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DARING TO PROTEST:
YOUNG RUSSIAN
CLIMATE ACTIVISTS
PERSEVERE

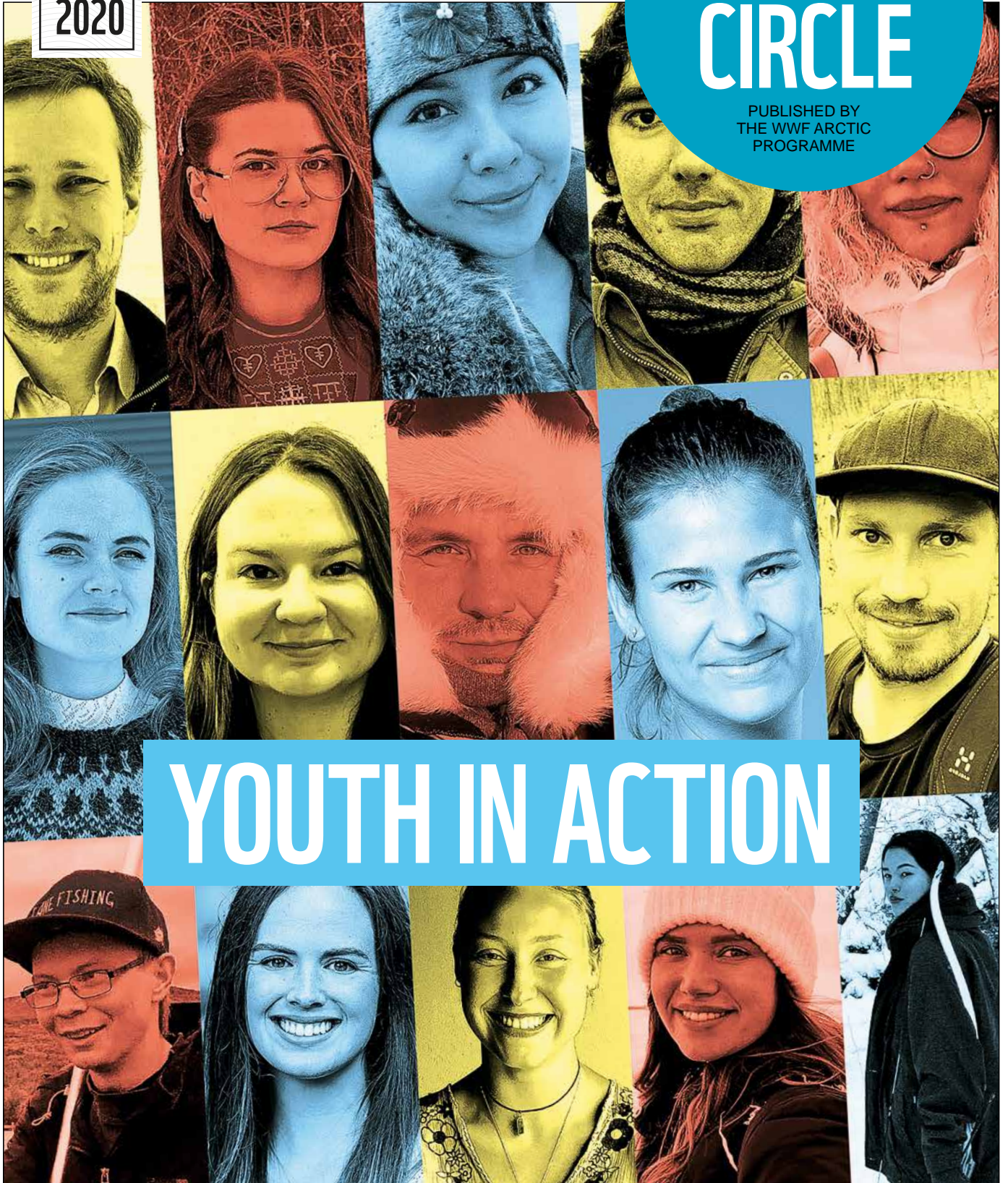
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FRUSTRATED BY
CHRONIC INACTION:
CANADIAN YOUTH
SPEAK UP

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THE CIRCLE

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THE WWF ARCTIC
PROGRAMME



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COVER: *Faces of change: the writers who wrote or contributed to the articles in this issue of The Circle.*

ABOVE: *A group of young Russians take part in Fridays for Future in downtown Moscow.*

Photo: Arshak Makichyan

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Guest
youth editor,
Iceland

The voices of emerging leaders in the Arctic

TODAY'S YOUNG PEOPLE will be disproportionately affected by what we do to our planet. But what issues matter most to youth in the Arctic, and how can we move forward together?

In 2017 at the Arctic Circle Assembly in Reykjavík, Iceland, two groups of young people met by chance: the Icelandic Youth Environmentalist Association and the Alaska-based Arctic Youth Ambassadors. Hearing stories from other regions of the Arctic was immensely informative for both groups, but it eventually led to a stark realization: we didn't really know anything about the most pressing issues in each other's homes, let alone those facing youth in other parts of the Arctic. We quickly recognized this missing information as a significant challenge to our ability to cooperate, and finding a solution became essential.

This was the beginning of the Arctic Youth Network (AYN), or the "Super Mega Plan" as it was initially called. Two years later, AYN is now a global network of youth working together to make changes in the Arctic through international cooperation and capacity building. Young people finally have a plat-

Guest editor **PÉTUR HALLDÓRSSON**, from Reykjavík, Iceland, works with the Icelandic Youth Environmentalist Association, the WWF Arctic Programme and the Arctic Youth Network. He is passionate about youth-led environmental advocacy and has a special interest in how climate change, conservation and cultural equality are interconnected.

Young people are less bound by special interests versus older generations, so they can be critical players in creating transparent and inclusive cooperation across borders and cultures.

form to join forces across the entire Arctic and take meaningful and coordinated action toward a better future.

That brings us to the stories in this edition of *The Circle*, which provides a number of enlightening insights into some of the key issues facing the Arctic. I and two other youth editors (Jukipa Kotierk and Martina Fjällberg, whose editorials follow this one) chose the topics to cover in this issue, and every article is an inspiring example of how youth voices should be central to local and global issues. Young people are less bound by special interests versus older generations, so they can be critical players in creating transparent and inclusive cooperation across borders and cultures. Their stories are the beginning of a much broader and deeper discussion that we must continue. It is my sincere belief that these youth and their stories will bring us closer to a shared vision for the Arctic.

I encourage you to approach the articles in this issue as a single Arctic-wide story depicting common themes in diverse circumstances. When you look at the articles collectively, you will start to see the similarities among challenges across the Arctic—and in fact, across the world. This broader vision can provide us with a better understanding of the global diversity of perspectives and challenges, and can make us much more capable of addressing global topics such as climate change, conservation and cultural equality. Without such an approach, we will never be able to solve societies' problems, because everything young people experience transfers into how society is governed, both currently and in the future. Like many, I have seen and experienced such consequences, and feel a strong moral obligation to do what I can to improve the situation.

I hope you'll benefit from reading these stories, and I look forward to seeing young people cooperate with decision makers and become a meaningful part of the decision-making process. ○



Guest
youth editor,
Sweden

I should not have to feel guilty about getting a degree

I AM MAKING the difficult decision to go to school instead of helping my reindeer-herding family.

Our winters are disappearing. Our snow is melting and turning the ground to hard, thick ice. The reindeers cannot find food under that ice, and more of them are getting sick. I know what I see: this is the result of climate change. However, this knowledge isn't taken seriously because I do not have an academic degree.

The Sámi people have depths of knowledge about nature that goes generations back. We have always lived at one with nature, and know its limitations. We feel it when nature is hurting, because when that happens, so are we. This is not an opinion, yet people treat it like one.

Multiple times when I have spoken to people about how we are being affected by climate change, they have responded with questions like: "But do you have any research to back that up?"

No matter what we—the reindeer-herding youth—say, governments and companies continue to treat us like we do

Guest editor **MARTINA FJÄLLBERG** is a young Sámi reindeer herder from northern Sweden who is passionate about combatting climate change and fighting for her culture. She is a board member of Sáminuorra, a Sámi youth organisation.



I feel like I am being torn apart between two different worlds. Sámi knowledge should be valued. I should not feel like I have to choose between helping my family now, or going to school so I can help our future.

not know what we are talking about. The only people who are respected in this system are scientists and researchers, because they have a piece of paper that I do not. Most of them have probably never seen a reindeer before, yet they are considered more credible than me.

Because of these people and this system, I have decided to pursue an education in environmental science. I want my knowledge and experience to be taken seriously. I want to do this to fight for our future.

But at the same time, I feel guilty when I think about moving away to go to school. I think about how there is so much to do here and how my family needs my help. Right now, I am the one in our family who makes the decisions during our fall and winter gatherings, and I do not want to put that responsibility on my baby sister. I want to be there if my cousin needs my help during the hard winter months, when we are outside almost every day. Climate change is making those days even harder.

I feel like I am being torn apart between two different worlds. Sámi knowledge should be valued. I should not feel like I have to choose between helping my family now, or going to school so I can help our future.

My family supports me and my decision. They think I should go to school. And that is positive, because I do not think I would be able to do it without their support. But shouldn't we have a system that is adapted to and supports reindeer-herding youth who want an education—especially since we need education in order to be taken seriously? ○

Climate action is not whole without climate justice

WHAT IMAGE comes to mind when you think of climate action in Canada? Maybe it's leading change, emphasizing inclusivity and being ethical. But when it comes to the Indigenous Peoples who have called the land now commonly known as Canada home for millennia, this is far from the truth.

There is a false narrative circulating that Indigenous young people are radical protestors and an inconvenience. When a foreign body such as the colonial Canadian government invades lands that Indigenous Peoples have thrived on for centuries and violently imposes a governance system and way of being that is disconnected from the land, do we as Indigenous People start to mobilize by taking a proactive and protective role as stewards of the land and water?

Yes, so this narrative needs to change. It needs to present Indigenous Peoples as they are: as protectors, mobilized peacekeepers and stewards of the living environment. There is no escaping this role for us when our cultures and livelihoods are so intrinsically tied to the natural environment, especially at this point in history when the global community is facing a climate crisis.

Guest editor **JUKIPA KOTIERK**, from Inuit Nunangat in Canada, works for the Nunavut Department of Health as a territorial wellness program specialist. She is doing her part to hold herself and others accountable for climate action that includes the social and political complexities that inform the climate crisis.



If your environmentalism does not include the complexities of anti-oppressive, anti-racist and anti-colonial rhetoric, then it is not environmentalism.

A large portion of the land now commonly referred to as Canada is unceded Indigenous territory. This essentially means that no treaties (agreements between Indigenous nations and Canada) exist surrounding the use of the traditional lands and resources that Indigenous People have called home for millennia. Ninety-five percent of what is now referred to as British Columbia is unceded territory. This land is not only unceded, but culturally and ecologically sensitive. Wet'suwet'en frontline land defenders (Indigenous Peoples in what is now known as British Columbia) are being forced to protect their land and water from invasions by Canada.

"Consulted" but having not consented, the Wet'suwet'en suggested alternate routes for the federally supported Coastal GasLink Pipeline Project that is invading their territory. Regardless, the Canadian government persisted with its plans to the point where the country's national police service (the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, or RCMP) forcibly removed land defenders—men, women and youth—from their unceded land to "uphold a provincial court order." This was a direct violation of human rights that are ostensibly protected by the Canadian constitution and the United Nations—and it was done with a media exclusion zone set up to prevent coverage.

If your environmentalism does not include the complexities that have just been laid out—including, but not limited to, anti-oppressive, anti-racist and anti-colonial rhetoric—then it is not environmentalism. Considering the complex connections between society, politics and the climate crisis is part of being an environmentalist. Social issues are environmental issues. Climate action is not whole without climate justice.

Fortunately, once we know better, there is room to *do* better. Look for ways to volunteer your time to participate in land defender actions. Educate others and raise donations for those at the frontlines. Call your government officials to bring attention to injustices. Act in solidarity with the Indigenous Peoples who are protecting the environment that all of us, as global citizens, benefit from. ○

Gjoa Haven's first harvest of lettuce was distributed to community elders.



Photo: Tom Henneffer

ARCTIC FOOD SUPPLY

Growing fresh produce in Nunavut—all year round

IN NUNAVUT, Canada's northernmost territory—where little plant life thrives, even in the summer months—a ground-breaking greenhouse project is growing fresh produce.

Lettuce, microgreens and cherry tomatoes are all being cultivated in “grow pods” made from two shipping containers powered by a row of solar panels and two wind turbines.

Known as Naurvik, which means “the growing place” in Inuinnaqtun, the pods have already produced their first harvest. So far, food grown in the greenhouses has been given to elders in the community of Gjoa Haven, a hamlet of about 1,000 people. But the non-profit behind the initiative, the **Arctic Research Foundation**, hopes to increase the amount of food grown by adding more pods. Community elders also hope to expand the variety of what is grown by including some of the area's native berries and flowers.

As in many Arctic communities, food scarcity and affordability are critical issues in Nunavut. Groceries can cost 10 times the national average while the unemployment rate is the highest in the country.

EDUCATION

UK students lobby for compulsory climate change education

THE UNITED NATIONS Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) wants to make climate change education a bigger part of the international response to the climate crisis. The organization believes young people need to become “climate literate.”

Several countries have already risen to the challenge: Italy has made climate change

education mandatory, and New Zealand introduced the topic into its curricula this year. Now a youth-led UK network called **Teach the Future** is taking it a step further, demanding a new law that would force all of the country's schools to teach climate issues.

The group drafted a bill called the *English Climate Emergency Education Act* demanding, among other

things, a national Youth Climate Endowment Fund, a government-commissioned review of how the English education system is preparing students for the climate emergency and ecological crisis, and a policy forcing all new and existing state-funded educational buildings to be net zero starting in 2020 and 2030, respectively.

Teach the Future has educa-

tion experts around the world on its side. The UN Institute for Training and Research agrees schools must do a better job of teaching climate issues, including by integrating the issues into other subjects. Climate education experts have also said there is a need to empower students to take action on climate change in order to channel their climate anxiety.

POLAR RESEARCH

COVID-19 shuts down Arctic research

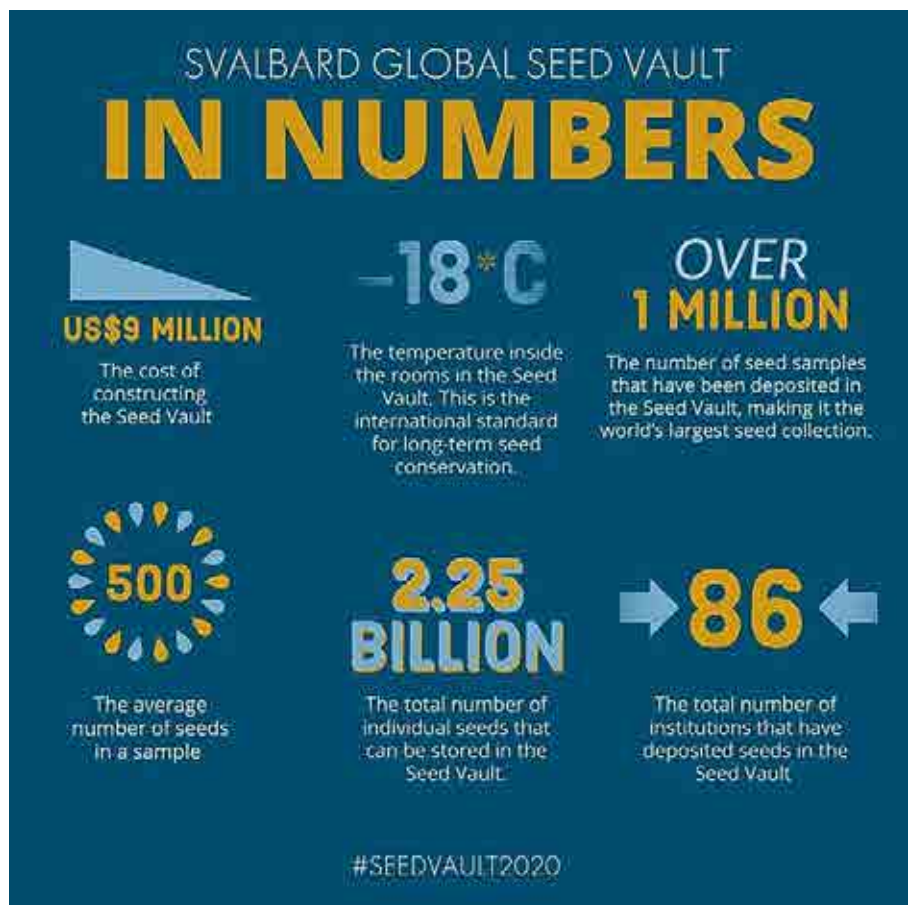
COVID-19 is making its way across the globe—and bringing Arctic research to a halt. In March, several research expeditions or projects were cancelled or curtailed in efforts to prevent the virus from getting a foothold in vulnerable and isolated communities.

Russia's planned Barneo ice camp in the high Arctic has been cancelled. Svalbard, Norway was the jumping-off point for logistical flights, but Norway closed its borders in March and Svalbard removed all non-residents to avoid introducing the virus to the archipelago.

The \$150 million Multidisciplinary drifting Observatory for the Study of Arctic Climate (MOSAIC)—the largest Arctic research project ever undertaken—has also been disrupted. A series of research flights set to take off from Svalbard, Norway in March and April have been cancelled, making it a challenge for supplies or researchers to reach the ship, which was floating in sea ice 156 kilometres from the North Pole in early March.

Students on Ice (SOI), a Canadian leader in experiential education through expeditions to the polar regions, had planned to celebrate its 20-year anniversary with a special expedition to Nunavut in July. But the Canadian government has banned all cruise travel in the Arctic for the 2020 season.

And in Alaska, COVID-19 precautions are posing challenges for University of Alaska Fairbanks scientists. Field work has been curbed and the conference, the Arctic Observing Summit, has been moved online.



NORWAY

Arctic seed vault reaches one million samples

THE SVAlBARD Global Seed Vault—often called the “doomsday vault”—has surpassed one million seed varieties. The vault is carved into solid rock on the island of Spitsbergen in the Arctic archipelago of Svalbard, halfway between Norway and the North Pole. It is the world's largest back-up seed collection.

The vault was built in 2008 to store and preserve seeds for rice, wheat and other food staples. In February, it received 60,000 new seed varieties from gene banks in India, Mali, Peru and the Cherokee Nation in the

United States—the largest deposit since the vault's opening in 2008. This latest deposit means the vault now contains more than one million different kinds of seeds, representing almost every nation.

While humans around the world once cultivated some 7,000 different plants, today we get almost two thirds of our calories from the same three crops: maize, wheat and rice. If climate change caused these harvests to fail, the global food supply would be vulnerable.



Arshak Makichyan



Silenced by laws, bonded by cause

Russian climate activists find strength in numbers

ARSHAK MAKICHYAN, 25, and ASYA FOMINA, 16, are Russian climate activists from Moscow and the northern city of Arkhangelsk, respectively. Operating under a regime where unapproved protests by more than one person are illegal—as are protests of any kind by youth under 18—isn't easy. But they are powered by the strength of their convictions and the bonds they have formed. In their own words, they told *The Circle* what being a climate activist is like in Russia—and what motivates them to persist in a place where dissent is routinely silenced and activists have faced prison terms.



БОЛЬШЕ НЕТ ЛЕСОВ СИБИРИ АМАЗОНИИ
 БОЛЬШЕ НЕТ ЛЕДНИКОВ в ГРЕНЛАНДИИ
 В РОССИИ ЕЩЕ ГОДНО РАЗЛИВАЕТСЯ 30 МИЛЛИОНОВ БАРЕЛЕЙ НЕФТИ!
 РАДИ ЧЕГО?

Asya Fomina

I'm going to continue my strikes because I believe activism works everywhere, even in Russia. It's about survival and our future.

ARSHAK MAKICHYAN

WE WANT TO TELL YOU about climate strikes in our country. Why are two young activists from completely different regions writing an article together? Because the climate crisis unites us. Only together can we find solutions to this global emergency.

ARSHAK MAKICHYAN

For most of my life—until last year—I had always hoped to leave Moscow and move to a nicer place, a warmer place. Now I spend a lot of time on the streets of my city because I'm striking. In fact, I have been striking every Friday for more than a year. I've changed a lot: I'm not afraid of winter anymore. And I'm going to continue my strikes because I believe activism works everywhere, even in Russia. It's about survival and our future.

My coldest strike to date has been in Arkhangelsk, a city in northern Russia where the government was planning to build a huge dump for garbage from

Moscow. I went there to attend workshops about climate debates, and spent the 47th week of my climate protests in -24 C° temperatures. People in Arkhangelsk had started a local protest about the dump, but it soon became the biggest environmental protest in Russia. When I was there, we couldn't organize a mass protest because we didn't have authorisation from the government, so we set up a queue and took turns doing solo protests.

That is where I met Asya Fomina.

I found the people in Arkhangelsk

friendly and the northern scenery beautiful, but Asya told me that the snow hides a lot of dirt, and that the spring melt would uncover a lot of garbage and abandoned houses.

But seasonal snow is not the only thing that is melting. Scientists tell us that permafrost across the North is thawing due to rising temperatures, releasing huge amounts of greenhouse gases. I live in the richest city in Russia and it's our responsibility to do something to stop this. It's our garbage, our emissions and our problem.

■ The garbage conflict in north-eastern Russia—where local residents and their supporters protested the government's plans to build a landfill that would receive 500,000 tons of unsorted waste from Moscow over a period of 20 years—sparked some of the largest social protests in Russia since the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Shies, the southern part of Arkhangelsk that was the chosen site for the dump, has since become a gathering place for environmentalists and activists from across the country.



"Chocolate" takes part in a Fridays for Future protest in March 2020 with his owner and other young Russian activists.

Photo: Arshak Makichyan

I don't know everything about myself yet. My life has changed a lot since I became an activist, and it's still changing. But what I know for sure is that I have a lot of like-minded friends, and together we can make a difference.

ASYA FOMINA

I've admired nature all my life. I don't understand why people are destroying our planet.

I've seen a lot of illegal deforestation in Russia, and I believe we must intervene and stop it somehow. That's why I started participating in a Russian environmental movement known as "42" (a reference to the Russian constitution's section 42, which covers violations of environmental legislation). After I became involved, I realized there were many like-minded people in the movement. I found out that I was not the only one worried about climate change.

Today, activism is my life. Social, climate, environmental, political—it's all connected. I've decided to leave a prestigious school and study at home so I can spend more time fighting for change. I've sacrificed my school and my friendships with classmates, among other things, but I don't regret it. I know that activism unites the most wonderful and free people.

The climate crisis is a pressing issue for the Arkhangelsk region, where I live. Yes, there is the garbage issue—but that's just one problem. As a northern

city, we are also on the front lines of the climate crisis. Arkhangelsk is on the coast of the White Sea, where many small villages are now coping with flooding. Our town suffers every summer from strong winds and storms. Animals are losing their habitats and being forced to migrate.

Yet people still don't care about climate change.

So many people have said to me, "It's not important. Why do you talk about it all the time? People can't influence that much." But I don't believe that we have no influence.

I can't strike every Friday, like Arshak or other climate activists, because I'm only 16, so it's illegal. In Russia, we have strange regulations about protests. So I'm taking another approach: I organize lectures and talk to people about the climate crisis. Still, sometimes I take the risk and engage in a solo strike. Because as young people, it's about our future. I can't just stand by and watch nature be destroyed.

What's great is that I'm not alone. I've discovered that activism brings people together. We realize the only way to solve the climate crisis is by uniting—not only behind the science, but behind the friendship. Because when it comes to the global climate, there are no cities or countries. It is a borderless crisis. It is the biggest crisis the world has ever faced. ○

I've discovered that activism brings people together. We realize the only way to solve the climate crisis is by uniting—not only behind the science, but behind the friendship.

ASYA FOMINA



*Drynjandi
Waterfall,
Iceland*

An aerial photograph of a river winding through a rugged, volcanic landscape in Iceland. The terrain is dark and rocky, with patches of low-lying vegetation. The river is a vibrant blue, contrasting sharply with the dark surroundings. The river flows from the upper left towards the lower right, with several small waterfalls and rapids visible. The overall scene is one of a wild, natural environment.

Excluded from decision-making In Iceland, young environmentalists' pleas are falling on deaf ears

Controversial plans to build the Hvalárvirkjun power plant in Iceland's West Fjords—a large peninsula in the country's remote northwest—have alarmed youth activists. The plans involve damming three different rivers near the municipality of Árneshreppur to produce 55 megawatts of power. ÞORGERÐUR MARÍA ÞORBJARNARDÓTTIR is worried the project will destroy unique wilderness areas irreversibly. She objects to her generation having no say in the matter while the municipality's population of 43 (and others who stand to profit) make all the decisions.

► **ICELAND IS OFTEN** portrayed as a green-energy paradise where all electricity comes from renewable sources. What is less known is that the electricity is produced largely by hydropower plants that submerge vast wilderness areas, destroying them for future generations—or that 77 per cent of the electricity produced goes to heavy industry.

In Icelandic law, there is a Master Plan for Nature Protection and Energy Utilization. Developed after years of debate, this plan aims to reconcile the competing interests of nature conservation and energy utilisation by assessing whether power plant proposals should be refused, put on hold, or go ahead. Those slated to go ahead must still undergo environmental impact assessments. A company seeking to build a plant must arrange the assessments and pitch the project to the local municipal government. At that point, members of the public can submit comments and the municipality is required to answer them. Nevertheless, the municipality alone makes the final decision.

ÞORGERÐUR MARÍA ÞORBJARNARDÓTTIR is a geologist who has been volunteering with Iceland's Young Environmentalist Association for the past year. Her goal is to protect Iceland's unique wilderness so future generations can enjoy its biological and geological diversity.



Even though my generation will be affected the most if this project goes ahead, it has been a struggle to have our voices heard at all.

This dynamic can fuel confrontations between those whose main interest is keeping rural populations steady and those who favour protecting the environment. I know this from my own experience. I am from Fljótsdalshérað in the east of Iceland, where the country's largest power plant (Kárahnúkavirkjun) was built in 2009. The dam swiftly split the community into two groups: jobs versus the environment, humans versus nature.

Needless to say, it is never quite as simple as that. It is possible to care about employment and safety in rural communities while also wanting to protect wilderness areas.

Many small towns in Iceland struggle to keep people from moving to Reykjavík—and while power plants do not generally provide many jobs once they are up and running, their construction can bring much-needed funding into municipalities. Towns that permit construction stand to gain financially.

As a young person who has seen 925 square kilometres of local wilderness traded for 690 megawatts, I don't want history to repeat itself by damaging 226 more square kilometres for another 55 megawatts. The area under threat is home to glacial and freshwater rivers, rocky terrain, and lakes and ponds that are unique in Iceland, not to mention one of Iceland's highest waterfalls. Even though my generation will be affected the most if this project goes ahead, it has been a struggle to have our voices heard at all.

In the case of Hvalárvirkjun, assessments still need to be done before

construction can begin. But since the area is remote and difficult to access, the contractor, VesturVerk (owned by power company HS Orka), has already begun building roads so heavy machinery can reach the reservoir sites. This is supposedly being done in the name of research. However, to minimize environmental impact, it is possible to move research equipment on snow during winter for use in the summer, or to fly it there by helicopter. So it seems obvious that the roads are the start of construction. In response, several environmental groups have filed a lawsuit.

Numerous reports have advised against building this power plant, including one from the International Union for Conservation of Nature. The Icelandic Institute of Natural History has proposed that a 1,435 square kilometre area be protected, including all the land at stake. Considering this criticism, who is really in charge of the decision? Follow the money: Jarðvarmi slhf, a company owned by 14 Icelandic pension funds, has a 50 per cent stake in HS Orka; the other half is owned by Magma Energy Sweden A.B., in turn owned by London-based Ancala Partners.

The exclusion of youth from this decision is extremely discouraging. The Young Environmentalist Association in Iceland has submitted numerous comments and questions, but its members are powerless to make a real impact.

The power project endangers irreplaceable natural resources in Iceland, including precious rivers and lakes. It will be a shame if they become nothing but a memory. ○



In the Sámi language, a suohpan is a lasso—the gentle weapon of choice used to catch reindeer. Combined with “terror” to make “suohpanterror,” it suggests nonviolent resistance.

Provoked into activism

Kicking up an Indigenous storm one pop culture reference at a time

When democratic means of achieving Indigenous rights prove futile time and again, what can be done? One group, tired of dealing with a seemingly rigged system, has turned to witty works of art and poignant pop culture references to unleash their Indigenous ire. As [LYDIA TAYLERSON](#) and [ASLAK PALTTO](#) write, Suohpanterror is gaining international recognition as an emerging Sámi voice that is challenging the world’s conventional views of the Sámi.

THE LAND OF a thousand lakes, a pillar of gender equality, and consistently mentioned as a top contender in World Happiness Reports, Finland is often regarded as a haven of serene land-

scapes and social justice—and for the most part, it lives up to those expectations. However, just beneath the surface of Finland’s shiny exterior lurks a jagged splinter in the form of suppressed

Indigenous rights and very real fears of a disappearing way of life.

Finland is home to Europe’s only recognized Indigenous People, the Sámi, who traditionally live in the northern- ➤

► most region of Lapland. Their territories extend across neighbouring borders into Sweden, Norway and a sliver of western Russia.

Time-honoured Sámi trades revolve around fishing, handicrafts and reindeer husbandry, and the traditional knowledge and language entwined in such skills remain integral to the Sámi way of life. But in Finland, these livelihoods are under constant threat because the Sámi lack the rights to secure their own future in their homeland, Sápmi.

While the Finnish government has made strides to support Indigenous People—from constitutionally recognizing their status in 1995, when the Sámi parliament was established, to granting them the right to develop their language, culture and livelihoods—a chequered colonial past and modern unwillingness to ratify International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention 169 has hindered the march of progress and left many Sámi frustrated. ILO 169 would grant the Sámi people the rights to their land, giving them considerable powers in matters that affect their future.

In 2015, Finland's Supreme Administrative Court added 93 individuals to the Sámi electoral roll despite the objections of the Sámi Parliament. In 2017, the government restricted Sámi traditional fishing in the Teno river in Sápmi. Both

of these decisions whipped up a furore, and in 2019 they were deemed violations of Sámi Indigenous rights. There is also frustration all around Sápmi in response to land-related injustices, such as the clearcutting of forests, construction of wind parks and intrusive exploration activities related to mining.

Because of shortfalls like these—where the Finnish state has behaved more like an enemy than an ally—Sámi activists have been forced to explore alternative approaches to bringing about change. Suohpanterror, an anonymous art collective brandishing aggressive artistic activism and unafraid to call out the top dogs, is one of these approaches.

Suohpanterror, created in 2012, is an anonymous artist group known for sharing provocative poster art online. Based out of Finland, it is considered a transformative phenomenon within Sámi cultural life. The “artist” group creates art that

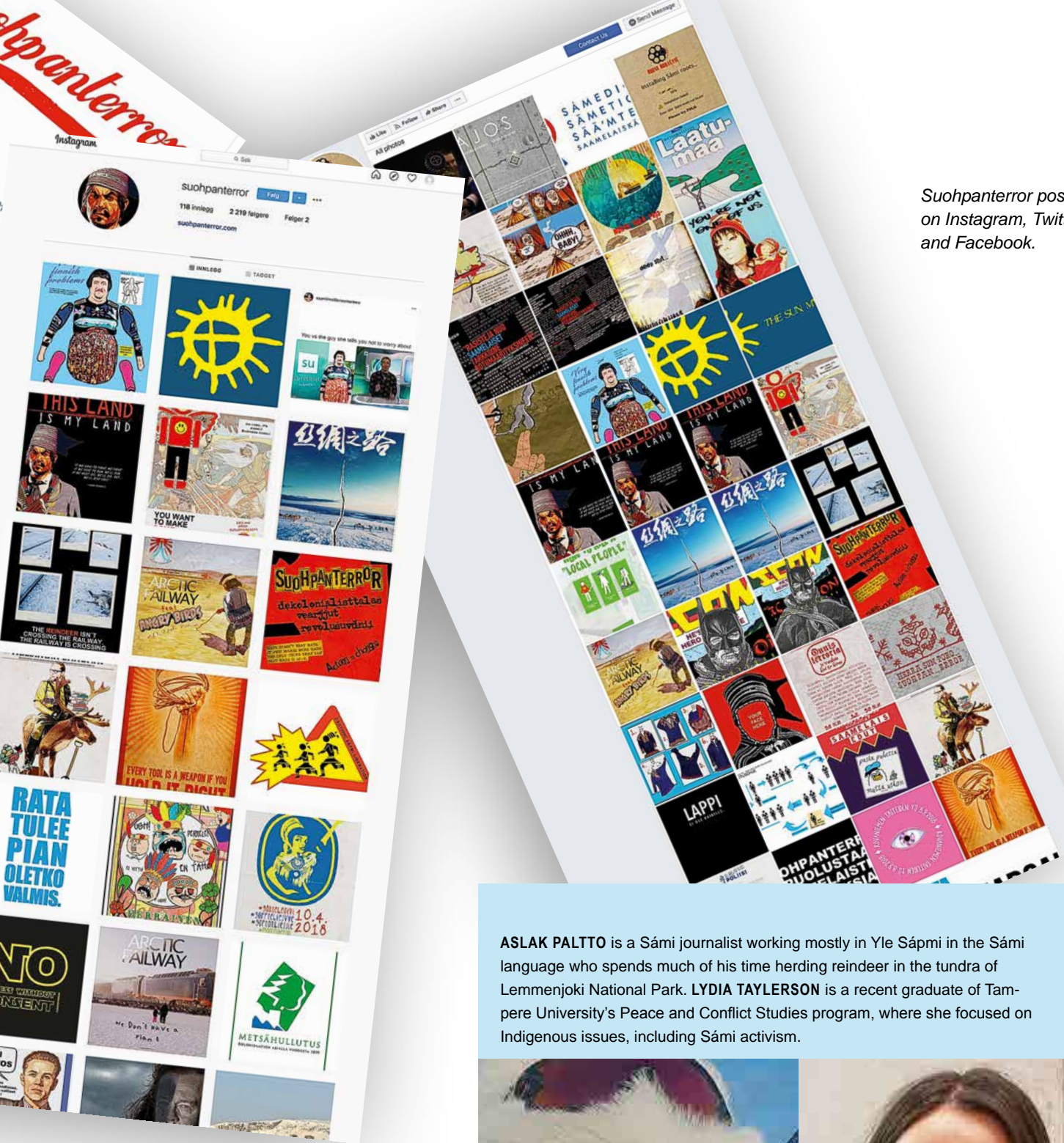
questions society's commercial lifestyles and economic structures. Suohpanterror came into existence at a time when Sámi politics seemed to be running into dead ends and the state media lacked the freedom, power or willingness to turn a spotlight on controversial issues.

You may find the work of Suohpanterror in solo, street or group exhibitions in Sápmi, Nordic countries and elsewhere in Europe, or **online**.

A form of nonviolent resistance, Suohpanterror is like a channel that expresses the feelings of Sámi people. It expresses thoughts and ideas that the



Sámi activists have been forced to explore alternative approaches to bringing about change. Suohpanterror, an anonymous art collective brandishing aggressive artistic activism and unafraid to call out the top dogs, is one of these approaches.



Suohpanterror posts on Instagram, Twitter and Facebook.

Sámi are afraid to say out aloud. When you see a post from Suohpanterror, you can be sure there is real news to read and a deeper meaning beneath the surface. ○

ASLAK PALTTO is a Sámi journalist working mostly in Yle Sápmi in the Sámi language who spends much of his time herding reindeer in the tundra of Lemmenjoki National Park. LYDIA TAYLERSON is a recent graduate of Tampere University's Peace and Conflict Studies program, where she focused on Indigenous issues, including Sámi activism.



Houses in Selawik are threatened by riverbank erosion.



Outraged by government inaction
“Bye, you poor Eskimos,
you’re our last worry!”

Many people in Alaska’s Native Village of Selawik feel abandoned by the federal and state governments in their struggles with climate change. [TUVA NERRAL VOLDEN](#) is a young academic who went into that community to document their stories about—and thoughts on the reasons for—government neglect.



Many of the people I met shared a nearly fatalistic view of the likelihood that government would provide support and felt they had limited influence in the matter.

THE NATIVE VILLAGE of Selawik in rural northwest Alaska is home to about 850 primarily Indigenous People. In 2009, the United States Army Corps of Engineers identified the village as one of 26 Priority Action Communities in the state due to significant amounts of riverbank erosion. Ten years later, when I first visited Selawik in 2019, most of the people I met were clear that the climate crisis is affecting their lives. Altered animal migration patterns are making subsistence hunting more difficult, while erosion and permafrost thaw threaten public infrastructure and private homes.

During my stay, I met a family whose

house was no longer level because of erosion. They told me that this had made its structure more fragile, so when an earthquake struck in November 2018, the house collapsed. The earthquake and its effects in Anchorage, the state capital, received major media coverage, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) encouraged all affected citizens to contact the agency for assistance. But during my visit in April 2019, this family had yet to hear anything back from FEMA about their application for assistance. Nor had they received help from any other federal or state agency. They had moved back into their damaged house, where they were coping with electrical, water and sewer issues.

This is just one example of the lack of US government attention to and assistance with the impacts of climate change in Selawik. As further evidence, other villagers I spoke with told me that Selawik's status as a Priority Action Community has not increased the government support received. In fact, many were unaware that their community had even been granted this dubious status.

In general, accounts of government neglect in the face of climate change were plentiful during my stay in Selawik.

"I think they're just kind of like, 'Oh, you're on your own,'" is how one woman described the government mentality. Another told me she thinks the government is too disconnected from rural

Alaskan realities: "The bureaucrats are not here," she said. "We're almost kind of isolated in trying to deal with a lot of these changes."

Many of the people I met shared a nearly fatalistic view of the likelihood that government would provide support and felt they had limited influence in the matter. As one resident put it: "If they wanna help, then they're gonna help, and if they don't wanna help, they're not gonna help."



An earthquake shook this Selawik house off its foundation after years of erosion made it unstable.

TUVA NERAAL VOLDEN is a recent graduate of the University of Copenhagen and currently lives in Norway. She holds a B.Sc. in anthropology and an M.Sc. in global development. She based this article on field research conducted for her graduate thesis in 2019.



► In terms of the reasons behind this sense of abandonment, many of the people with whom I spoke drew links between climate change assistance and politics. One man described how the needs of Selawik and other Arctic towns like it are assigned low political priority: “[Government climate change assistance] depends on the federal dollars and it depends on the global economy. If there’s war, then boom, the federal dollars go. ‘Bye, you poor Eskimos, you’re our last worry.’”

Another said the lack of assistance is symptomatic of the US government’s limited commitment to climate change action more broadly.

“Climate control, [the government has] been talking about it for 30 plus years and nothing’s been going on. (...) That’s all they’re doing, just talking, nothing’s ever happening. And that’s where people get it wrong. ‘Oh, they’re talking about it, they’re talking about it.’ But every year, they just talk about it and nothing’s happening.”

The Arctic is now in many ways the face of the climate crisis. The government support received in Selawik—and, most likely, in other communities facing similar challenges—falls far short of the significance of the consequences. Many of the villagers I spoke to believe this is because efforts to fight the climate crisis and help affected communities respond to it depend on the priorities of those in power. While many of the current responses to climate change may seem apolitical—such as working on technological innovations to store carbon dioxide or building seawalls to prevent flooding—the decisions about what measures to prioritize and for whom remain intrinsically political.

For people in Selawik, the climate crisis doesn’t only pose challenges to their everyday lives. It is also a manifestation of their low value in the eyes of power holders. As for the rest of us, we can also benefit from viewing climate change through the lenses of politics and justice. ○



Insisting on respect

A fine balance: Applying Indigenous traditional knowledge without appropriating it

The carriers of the knowledge should remain the holders of it.



The Sámi people have preserved and developed irreplaceable knowledge and experience of the balance between man and nature for generations through traditional practices and cultural expressions. This knowledge, often referred to as traditional knowledge, is fundamental to Indigenous culture, and incorporates important understandings of the relationship between the natural environment and human impacts. As **ADRIAN FORSGREEN and **NILS ÁNDÁ BAER** explain, applying this knowledge will play a vital role in our efforts to adapt to climate change—but we must do so respectfully. ➤**

► **TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE** is knowledge that has been passed down through generations. For Indigenous Sámi people, it encompasses language as well as knowledge of the surrounding nature and, of course, of reindeer. Traditional knowledge is not just “facts,” but a holistic understanding of how nature works. The Sámi begin acquiring traditional knowledge at a very young age. They understand intuitively why it has survived for centuries and is still needed.

The Sámi value traditional knowledge of the land and nature because it is part of their everyday lives, and without it, there would simply be no Indigenous culture. For example, today’s reindeer herding is based on traditional knowledge about the best locations for reindeer to graze in different seasons and how to herd them. Sámi handicrafts and art (duodji) also rely on traditional knowledge. If this knowledge disappeared, so would entire Indigenous societies.

Fortunately, traditional knowledge is becoming more widespread today—and easier to acquire. Thanks to the Internet, traditional languages and handicrafts such as duodji can be taught across great distances. Several high schools and universities have launched programmes that focus on teaching



Photo: Adrian Forsgren

Based in Sweden, **ADRIAN FORSGREN** works as a legal adviser on Indigenous rights. He is a board member of Arctic Youth Sweden, a regional chapter of the global Arctic Youth Network. **NILS ÁNDÁ BAER** is a reindeer herder and student of history at Umeå University and a member of the Arctic Youth Network. He is focused on making Arctic Indigenous cultures more commonly understood.

both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students many traditional aspects of Sámi culture.

International law also recognizes that Indigenous Peoples’ traditional knowledge is important for environmental

protection and stewardship and may provide one of the most effective means of achieving a sustainable future and lifestyle. However, the Convention on Biological Diversity stresses the need for “free prior and informed consent” regarding the use of Indigenous and local knowledge. Essentially, this means the carriers of the knowledge should remain the holders of it. Indigenous knowledge should be handled and applied in keeping with the views and position of the group at hand.

Traditional knowledge provides insights into Indigenous Peoples’ cultures and intimate connections with nature and is inseparable from traditional land use. As we struggle to find ways to deal with the effects of climate change, we need to tap into this knowledge by ensuring effective, equal participation of Indigenous groups and states in environmental decision-making processes. It is also essential to integrate traditional knowledge with science-based research in environmental decision-making and global efforts to adapt to climate change.

Reflecting on Indigenous lifestyles and cosmologies can guide us toward sustainable life choices that can be shared by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples in the Arctic. ○

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Inspired by science

Arctic-focused youth find inspiration at the UK Polar Network

The UK Polar Network is an organisation that aims to inspire young people to think about the polar regions in new ways. **CHLOE SCOTT** writes about its ARCTIS and Polar Scientist Visit programmes—two examples of how it creates opportunities to inspire and support interested youth.

THERE IS NO QUESTION that education is critical if we are to respond adequately to the challenges facing the Arctic today. Education holds the key to helping young people understand and address the impact of climate change. Although the UK is not an Arctic state, it has a role to play in raising awareness about Arctic issues. The UK Polar Network (UKPN) is helping to make this happen by bringing together volunteers from a myriad of backgrounds to advocate for better awareness, education and social responsibility in relation to Arctic issues.

Established in April 2007 as part of the 2007–2009 International Polar Year, the UKPN is the UK branch of the Association of Early Career Scientists

■ Want to learn more about the polar regions and UK Polar Network's work? Check out the digital **Edinburgh Science Festival**, #EdSciFest. Throughout the month of April, it will offer online entertainment, articles and downloadable resources that shine a spotlight on the threats, challenges and opportunities that face planet Earth—and the science behind them. As a supporter of #EdSciFest, the UKPN will be contributing videos and some of its favourite resources.

(APECS). Members come from a broad range of scientific, humanities and social science backgrounds, and include aspiring undergraduate, masters and doctoral students, post-doctoral researchers and recent faculty appointees. Part of the UKPN's core mission is to provide education and outreach on polar issues to young people and the general public.

A significant UKPN initiative is the Polar Scientist Visit programme, which has polar researchers share their work with students in schools across the UK.

"For many of these students, it is their first time hearing about where a career in science may take them," says Kate Stockings, a programme head. "Their image of science is that of a school science laboratory—a highly structured environment that can feel a world away from the stories of life on research boats and polar trips."

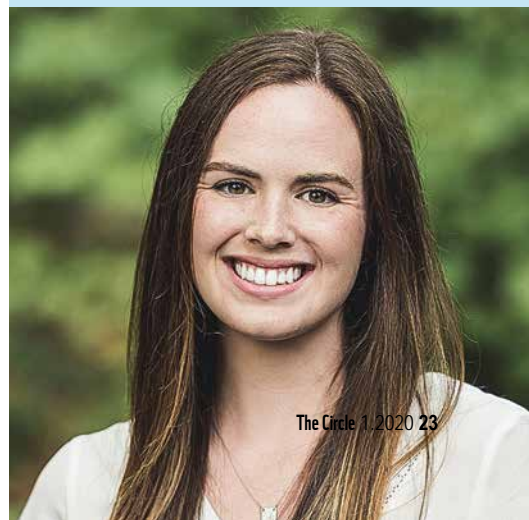
Stockings and the UKPN members who participate in the Polar Scientist School Visit programme are motivated by the prospect of inspiring future generations of scientists. One day, some of these future polar researchers may even join fellow young scientists engaged in Arctic Interdisciplinary Studies, or ARCTIS. An interdisciplinary field course in the Russian Arctic jointly organized by APECS Russia and the UKPN, ARCTIS supports collaboration between early career scientists specializing in the Arc-

tic natural and social studies. It provides an interactive platform where they can share ideas, exchange knowledge and gain new skills and experiences.

UKPN events coordinator Chloe Nunn recognizes both the professional and personal value of the organisation's outreach work.

"Working in the field of education and outreach is a unique opportunity for me to view my research from a new perspective," she says. "Questions from children and adults alike have made me consider more carefully where my work is positioned and the impact it has in interdisciplinary science fields." ○


CHLOE SCOTT is a Canadian youth who is currently volunteering with the UK Polar Network in London. She is passionate about conducting research that will influence public policy and generate positive social change.



Disillusioned, but determined

The importance of dialogue in the Arctic: Observations from a trip to Unalaska

The island of Unalaska is a part of the Aleutian island chain, located between Russia and Alaska where the Bering Sea and the North Pacific Ocean meet. In 2019, Finnish environmental activists [NIINA JYRÄNEN](#) and [ANNA-KATRI KULMALA](#) visited the island to learn about its environmental issues.



A key lesson we took from this trip was that whether you live in Unalaska or Finland, the same environmental problems are present, and only by cooperating can we tackle them.

Bald eagles are everywhere in Unalaska. This one sits on discarded fishing nets (or ghost nets) that cause damage to the ocean and marine life.



WE WERE ON OUR WAY to the complete unknown and could almost smell the ocean mist as the plane's tires hit the ground. We had heard that Unalaska is heaven for birdwatchers and a marine biodiversity hotspot. We were beyond excited to explore it.

We were sent to Unalaska by the Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF) working group and the United States embassy in Finland to live with the local Qawalangin tribe for two weeks. The idea was to share and learn about environmental problems and solutions in countries and societies far from our own.

But as we spent time in Unalaska, we noticed that things were different from what we had expected. While still breathtakingly beautiful and unique, it wasn't as untouched as it had first appeared. For example, we saw and heard about unfortunate alterations

Arctic Utopias Film Project: Bringing Arctic biodiversity loss to the forefront

■ Arctic Utopias is a co-creation documentary project that is connecting Arctic countries and people living in the region. Each country produces an episode about the environmental and societal changes facing its regions and how locals are experiencing them. The aim of the project is to increase dialogue across borders and generations. Arctic Utopias is made possible through the support of WWF–Finland and the US embassy in Finland.

Psst! Arctic Utopias is looking for contributors, stories and support. If you have a story that needs to be heard, email info@arcticuto-pias.com.

caused by climate change, such as erosion and diminishing ecosystems.

The longer we stayed and the more we observed and listened, the more we realized how similar Unalaska's envi-

NIINA JYRÄNEN is an environmental politics student at the University of Tampere, Finland, and a youth team leader at WWF–Finland who works for a sustainable future where people and nature live in balance with each other.

ANNA-KATRI KULMALA is a biomaterials entrepreneur, Arctic Youth Network member and journalism student at Tampere University. She is committed to exploring humans' relationship with nature and promoting a non-consumeristic lifestyle. Both women are also the founders and coordinators of the Arctic Utopias Film Project.

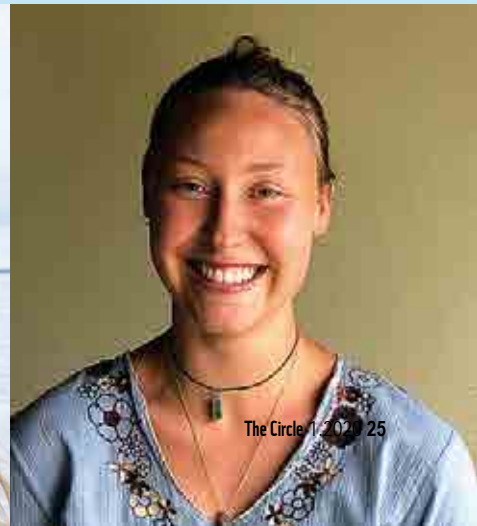


Photo: Niina Jyränen

► Environmental problems are to Finland's: polluted waters, warmer winters with less snow, extreme weather events. This "biodiversity hotspot" is struggling with overfishing, which is threatening the abundance of fish that is the basis for the island's economy and development.

Another thing we noticed is that the people and their everyday lives are surprisingly similar to ours. We shared many desires and concerns with the locals in Unalaska. For example, a reliable Internet connection is something most people want, just like in Finland. We also realized that the pollock we buy in Finland comes from the other side of the world: from Unalaska. We thought we were going to a really distant place, but we soon realized it was actually very near to us in certain ways. Everything is interlinked.

Having the chance to travel to Unalaska and share our thoughts with the locals was an honour and a privilege—and it showed us the importance of dialogue across not only the circumpolar world, but the entire globe. Ultimately, a key lesson we took from this trip was that whether you live in Unalaska or Finland, the same environmental problems are present, and only by cooperating can we tackle them.

Local dialogue between people representing different interests and global dialogue between different nationalities are both important. We can't face environmental problems alone, because they affect all of us.

Despite speaking different languages and having other cultural differences, we are all living under the same sky and walking on the same ground. We all share this planet and we must work together to ensure its diversity and protect life in all its forms. ○

Motivated by crises

We need to stop putting off difficult decisions

Canadian climate activist EMMA LIM details the frustration youth feel in the face of constant delays on climate crisis action by the world's decision makers.

Last year's climate protests attracted millions of people across the globe. The scientific consensus is clear: one quarter of the world's population is facing a water crisis, one in every eight animals face extinction, and the economic impacts will be dire.

With every passing day, environmental concerns approach a fever pitch. We don't hear about global warming anymore. Instead, it's climate catastrophe, ecological breakdown, climate crisis, mass extinction.

Despite all this, last year's United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP 25) was a failure. Negotiations lasted two extra days, making it the longest in the conference's history—yet key decisions about the global carbon market and emissions were shelved, put off to COP 26.

But we are rapidly running out of time to act. While those who run the world sit on their hands, young people in Canada and around the world keenly feel the consequences of inaction.

KOLBI BERNHARDT

For example, Kolbi Bernhardt is from Tuktoyaktuk, a Canadian Arctic community encircled by ocean. In 2017, a highway was built from Tuktoyaktuk to Inuvik—the largest city in that part of the territory—and the remote community became accessible by land for the first time. Tuktoyaktuk is now the northernmost location you can drive to in Canada, and it is beautiful. The ocean is full of Arctic ice tinted an other-worldly blue. The sunrises are pale pink and vibrant orange.

But as the icebergs melt, the ocean rises, and Tuktoyaktuk is being lost to the sea. Erosion threatens its existence.

Nearby islands shrink with every passing year. Homes near the shoreline have had to be moved.

Traditional ways of life

While those who run the world sit on their hands, young people in Canada and around the world keenly feel the consequences of inaction.



Kolbi Bernhardt

are disappearing along with the ice. Food is expensive to import, and people in communities like Tuktoyaktuk rely on the land to survive. But climate change is disrupting the weather patterns that animals have followed for millennia. The sea ice is becoming treacherous, melting earlier in the year and freezing later.

Pushing back key decisions on climate change is easy for world leaders, but a year might be too long for Tuktoyaktuk.

JULIA SAMPSON

For Julia Sampson, who has been organizing climate strikes in the eastern Canadian city of Halifax, a year of waiting means another year of school strikes for climate action. Organizing and participating in strikes takes hours away from her friends, family, homework, extracurriculars and free time. Although some school boards have been supportive, Julia's has not. She has faced disciplinary action for her weekly protests.

But Julia feels like she has no choice. Although Halifax has not been as hard-hit as some northern communities, the effects of the climate crisis are nonetheless making themselves felt. In 2019, Hurricane Dorian left 400,000 people without electricity as it smashed through Canada's maritime region. People in Halifax were lucky compared with residents of the Bahamas, where Dorian destroyed entire islands, caused US\$3.4 billion in damages and killed at least 70.

Like most young climate activists, Julia is prepared to keep striking until she sees action, even if it means protest-

ing for the foreseeable future. She is hoping for academic scholarships to offset the cost of university, and knows



Julia Sampson

her sustained protests will affect her grades—but she isn't backing down.

KYRA GILBERT

Kyra Gilbert is a Mi'kmaq activist in Nova Scotia, Canada whose community is battling Alton Gas, an energy company that wants to store natural gas underground in the province. To create the underground caverns, the company wants to flush out salt deposits and dump the resulting brine into the Shubenacadie River. The salt concentration will be too high to sustain life. Indigenous groups are fighting to protect not only the water itself, but the fish their community relies on.

Kyra faced personal attacks and death threats last year after a video of her at a protest went viral, and her mother was arrested for protesting the Alton Gas project. But she remains undeterred. For Indigenous People, protesting is not a choice. It is often the only option left to communities who are not consulted properly, and whose rights are seen as secondary to corporate demands.

A year of inaction will mean homes lost to the sea. It will mean glaciers that melt and never reform. For youth, it will mean climate grief: sleepless nights and anxiety, crying when you read the climate science, and living with a constant boiling rage inside of you. For some of those youth, it will mean not being able to go to university.

The year of postponed decisions is another year where lives are at stake, where land is taken from guardians, where corporations can pollute with impunity.

A year is just a year for the world's decision makers, but for people like us, a year is too long to wait. ○



Kyra Gilbert

Contributor **EMMA LIM** is a first-year biomedical sciences student at McGill University in Montreal, Canada. An activist since a very young age, she is now part of Climate Strike Canada (Fridays for Future Canada).



Protesting inaction



In September 2019, youth from more than 150 countries—including students from Nunavut Arctic College in Canada's North—took part in the Global Climate Strike, a youth-led movement demanding action against climate change.



Why we are here

To stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.

www.panda.org/arctic