutions. Working together with experienced interpreters to ensure core meeting materials can be translated in advance will increase understanding and participation of elders.

Invited presenters should provide hard copies of their presentation and speaking notes to interpreters several weeks in advance. Avoiding technical jargon and acronyms, which do not translate directly into Indigenous languages, will help interpreters keep pace with the presentation and make their presentation more engaging overall. POLAR can support presenters by encouraging them to use plain language and by providing guidance on knowledge sharing best practices prior to the meeting.

“I learned a lot (in this workshop). In science, we get a lot of specific technical training but not a lot of training on connecting with the community. I’m going to pass these learnings on to my colleagues.”

Brent Else, University of Calgary



Moving forward together

POLAR endeavours to support resilience in northern communities by bringing together diverse groups of knowledge holders and decision makers to share information and create new knowledge in order to address issues relevant to Northerners. Through meaningful and respectful discussion, the Regional Planning and Knowledge Sharing Workshop initiated the co-development of a vision for POLAR's knowledge sharing forum. Under this shared vision, the innovative forum would bring together Indigenous knowledge holders, researchers and decision makers into a welcoming and comfortable space, using the technology and facilities of the CHARS campus,

while maximizing opportunities to connect on the land. Recommendations from the workshop as summarized in this report will facilitate presenters to communicate creatively and dynamically, and help ensure Indigenous partners are able to share and receive information on topics important to them. Shared activities indoors or on the land that include humour and movement can build trust between participants and allow for open and respectful conversations. Participants leaving the forum will have built new relationships, shared and received meaningful new knowledge, while discovering exciting opportunities for collaboration.

"Really good two days — such a diverse group of people from different backgrounds, working together to problem-solve. I'm very proud of the group and proud to be a part of it. I encourage all the scientists to pick up all the tips we've given you over the last two days, because each community has its own direction as far as what they see as important to them."

George Angohiatok, Ekaluktutiak Hunters and Trappers Association



This workshop represents an important first step towards co-developing the knowledge sharing forum. POLAR will continue to engage with other Indigenous groups and governance bodies across Canada's Arctic and Northern regions, as well as with other territorial, provincial, federal government departments and academia to incorporate broader perspectives. Findings from these future engagement efforts will be communicated back to POLAR's Indigenous partners from the Regional Planning and Knowledge Sharing Workshop as forum themes and format are further refined.

POLAR is inspired by the success of this workshop and is grateful to the Indigenous partners and other participants who came together to share their ideas, unique voices and experiences. POLAR looks forward to building on this foundation and applying the knowledge sharing best practices in meetings to come.

"I'd like to thank Polar Knowledge Canada staff for inviting us over and hearing our concerns. ... I'm sure other people in the North will be invited to the forum and I look forward to more of this type of get-together so we can enhance our knowledge and prepare for the future of wildlife management."

Ema Qaqqutaq, Kitikmeot Regional Wildlife Board



“Thanks very much for inviting me to be a part of this. It was great hearing all the views from everybody else. It brought me to realize that the things I do every day at work [might] seem normal, but presenting it up here blows it up.”

Stephanie Taptuna, Nunavut Impact Review Board

References

Orman, L. Balasubramaniam, A.M., McLennan, D. S. In press. A Pan-Northern Approach to Identifying Regional Priority Needs for New Knowledge. Polar Knowledge: Aqhaliat 2020, Polar Knowledge Canada.

Polar Knowledge Canada. 2020. [2020-2025 Science and Technology Framework](#). Polar Knowledge Canada. pp 13.

Polar Knowledge Canada. In prep. Regional Planning and Knowledge Sharing Workshop, March 10-11, 2020, Canadian High Arctic Research Station, Cambridge Bay, Nunavut. Polar Knowledge Canada Technical Report.





Figure 1: Regional Planning and Knowledge Sharing Workshop group picture, CHARS, March 11, 2020.

Front row [left to right] Matilde Tomaselli* (POLAR), Jennifer Sokol* (POLAR), Jennifer Fresque-Baxter, Government of Northwest Territories, Environment and Natural Resources, Ellie Adjun (POLAR), Kate Broadley (Fuse Consulting), Janine Angohiatok (Youth Representative, Cambridge Bay).

Middle row [left to right] Bobby Anavilok (Vice-Chair, Kugluktuk Angonaitit Association), Joseph Haluksit (Chair, Olokhaktomiut Hunters and Trappers Committee), George Angohiatok (Vice-Chair, Ekaluktutiak HTO), Willie Aglukkaq (Representative, Gjoa Haven HTO), Joe Ashevak (Chair, Spence Bay HTO), Canute Krejunark (Representative, Kugaaruk HTO), Ema Qaqqutaq (Kitikmeot Regional Wildlife Board), Nick Amautinuvar (Interpreter).

Back row [left to right] Jason Etuangat (Youth Representative, Pangnirtung), François Carrier (POLAR), Rafal Stolarz* (POLAR), Kevin Methuen (Government of Nunavut, Department of Environment), Elisabeth Jansen-Hadlari (Facilitator, Hadlari Consulting), Brent Else (University of Calgary), Stephanie Taptuna (Nunavut Impact Review Board), Lynda Orman* (POLAR), Ann Balasubramaniam* (POLAR).

Missing, or absent due to weather: Pamela Hakongak Gross (Mayor, Cambridge Bay), Malik Awan (Government of Nunavut, Department of Environment), Bert Dean (Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated), Donald McLennan (POLAR).

* POLAR's workshop working group

Annex A. Emerging Regional Research and Monitoring Priorities 2018-2019¹

(Orman et al. 2020 in press).

- Caribou population abundance and migration^{1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12}
- Whale population, abundance, migration, animal health, areas of importance to whales, predator killer whales, and food security^{2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 12, †}
- Shipping (large and small vessels) and its effect on marine ecosystems^{1, 2, 3, 4, 6}
- Bear abundance, distribution and management issues³ (Grizzly^{3, 4} bears (Western Kitikmeot), Polar bears (Eastern Arctic), Black bears (Nunatsiavut))^{1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, †}
- Caribou for future generations – conservation and protection of lands including sea-ice crossings for Dolphin and Union Caribou^{2, 4}; and of Boothia Peninsula^{6, †}
- Marine ecosystem biodiversity, conservation and protected areas^{2, 5, 6, 8} – Immappivut (Our Oceans) Marine Protected Areas^{11, 12, †}
- Emergency response equipment, training (oil spills, community search-rescue team)^{1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8}
- Hydrological change in rivers and lakes (lakes drying up; very low water on some fish spawning streams, inhibiting spawning migration (Arctic Char))^{1, 3, 5, †}
- Arctic char and other fish population dynamics and health^{1, 3, 4, 5, †}
- Changing ice conditions on ocean, lakes (later freeze up, earlier break-up)^{1, 3, 4, †}
- Freshwater quality and drinking water^{1, 2, 3, 4, 5}; contaminants monitoring and clean-up^{4, 5, †}
- Snow quality – different types of snow, or lack thereof^{1, 3, 6}(snow quality affected by too much wind blowing snow away/ lack of snow last few years)^{3, 5, 6, †}
- Predator-prey dynamics of caribou (wolf, Grizzly bear, wolverine; higher insect density)^{2, 3, 4, 8, †}
- Invasive species (plants, new insects, killer whales)^{2, 3, 4, 12, †}
- Changes in forest fire cycle and intensity (climate change)^{1, 7, 11, †}
- Energy sustainability, price, community autonomy^{1, 7, †}
- Northern Infrastructure innovation, development and sustainability^{1, 7, †}
- Changes in precipitation^{1, 7, 8, †}
- Polynya Biodiversity, Environmental Research and Monitoring in the face of Climate Change^{1, 9, †}
- Climate Change Research and Monitoring^{1, 8, 9, 11, †}
- Permafrost research, monitoring, adaptation and mitigation^{1, 13, †}

Notes

† Kitikmeot Regional Priorities¹ that were expanded upon based on follow-up engagement.

1. Compiling Best Practices for Community-Based Monitoring Workshop, Cambridge Bay, NU, March 2018
2. Ekaluktutiak Hunters and Trappers Association meeting, April 4, 2019
3. Gjoa Haven Hunters and Trappers Organization meeting, April 16, 2019
4. Kugluktuk Hunters and Trappers Organization meeting, April 3, 2019
5. Kugaaruk Hunters and Trappers Organization meeting, April 11, 2019
6. Taloyoak Hunters and Trappers Organization meeting. April 17, 2019
7. North Slave Metis Alliance, Yellowknife, June 7, 2019
8. Inuvialuit Game Council, Sachs Harbour, July 13, 2019
9. Nunatsiavut Government, Department of Environment, Nain, October 18, 2019
10. Torngat Wildlife and Plants Co-Management Board, Nain, Nunatsiavut, October 17, 2019
11. Government of the Northwest Territories, Yellowknife, June 7, 2019
12. Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami's Inuit Qaujisarvingat National Committee, CHARS Cambridge Bay, May 1, 2019
13. AngajukKak (Mayor), Nain Inuit Community Government, Nunatsiavut, October 18, 2019

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