



# Shared Voices



In the north  
For the North  
By the North



UNIVERSITY OF THE ARCTIC | NEWSLETTER

SPECIAL EDITION UARCTIC 5 YEARS  
JUNE 2006





# Happy Birthday UArctic!

## UArctic Celebrates its Fifth Anniversary Next Month

On June 12, 2001 the University of the Arctic (UArctic) officially came into being.

About 200 people gathered together in Rovaniemi Finland on that day to celebrate the launch of the “university without walls”. The milestone marked four years of hard work and dedication to make UArctic come into existence. The new Chair of the Council of UArctic, Sally Webber, spoke to the crowd about the long dream of creating a circumpolar university. With the final words of her speech, she changed this dream into a reality, officially.

“Therefore, with this dream at its heart, I now declare the University of the Arctic open!” she said.

This year, UArctic is reaching another milestone. UArctic’s turns five years old this year, and once again UArctic is preparing to celebrate all of its accomplishments. The anniversary will be celebrated at the Council of UArctic meeting in Bodø Norway on June 13.

“In five short years we have grown from an academic cooperation to an educational community,” says Webber, who recently stepped down as Chair of the Council of UArctic. “Our students now circle the North, and we have begun to create a new generation of leaders for this great global region.”



### Lots of Growth in Little Time

Since the 2001 launch, UArctic has grown substantially. The organization now has 90 members from across the Circumpolar North, with 15 more likely to be accepted in the Bodo meeting, along with 13 programs. In addition to the International Secretariat established in Rovaniemi, Finland already during the development phase, UArctic now has nine other offices. UArctic’s two flagship programs, the Circumpolar Studies (BCS) Program and the north2north student mobility program, have had large student involvement since their inception. BCS has received so far 1300 student registrations since 2001, while north2north has sent 236 students on exchanges across the Circumpolar North since 2002.

The Chair of UArctic’s Board of Governors, Oran Young, says this growth is evidence of UArctic’s success as an organization. “Institution building is a slow process. But just five years after its inception, the University of the Arctic has entered a period of sustained growth,” says Young.

### Many Accomplishments to Celebrate in 2006

Along with its five year anniversary, UArctic will also have several other milestones this year. UArctic is launching its newly redesigned website to go hand in hand with the launch of a new online course catalogue next month. Both of these projects serve also UArctic’s newest program called GoNorth, which allows students from non-UArctic member institutions to live and learn in the North. This program, along with the catalogue, show the continuing strength of the organization, says UArctic’s Director.

“We are proud of what we have accomplished in five short years,” says UArctic Director Lars Kullerud. “This year has been UArctic’s strongest to date, and we are confident that we will continue to grow and build on our successes so far.”

The idea of UArctic originated in 1997 when concept for an ‘arctic university’ was pitched to the Senior Arctic Officials of the Arctic Council. The idea was supported by the circumpolar academic community at large, the Arctic governments, as well as the Arctic indigenous peoples’ organizations, and resulted in the Ministers of the Arctic Council approving the idea of a University of the Arctic in Iqaluit, Canada, in 1998.

According to several leaders in the Circumpolar North, UArctic’s creation has helped to fill a need in the region.

“Providing high quality education to northern peoples is vitally important in order to equip our youth and adults with the knowledge necessary to compete in this complex world,” says Mary Simon, Canada’s former ambassador of circumpolar affairs, and a member of UArctic’s Board of Governors. “UArctic is one important tool for creating a strong, sustainable circumpolar region.”



First Council of UArctic at 2001 Launch in Rovaniemi Finland

# UArctic's Five Year History

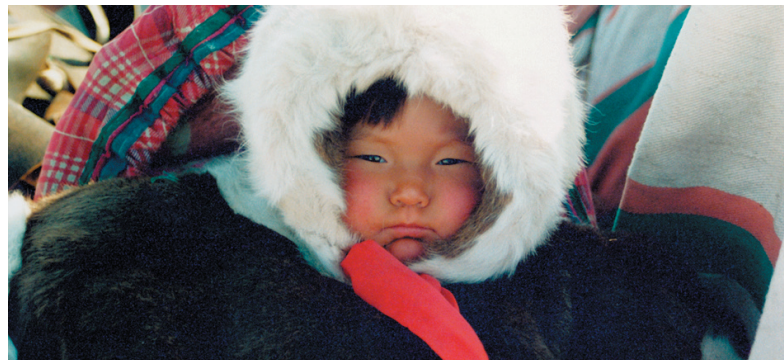
On June 12, 2001, the University of the Arctic officially came into being. At a Launch event in Rovaniemi, Finland, 200 hundred people gathered to celebrate the realization of four years of determination and perseverance since the proposal was made to the Senior Arctic Officials concerning an 'arctic university.'

In those four years the foundations were laid for the 'University of the Arctic' as it quickly became known in the Circumpolar World. A joint document entitled 'Shared Voices and the University of the Arctic – Views of Indigenous Peoples,' was published by the Inuit Circumpolar Conference, RAIPON and the Sámi Council, voicing their enthusiasm for the project.

With Shared Voices has since become UArctic's motto embodying the principles of interdisciplinarity, circumpolarity and diversity; bringing together indigenous and non-indigenous peoples and knowledge to create an empowered and sustainable North.

## Growing up...

UArctic has accomplished much since its inception in 2001. The organization has 103 members currently encompassing every region of the Circumpolar North. Thirteen programs are administered by UArctic members; including student exchange, undergraduate education and development, several networks, and education research and outreach. In addition to the International Secretariat established in Rovaniemi, Finland already during the development phase, UArctic now has nine other offices. UArctic's two flagship programs, the Circumpolar Studies (BCS) Program and the north2north student mobility program have had large student involvement since their inception. BCS has received so far 1300 student registrations since 2001, while



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## Developments in 2006...

In addition to the five year anniversary celebration, UArctic will also have several other milestones this year. UArctic is launching its newly redesigned website to go hand in hand with the inception of a new online course catalogue. Both of these projects also serve UArctic's newest program, GoNorth, which allows students from non-UArctic member institutions to live and learn in the North. The Thematic Networks is also growing with several new networks, with the Global Change Thematic Network at the forefront of development.

UArctic has accomplished much to date in creating an empowered and sustainable North. Throughout all its programs, the network seeks to instill principles of sustainability, interdisciplinarity, circumpolarity and diversity. With membership consistently growing and the development of new programs UArctic is making a meaningful and lasting contribution to the circumpolar world.

## UArctic's Website Gets Makeover

The University of the Arctic's (UArctic) website will show off its new look this month.

In time for UArctic's fifth anniversary, the website, which can be found at <http://www.uarctic.org>, has been redesigned along with the organization's overall graphic look. The move is to help usher UArctic into the next stage of its existence, says UArctic Director of Administration Outi Snellman.

"UArctic has accomplished a lot in its short five years," says Snellman. "We felt it was time to change our graphic look to match where UArctic is now."

The website redesign also coincides with the launch of the UArctic online course catalogue this month



UNIVERSITY OF THE ARCTIC

which can be accessed all over the world via the web at <http://studies.uarctic.org>. The site will also help with the start of UArctic's latest program GoNorth. The GoNorth! Program makes studies on northern issues accessible to students who are not at UArctic member institutions.

UArctic's website gets 5,600 hits per day and 52,000 hits per week.



# Council of UArctic's First Chair Proud of Five Year Milestone

The first Chair of the Council of the University of the Arctic (UArctic) is looking back at UArctic's accomplishments with pride and joy.

Asgeir Brekke had always had an interest in the cooperation between different higher education institutions in the North. So, when he was approached by the University of Tromsø in 1997 to get involved with a new organization called the University of the Arctic, it was a natural response for him to say "yes".

"I have had a long career in the North," says Brekke, who is a professor at the University of Tromsø.

Brekke's involvement led him to become the interim chair for the Council of UArctic from 1998-2001. As chair, his main job was to arrange the meetings, and also to lead them in an orderly fashion. He says UArctic did face some challenges in the early years, especially in getting funding from all the circumpolar countries involved, especially Canada and Norway. However, when UArctic officially launched in 2001, he knew that it would help to alleviate some of the funding problems.

"I was kind of relieved that the organization was in good shape and that they would hire a full-time director," he says.

According to Brekke, an important aim during UArctic's early years was to get Russia involved. Therefore, he says, Russia could benefit from being involved with UArctic. He

also says the increased involvement of Russian institutions since UArctic's launch goes to prove UArctic's success.

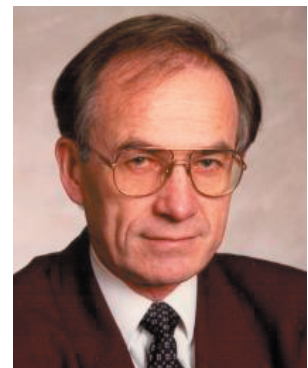
"If it's improved a lot, it's a good assessment for UArctic and I'm happy about that," he says.

Brekke strongly believes that UArctic has an important role in the Circumpolar North to help indigenous young peoples to get access to post secondary education. He also says that he believes that UArctic will continue to be strong in another five years.

"UArctic has created more interest in circumpolar countries, so it will expand UArctic," he says.

Brekke left UArctic to pursue other projects in 2001. However, he says his experience with UArctic was positive and has continued to follow the organization and its accomplishments a little bit. He also had many warm memories.

"What I remember best and with some joy was all the trips UArctic offered in the arctic areas, and being able to meet people in those areas and visiting the small colleges there," he says.



UArctic's First Council Chair Asgeir Brekke





# Council of UArctic's Vice Chair Has Many Warm Memories of UArctic

Claudia Fedorova first heard about the idea of the University of the Arctic (UArctic) over a decade ago.

During that time, Fedorova, head of Sakha State University's (Yakutsk Russia) International Programs Department, met a young Canadian student who was doing working on his master's degree at the university.

"The young man spoke broken Russian, but very soon no one could tell him from the rest of the Russians," says Fedorova. "He looked Russian with a broad smile and honest blue eyes and a central Russian accent."

The student's master's degree focussed on political and social issues of the North and indigenous peoples. Needless to say, Fedorova didn't know at the time that her and this student would have a partnership in the future. The student was Greg Poelzer, UArctic's current Dean of Undergraduate Studies.

After Poelzer's time in Russia, he returned to Canada and earned his PhD. It was one of his students which told Fedorova, who is the vice-chair of the Council of UArctic, about the idea to create a partnership among universities in the Circumpolar North. She says after hearing about the idea, Sakha State University sent a delegation to the Circumpolar Universities Association conference in Aberdeen Scotland in 1997.

"There had never been a question about why we should get involved," says Fedorova. "Enormous territories, long distances, and endless dark winters have taught us Northerners to appreciate partnership because alone no one can survive in the North."

Fedorova says she has many fond memories of UArctic over the years. One of them was during the first Council of UArctic meeting at the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC) in Prince George, Canada. She says the meeting began a UArctic tradition of international sandwich nights.

"The university campus was far away from the city and the shopping centre," she says. "So, when we felt hungry we had to interrupt the discussions to pack ourselves into



Claudia Fedorova

a taxi and rush to a supermarket to buy some food."

Fedorova attended UArctic's official launch in Rovaniemi Finland on June 12, 2001. She says she remembers a lot about that day including the special blue t-shirts everyone received, and also the people who spoke and attended the event. She says she remembers clearly the reaction of members of the Russian

delegation which included representatives from RAIPON and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

"Their reactions were a mixture of surprise, interest and admiration," she says. "I felt a part of a circumpolar brotherhood sharing the pride and responsibility."

Fedorova says she always had a strong belief in UArctic since its inception. She says she always knew that the organization would have an important role in the North, which is why it has had a lot of success these past five years.

"UArctic is the model of regional cooperation, which fosters the social and economic development of the Arctic," she says.

For Fedorova, an excellent example of this cooperation is UArctic's Circumpolar Studies (BCS) program. The program was created by scientists from Russia, Canada, the USA, Greenland and other arctic countries. Secondly, the students gain the same knowledge regardless where and how they take the courses. She believes the program is one of UArctic's greatest accomplishments.

"I am proud of the circumpolar students and northern academics that put together the BCS program," she says. "I feel a very deep respect towards the organizations that support the activities of UArctic."





# “Warm Friends from Cold Places”

## Recalling the Beginnings of UArctic

*Sally Webber recently stepped down as Chair of the Council of UArctic, after being chair since UArctic's launch in 2001. Webber shares her experience and memories of her time with the University of the Arctic in her own words.*

Twelve years ago, as a “newcomer” northerner and the newly appointed President of Yukon College, I began my love affair with the north. I was tutored in matters northern and circumpolar by the late Aron Senkpiel, Dean of Arts and Science, a thoughtful and ardent exponent of the special requirements of higher education in this region. In one of our earliest conversations he explained to me the importance of the academic cooperation provided by the Circumpolar Universities Association. For a small institution such as ours, it provided rich linkages with scholars from the international northern region, and gave our faculty, and later our students, a window on emerging knowledge endemic and relevant to the north.

My first CUA conference was in Luleå, Sweden, hosted by Luleå University of Technology in 1998. It was an exciting affair for me, and my first experience of Sweden and the living discourse of the circumpolar scholarly community. It was at that conference that I met some of the founding figures of what would eventually become the University of the Arctic. Prominent in my memory are Esko Riepula, Rector of the University of Lapland, Charles Jago, President of the University of Northern British Columbia, Ingegerd Palmer Rector of Luleå University of Technology, and most particularly, Outi Snellman, who headed up the CUA secretariat. The excitement permeating that conference was the concept of a potential circumpolar university, built upon the shared resources of all of us, and endorsed by the newly created Arctic Council in 1997 as a promising undertaking. Their Task Force, under the leadership of Bill Heal presented the idea to the conference. There was a lively buzz about what it could mean, how it might work, and whether it was possible to bring it about. The question for the delegates was whether the CUA would “take on” a feasibility study to assess the merits of the idea, and to formulate some preliminary thoughts based on the feedback received from the circumpolar community. They agreed, and the Arctic Council assigned the task.

The CUA's Feasibility Study Working Group went to work. In Canada, Peter Johnson and I canvassed stakeholders from coast to coast to coast, as our colleagues worked in their nations on similar tasks. The feedback was rich and instructive. We learned of the barriers to higher education experienced in the Canadian north, especially by the First Nations and Inuit communities. We discovered the support





of national associations for the development of a collaborative institution. We found political friends, constructively critical academic administrators, and cautiously hopeful community leaders. The final report was favourable to the creation of the University of the Arctic, and well received by the Arctic Council officials. It also laid out the basic blueprints for this wonderful organization.

The period between 1998 and the launch of UArctic in Rovaniemi in 2001 was an exciting and energy-charged time. A cadre of internationally savvy and wonderfully committed scholars, administrators, governmental representatives, researchers and Indigenous peoples' representatives worked through the challenges of relevant curriculum, the role that information technology could play, framing up a circumpolar mobility program, ensuring inclusive circumpolar representation, engaging diverse organisations and institutions, and deciding where to begin. What sort of governance provisions? How credentialed? What kind of administrative structure would suit? How would it be funded? What programs should be built first? So many questions, so much talent and innovation engaged in the creation!

I remember sitting at a picnic table with Terry Fenge of the ICC and Ande Somby from Sami Studies at the University of Tromsø. It was in Whitehorse on a sunny afternoon in May, 1998. We were discussing how the UArctic could symbolically express its commitment to the full inclusion and participation of indigenous peoples. The motto "Shared Voices" was the outcome of that conversation. Perhaps it was Ande's yoik, or Terry's description of the traditional teaching practices of Inuit people that ensured that UArctic would enshrine the orality of indigenous ways of knowing.

One of the most memorable Council meetings was hosted by Sakha State University, and my wonderful colleague, Claudia Fedorova in June, 2002. As our meeting literally floated down the Lena River past expansive green fields with calmly grazing Siberian horses and, later, towering shoreline rock formations, my mind strayed from the ambitious meeting agenda. I found myself reflecting on the tremendous power of the northern landscape to unify and sustain its peoples, and how it weaves itself into the work of UArctic as a common language and framework for us all. We share a love of place and its natural beauties, mosquitoes and all.



In the past five years UArctic has matured and evolved. The innovations embedded in the original vision have been enacted, refined, and continue to develop. New challenges have been created by a phenomenal growth in member organizations, students, and emerging educational priorities. New solutions are ever forthcoming. Indeed, if there is one thing I have learned as a participant member and Council Chair, it is that there is no challenge so large that a circumpolar gathering can't come up with several workable solutions. This is a part of the culture of UArctic, as is the wonderfully international, intercultural and deeply grounded northern wisdom of its members.

So, I learned to be circumpolar, and it was a profoundly rewarding process. I have placed my experiences of the early years of UArctic next to my heart, where all personally transformational learning is stored. I cherish the memories of spring Council meetings in our arctic communities, bathed in the uniquely lucid sunlight of our northern latitude, fall meetings convened in oddly familiar and darkened landscapes in distant longitudes, and all peopled by "warm friends from cold places" as Aron would say. These "warm friends" are responsible for construction of a distinctively new kind of institution, one that gathers up the richness and diversity of the circumpolar academy and offers it to northern students around the globe.



# One of UArctic's Founders Reflects on Organization's Past and Future

*In 1997, Professor Bill Heal from the University of Durham (Durham UK), was asked by the Senior Arctic Officials (SAO) of the Arctic Council to lead a task force to undertake the initial planning for a circumpolar university. That task force helped bring UArctic into being. 10 years later, Heal is looking back at UArctic's beginnings and accomplishments. His reflections, in his own words, are below:*

How did I get involved with UArctic from UK? As a student in the 1950s I worked at an upland field station where the climate is similar to southern Iceland. In the 1960s, the International Biological Programme (IBP) was established to study 'the biological basis of productivity and human welfare'. Moor House was naturally linked with the Tundra Biome Programme, joining sites in Norway, Sweden, Finland, Russia, Canada and USA. Over the next 10 years we shared technologies, visited others sites, established common methods and compared results. We argued about where does the Arctic and tundra begin and end? What controls plant and animal productivity, carbon balance and, to a limited extent, how do these influence human welfare. These were exciting times for young ecologists. The exercise highlighted the values of shared experience, integration of information, co-operation across national boundaries, and the surprising principle of  $2+2=5!$

In the 1990s I retired from research and management and returned to Arctic research - with encouragement from an Alaskan that I first met and argued with during IBP! A series of European Union contracts enabled me to meet current researchers and review data from Arctic ecosystems on climate change impacts. This led to the establishment of a network of sites over the North Atlantic region, including Russia. Now joining with North America to establish a circum-Arctic network. The core of these initiatives was the IBP sites from the 1970s. Revisiting these sites now provides long-term data to test predictions of climate change impacts and monitor future responses. Once again,  $2+2=5!$

Through my Arctic connections, I was invited to represent UK in meetings of CAFF and AMAP and, as an 'Observer', I did not have the inhibitions of 'representing' national interests and policies. At an AMAP meeting in Holland in early 1997 I was talking, over a beer, with a Swedish colleague, Lars Eric Liljellund. As I remember it, we discussed the difficulty of establishing long-term continuity of environmental interests around the Arctic. What was needed was something that could combine the limited national resources but was not limited by national policies and attitudes. I commented that 'What we need is a University of the Arctic!'. We briefly discussed the option of combining northern Colleges and Universities. Together, they could provide various facilities and expertise which could be experienced by students (and staff) moving between countries. This would enhance understanding of the emerging dynamics of international affairs as well as the common human and environmental conditions.

Lars Eric then said, 'Wait, we must discuss this with David Stone'. David was a Canadian Senior Arctic Official (SAO), striving to generate initiatives to focus the newly

established Arctic Council, Chaired by Canada. David's reaction was swift. Give me a brief proposal for the next SAO meeting. The 3 pages that I drafted were submitted by Canada and Sweden to the SAO meeting in Kautokeino, Norway in March 1997. Encouraged by the SAOs, Canada and Finland agreed to support a small international Task Force which I Chaired. The initiative, backed by the University of Lapland and the Circumpolar Universities Association, was based in Rovaniemi, with Outi Snellman as a key driver. The Development Plan 'Turning Concept into Reality' was accepted by the SAOs in October 1997 and followed by the Feasibility Study.

In those early days, the responses from the Arctic nations and individual Colleges and Universities was a mixture of caution and enthusiasm. For me, two successful examples, already in place, were particularly stimulating, illustrating key concepts envisaged in UArctic. First, University Courses on Svalbard (UNIS) provides an impressive international science facility in Longyearbyen. UNIS brings students and staff together, from different countries and backgrounds, to gain experience in the High Arctic environment using modern technologies (Asgeir Brekke, 1998). Thus UNIS provides a unique facility, available to the wider Arctic community - 'a shared facility'. Second, the PhD networks in social science brings together small groups of students in a different location for two weeks each year. Coming from different countries and backgrounds they have differing views on the chosen local problems. The PhD networks incorporate the principle of 'mobility and shared experience' which 'create the roots for a life-time international network' (Rasmus Ole Rasmussen & Gerard Duhaime, 1998).

Remarkably, UArctic was formally launched in 2001 in Rovaniemi, only 4 years after conception. Now after 5 years it offers the Bachelor of Circumpolar Studies with courses delivered around the Arctic. For me, a key feature envisaged early in planning is firmly in place - mobility of students and staff to experience the diversity of the Arctic, often with common conditions but different solutions. Success is demonstrated by the involvement of more than 1000 students and 100 institutions. This network, rightly, is 'In the North, For the North and By the North' - but one key feature probably still needs to be strengthened, that is



Bill Heal



# ULapland Rector Sees Importance of UArctic



ULapland Rector Esko Riepula

“The University of the Arctic is truly a university without walls, an institution true to the special spirit that unites the peoples and places of the Circumpolar World.”

The Rector of the University of Lapland, Esko Riepula, said those words during the University of the Arctic’s (UArctic) launch in 2001 in Rovaniemi, Finland. For Riepula,

the launch had a special meaning for him for a few reasons. The Rector had been involved with UArctic since he first heard of the idea in 1998. Additionally, UArctic’s International Secretariat had also found a home at ULapland located in Rovaniemi.

“I’m proud to have played a part in this process and hope that you all share this sense of ownership,” he told the crowd during that day, which included several important officials and politicians from across the Circumpolar North. “The University of the Arctic is, as we Northerners like to say, in the North, for the North and by the North.”

Five years after the launch, UArctic’s International Secretariat still has home at ULapland. It also appears it will continue to do so for many years to come. Last April, Finland’s Ministry of Education agreed to give stable funding for the Secretariat until 2009.

“My hope is that UArctic will continue to benefit this organization and the two or three other institutions in the area that are involved,” says Riepula, who recently retired as rector of ULapland.

Along with housing the International Secretariat, ULapland is involved with many UArctic programs including the Circumpolar Studies Program (BCS), the north2north student mobility program, and UArctic’s latest mobility program GoNorth. Riepula says it’s important for academic institutions, such as ULapland, to get involved with organizations such as UArctic.

“Every country, especially northern countries, needs north-south south-north connections,” he says. “It’s very important to have these sorts of networks.”

Riepula first heard of the idea for the UArctic during the Circumpolar Universities Association (CUA) Conference in Luleå Sweden in 1998. At that time, he was the chair of the CUA.

“I remember that was the first start of these activities and they went really rapidly,” he said.

Riepula says that UArctic has accomplished a lot during its short existence, exceeding the expectations he had five years ago. However, he says looking ahead the organization needs to figure out a way to combine the European and American post-secondary systems so students can benefit.

“I hope students have more flexibility to pick up more studies and different universities,” he said.

As for UArctic’s future, Riepula says he believes in the next few years, even more institutions will get involved with UArctic. He also feels the organization will play an important role in find solutions to having courses online.

- the involvement of the indigenous peoples. It was essential for UArctic, first and foremost, to establish its Arctic identity and governance. Now, UArctic is strong enough to invite students from the South to ‘Go North’. UArctic has attracted the smaller northern institutions, giving them, their staff and students, a corporate strength, wider vision and opportunities - ‘Shared Resources’. Importantly, it also gives the North a stronger voice in the corridors of power in the South - ‘Shared Voices’ - further examples of 2+2=5!

UArctic is a rapidly growing child of its time. Globalisation, human development, sustainability and climate change are demanding issues critical to the North. UArctic has a key role to play in analysis, synthesis and communication in the North - and with the South.





# UArctic Board Member Proud of Organization's Accomplishments



One of the University of the Arctic's (UArctic) Board of Governors is celebrating the organization's 5 year anniversary.

"I feel proud of being a small part of it and happy to be part of it," says Rune Rydén.

Rydén has been involved with the UArctic since the first ideas to create a cooperation between circumpolar higher education institutions in the late 1990's. The Scandinavian Seminar Group, which has offices in the US and Sweden, helped play a role in the creation of UArctic which was launched in 2001. Rydén attended the launch on June 12, 2001 in Rovaniemi Finland as a representative of the group. The Swedish native says he remembers the launch as a special day.

"I had some idea that this was a historical moment, and that something new and interesting would come out of it," he says.

According to Rydén, UArctic has a special role in the Circumpolar North. He says the organization can help provide education in subjects specific to the North such as flora, fauna and reindeer herding. He also says the North has a very specific environment from the rest of the world, especially with climate change. For him, UArctic could help showcase this issue. Additionally, the Circumpolar North will have an important economic

role in the future. In order for residents to benefit they need education, and that's where UArctic fits in, says Rydén who is a member of Ofelas (UArctic's Executive Committee and Senior Management Group), Chair



Rune Ryden

of the External Relations Committee, and a member of UArctic's Board of Governors.

"People here know more about the region than people south of here," he says.

Rydén says UArctic has faced some bumps in the road these past five years. He says, UArctic's first year was a time to workout all the kinks. However, during the council meeting in Yakutsk Russia the next year, he noticed that the organization was working more smoothly.

"I think it has been more or less on track since that date," he says.

Rydén says he is pleased that UArctic is helping to create exchanges between northern and southern higher education institutions. He says UArctic's newest program, GoNorth, is a step in the direction. Rydén brought forward the idea to create such a program during previous Council of UArctic meetings.

As for UArctic's future, Rydén believes that UArctic will continue to move on the same positive direction. However, he would like to see UArctic to get more involved in the science community. He also says funding is an issue that needs a permanent solution. He would also like to see more Swedish members in UArctic, but he says a structure problem in the country has prevented more involvement.

"I would like to see a greater involvement on the Swedish side and I'm working hard to do that," says Rydén.

However, regardless of the areas UArctic needs to improve on, Rydén says he has enjoyed being part of the organization for almost a decade. He describes his time with UArctic as a great challenge and experience.

"I have so many positive memories and experiences it's hard to pick one," he says.

He also believes that others involved in UArctic feel the same way.

"I think we have founded a 'family'," he says.



# Introducing UArctic's Online Course Catalogue

## Individuals Can Now Surf the Educational Landscape of the Circumpolar North



The University of the Arctic's (UArctic) online course catalogue will be launched to the public this month, providing a new and innovative academic tool for instructors, researchers and students alike.

The catalogue is the first of its kind for postsecondary education in the Circumpolar North. The purpose of the catalogue is to list courses about the North or relating to northern issues, such as climate change, politics, and the arts at UArctic member institutions. The catalogue also lists courses available with UArctic's student programs. Additionally, it shows courses available on sustainable development, in cooperation with UNEP (United Nations Environment Program) and the UN Decade of Sustainable Development.

The catalogue is also unique because it can be accessed all over the world via the web at <http://studies.uarctic.org>. At this address, students can search for courses on various arctic issues by using key words, or by searching under countries or UArctic member institutions. The search is done by a search engine maintained in cooperation with the "Norway Opening Universities" and will redirect any interested student to online content at the web-pages of institution that offers the course. However, it is required by the institutions that they keep some kind of online course descriptions.

"The UArctic Online Course Catalogue gives students from all over the world improved access to courses in and about the North," says Catalogue Project Committee Chair Eystein Markusson. "It will greatly improve the ability of students to go across borders and latitude to get a northern perspective."

For the first phase, 14 UArctic institutions will have more than 200 courses listed on the catalogue. It is expected that the catalogue will be fully accessible to all UArctic members during 2007.

### Background

The catalogue is a recent initiative of UArctic. In May 2005, the Council of UArctic endorsed the full implementation of a UArctic course catalogue during its meeting in Oulu Finland. With UArctic's continual and steady growth, it was apparent there was a need for a new tool to help potential students find courses in all of UArctic's programs. From this need, the UArctic Online Course Catalogue was born.

Soon after the Council endorsed the implementation of the catalogue last year, a steering committee was formed. The members include: Olav Hesjedal (GoNorth), Amanda Graham (Yukon College/user representative), Audra Krueger (Undergraduate office), Mona Johnson (North2North office), Outi Snellman (International office), and Diana Thompson (Academic office). Eystein Markusson from the UArctic Field School Office was named chair of the committee.

During the fall 2005, the catalogue committee was busy bringing the catalogue into being. Tromsø University (Tromsø, Norway) and the University of Northern British Columbia (Prince George, Canada) were involved with the pilot phase of the project. A marketing strategy was developed, along with a brochure which will be distributed across the Circumpolar North.

The creation of the catalogue coincides with the development of UArctic's newest program GoNorth! The GoNorth! Program makes studies on northern issues accessible to students who are not at UArctic member institutions.

"The UArctic Online Course catalogue has a crucial role in the development of the GoNorth program," says GoNorth program Chair Astrid Revhaug. "It will help UArctic member institutions to market themselves to students in non-circumpolar areas."



# Nunavut and Kautokeino Students Make Special Connection

## UArctic's Verdde Exchange Program is Bringing Together Two Small Colleges in the Circumpolar North

It is a quiet clear evening on April 3 in Kautokeino Norway – a small town of 3,000 people five hours north of the Arctic Circle. In this town, surrounded by mountains and snow, a group of people has gathered at a local restaurant, which looks and feels like a cabin in the woods, for dinner.

At a first glance, it appears like the group is having a family reunion. The atmosphere of the room feels warm and friendly. There is also a sense of excitement. Everyone is smiling, and asking each other about their lives. One person in the crowd says: "It's very good to be here. It's a privilege to be here."

Despite having a lot in common, this group has only met a few hours before. This meeting, in a remote part of Europe, has brought together two groups of indigenous peoples from across the Circumpolar North. In this group are instructors and students from Saami University College in Kautokeino and 6 students and 3 instructors from Nunavut Arctic College in Iqaluit Canada. The Canadian students, most with an Inuit background, are in Norway for the first time to learn about the Saami, an indigenous group in northern Europe, by visiting the local college. The college's mandate is to research and teach about the Saami and their culture in the Saami language. The school also trains Saami teachers and journalists.

The students and teachers are on a 10 day exchange through a University of the Arctic (UArctic) Thematic Networks program called Verdde, which means "a mutual beneficial exchange" in Saami. The program is a student/teacher exchange program, which allows small colleges from across the Circumpolar North the opportunity to visit and learn from each other. The exchanges were made possible with support from UArctic's north2north program.

### **Verdde: A Special Exchange Program**

The Verdde program is different from other exchange programs. One of the reasons is that the colleges involved create strong ties with each other. The exchanges are also with groups of people and are for shorter periods of time, which has several benefits for students, says Saami University College Prorektor Kristine Nystad.

"It's hard to get exchange programs to work because (our) students don't want to go three months alone," says Nystad. "If they go together with a teacher for one month it is doable, especially if they have families and herd reindeer."

Nystad also believes the program has benefits for small colleges across the Circumpolar North, and for programs at Saami University College.

"I think about the teacher training program and that we can strengthen it by having ties to another college with an indigenous training program," she says.

The Verdde program started as a pilot project with Nuna-

vut Arctic College and Saami University College in 2004. In February 2005, two instructors from Nunavut Arctic College visited Saami University College. Later that year in April, three students and three instructors from Saami University College went to Iqaluit to learn about Nunavut Arctic College's teacher education program. The students stayed at the college for one month. Now Saami University College is returning the favour, and students from Nunavut Arctic College are getting the most out of the experience.

"It is not only going to help me as a teacher but as a person," says Rebecca Hainnu, who is studying teacher education at Nunavut Arctic College. "It is going to help me learn the uniqueness of Inuit and to share what I have learned with my students."

### **Sharing Two Unique Cultures**

During the students' stay in Kautokeino, they will visit the Saami parliament, attend a local film festival, and learn local traditions. The students will also give presentations about Inuit history and culture to local schools. Students say they are excited about what they will see and do the next few days.

"I am looking forward to looking around the community, sight seeing, and doing traditional activities such as reindeer herding to see if it's similar to back home," says 26 year-old Pujjuut Kusugak.

During discussions, students are finding a lot of common between the cultures, including struggles to maintain their native cultures and languages. 25 year-old Gloria Kowtak says she has learned a lot so far not only about the Saami culture but also about her own culture.

"I have certainly learned something about them and the similarities between the two," she says.

Kowtak, who has a four year old son, says the Verdde program is also a wonderful exchange program for her personally.

"It's harder (to get away) now because I have a family. I am trying to take every advantage," she says.

### **Verdde Expanding Quickly**

Saami University College is planning on expanding the Verdde program in the future. Nunavut Arctic College is sending an English language instructor to Kautokeino in September 2006, and Saami University College is hoping to send instructors to Iqaluit to do research. Saami University College is also looking to create similar partnerships with other circumpolar colleges in the Yukon, Russia, and Greenland.

Nystad says after seeing the benefits of the Verdde program for Saami University College, she hopes other colleges across the Circumpolar North will create similar programs.

"Maybe we can help or give inspiration to other people too," she says.

# UArctic's BCS Program Helps Canadian Student Learn About Her Heritage

The past few years, Sarabeth Burns has decided to learn more about where her family is from.

"I knew a little bit, but I wasn't exposed to a lot," says the 23 year-old, who resides in Ottawa, Canada. "Now I know that there is so much knowledge about where I am from that I don't know. That's what inspired me to take the Circumpolar Studies Program (BCS)."

Burns is currently taking the BCS 100: Introduction to the Circumpolar World course online while also holding down a full-time job doing consulting work. UArctic's BCS program allows students attending member institutions to learn about northern peoples, lands and issues in traditional classrooms, online, outdoors, and around the world. Special emphasis is given to matters concerning indigenous people of the Circumpolar North.

## ***"It Brings Up a lot of Questions . . ."***

Burns was born in Halifax but her mother, who comes from an Inuit background, was born and raised in Nunavut. She spent several summers up north while growing up, in a small town called Pangnirtung on Baffin Island.

The last few summers she has worked for an outfitting company owned by her uncle at Auyuittuq. The only way to get there is by boat. While working there, she greeted people at the airport, helped make reservations, and worked as a tour guide for a fishing camp and a historical park. Those experiences sparked her interest to learn more about the North, and to take BCS courses online. She constantly discusses her course work with her mom, she says.

"It brings up a lot of questions that I can ask her about. My mom tells me a lot of stories about my grandparents, aunts and uncles etc."

Her course work also relates to real life experiences she has had. One recent summer, while working as a tour guide in Nunavut, she worked in historical park with a lot of above ground graves. The experience taught her a lot about her native background, she says.

"There was a chance you would come across a bone," says Burns. "You couldn't pick it up. If you did, you had to put it back where you found it, and blow on your fingers, or the spirit would follow you. You have to respect the dead, your elders, and if you are hunting, the lives of the animals you are taking."

## ***"You Realise How Biased You Are ..."***

For Burns, her classmates have also been a wealth of knowledge and have taught her a lot so far. Currently in her BCS 100 class, there are students from all across the circumpolar north including the Yukon, British Columbia, Nunavut, Finland, Norway and Russia. The experience has allowed her to see other Northerner's perspectives.

"Everyone gives a background of themselves and their ideas of what the Arctic is. You realise how biased you are about the part of the Arctic you are from," she says. "I always had the image that everyone was from Pangnirtung, a scenic, small place by the water, but they are not."

She says the discussion boards are one of the most important parts of the online class.

"It's how you see the perspectives of the other students," she says. "You can go back and forth and get your answers."

Right now, Burns is taking BCS courses online for interest sake. She graduated from Dalhousie University in 2004 with a degree in business and economics, and afterwards spent some time in France learning French. She has enjoyed what she has learned in her BCS course so far, including the economics of the different circumpolar countries, and the different types of spiritual practices in the North.

As for her future, Burns might eventually move to the North to work and live. But, for now, she is planning to continue taking BCS courses to learn more about the North and northern issues.

"I am young. There are a lot of opportunities. We'll see where I go with it."



Sarabeth Burns



# A Russian Student's north2north Experience in Her own Words

*Alena Egortseva is currently in Iceland on a north2north Exchange. She Writes about her Thoughts and Feelings of her Experience So Far.*

A story that happened to one ordinary Russian girl is in fact a story of realised ambitions and dreams to come true, a story of desire and passion, a thrilling adventure and a challenging opportunity to discover distant lands and meet people of a different culture. I am not exaggerating when saying that it has changed her life tremendously, and also affected her life goals. This story is about me.

I graduated from the secondary school in May 2003. I still remember my English language classes and a strict teacher, always unsatisfied with our progress. She put exceptional efforts in teaching us a foreign language and a foreign culture, and, as I realise it now, only thanks to her outstanding job I was able to undergo the competition and withstand the race.

By the time I finished school, I had already been registered as a student of Murmansk Humanities Institute, the higher educational establishment famous in the city of Murmansk for its good reputation and extensive international contacts in particular. The Faculty of Foreign Languages, which welcomed me, was the best in Murmansk because students had an opportunity to study abroad literally for free thanks to a number of scholarships. Exchange teachers from Western universities were frequent guests there too, to say nothing about lots of foreign students who used to pay regular visits and explore the city in the company of their new Russian mates. The teaching of English and Swedish (the language I chose as my minor) was excellent and a number of extra-curricular activities diversified student life.

I did enjoy my first and second years tremendously. Besides studies, I volunteered at the Department of International Relations (the DIR), making both oral and written translations, attending conferences, and drinking champagne at diplomatic receptions. I cannot say at a time the names of all people I got acquainted with during numerous projects I

was involved in. Politicians, businessmen, diplomats, higher officers, people of culture, journalists... Many of them residents of Murmansk can see on TV in evening news – I was lucky to see and shake hands to them in real life, providing service and communicating face to face. It appeared that I was doing a fine job, and I soon found myself widely known in close circles as a young ambitious interpreter.

When I was a second-year student, I became interested in the Bachelor of Circumpolar Studies degree offered online by the University of Arctic. The DIR had established strong connections with this respectable organisation. I signed up for the course and discovered that one of the obligatory conditions to receive a diploma was a semester at a foreign university, everything paid for. After reviewing the list of the universities available, I finally made up my mind to try the Republic of Iceland. The small piece of land lost somewhere in the Northern Atlantic attracted my attention by its remoteness and originality. In fact, no one knew anything particular about it. I got crazy about the country and its lifestyle – and can you imagine my excitement when I was asked to welcome a group of Icelandic students to Murmansk? They were, in turn, to welcome me in Iceland, in the town of Akureyri at the beginning of the academic year.

I was lucky with the weather when I took a flight from Reykjavik to Akureyri. There were no clouds in the sky and I enjoyed observing the fantastic landscapes of this amazing island tremendously. My tutor picked me up at the airport and brought to my new home – a nice cottage fully equipped with everything one desires. During the next days I shook hands to hundreds (as I thought) people and was tired of pronouncing regular courtesy phrases “Nice to meet you, how do you do, my name is Alena, I am Russian, I am an exchange student here, I like Iceland very much, thank you”. Soon I learnt how they sounded in Icelandic (cute language, but extremely complicated, I should say!) which facilitated my communication with the locals.

I will honestly say that it was hard indeed to get used to the new lifestyle. It took me personally a month to get into the stream but, having done that, I had no difficulty in managing all my affairs on my own any longer (although my Icelandic friends were always eager to help). Even the language barrier was not so terrifying as it seemed at first glance. Actually, everyone who goes to another country as an exchange student will have to go through some boring stuff like tidying up your room or rushing back and forth between your house and a supermarket, but when one thinks about new buddies s/he will acquire for sure among local students, exciting parties and trips to see the country, new approach to studies at the new university and unusual courses primarily concerned with local issues (so you learn both indoors, at the university classrooms and outdoors, from the surrounding environment), and also that very set of excursions, tours, walks around places of



Alena Egortseva

# A day to remember

Olav Hesjedal attended the University of the Arctic's (UArctic) launch in 2001 at the Arctic Centre in Rovaniemi Finland, as an alternative council representative for the Scandinavian Seminar Group. He says he remembers the day of UArctic's launch with a lot of pride.

"It was a great thing," he says. "It was nice to have the media and the political focus it brought with it."

Hesjedal also says he was also happy that UArctic was able to overcome some hurdles to become a reality.

"It is always difficult to launch collaborations like this," he says. "We were all proud that we could launch UArctic at this time."

Hesjedal's attendance at UArctic's launch wasn't the first time the scientific advisor for the Scandinavian Seminar Group was involved with UArctic. Hesjedal first heard about the idea to create UArctic during a meeting in Kautokeino Norway, in 1997. In 1999, the Scandinavian Seminar Group got involved with UArctic with the encouragement of Hesjedal. Hesjedal also assisted in the creation of two of UArctic's flagship programs: the Circumpolar Studies Program (BCS) and north2north.



Olav Hesjedal

Looking back at the past five years of UArctic's existence, Hesjedal says there have been many success stories. Some successes are the establishment of a platform for circumpolar collaboration for higher education, along with the launching of several programs including BCS, north2north and PhD networks.

Hesjedal also says UArctic has developed very well as a collaborative effort, despite limited resources and funding. He says the reason behind this achievement is the ability of everyone in UArctic to work together to make the organization work.

"There is a lot enthusiasm involved, a lot of network building for those who want the area to be a success," he says. "Without that, it wouldn't be a success."

Hesjedal says despite UArctic's many successes, the organization still has some areas to expand on such as open learning. He also says UArctic needs to continue to look at its core funding, and at ways to financially support institutions who can't afford to join UArctic.

However, looking ahead, Hesjedal believes UArctic will have an important role in the future to educate everyone in the world about the North. The Circumpolar North has been receiving more political attention in recent years because of climate change, and the search for more natural resources. Hesjedal believes these issues will have even more importance in five years time, which could make UArctic a valuable organization.

"I hope politicians see we have a tool to develop higher education in the area," says Hesjedal.

- interest that is usually prepared for visiting tourists, s/he realizes how fun an exchange is in fact, and then s/he will most probably make up her mind to apply for it.

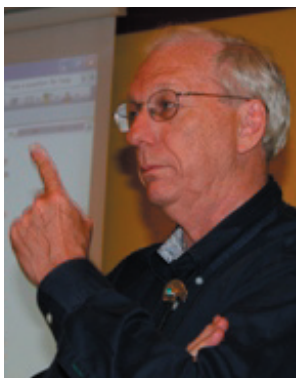
I haven't been to my Motherland for half a year by now, but I keep in touch with my family and friends by e-mail, giving them a ring sometimes. Also I regularly go to the news web-sites and read the information about the events in my country. I like to be aware of everything what is going on. I am taking certain courses at the University of Akureyri that correlate with my interests most of all: words are poor to describe how delighted I was to sit in a course in development and globalisation given by a British professor, or a course in international law, or in another one in law and economics. Generally I am interested in international relations and seriously considering a career in diplomacy. I am sure that this exchange year will give me a priority when I start bringing my dreams into life; I can only guess how wonderful it will look on my CV! Now I have something to be proud about. I am the very

first student from Murmansk Humanities Institute to come to Iceland, to show its people that Russians are a little bit different from what they see in Hollywood action films.

But life is going on. Changes, of course, have taken place in Murmansk, but they simply can't be compared to those that my soul and my very personality have undergone. Should I be happy about them? Definitely yes, because now I know for sure what my life goals are, and what I am to do in order to reach them. Actually, many exchange students say that their foreign experience has affected their turn of mind greatly, so here I am not alone. Going abroad, especially for such a long period of time, is always a challenge, and I genuinely believe that those who dare take it are distinguished, bright people with a large leader's potential. I am honoured to belong to their ranks. Now I am looking into the future, being confident in success. Surely you have to survive certain inconveniences (say, your room at home is always better than somewhere else) but in my opinion exchange programmes are an excellent example of how the ends justify the means.



# Global Change Issues Discussed in Rovaniemi



ACIA Chair Bob Corell

Rovaniemi, Finland - Educators from across the Circumpolar North gathered here for two days for the first workshop of a University of the Arctic (UArctic) Thematic Network on global change.

The UArctic Thematic Network on Global Change in the Arctic workshop took place May 30-31, and was hosted by the University of Lapland (Rovaniemi,

Finland) and the University of Oulu (Oulu, Finland). The network is UArctic's latest thematic network and has partners in Norway, Sweden, Finland, Russia, Canada, US, and Greenland including some indigenous organizations. Its goal is to strengthen higher education delivery in all areas related to global change, in particular climate change, in the Arctic. The creation of the network was made possible by 500,000 DKK in funding from the Nordic Ministers Council.

"Global change is an issue affecting the entire planet, in particular the North," said Thematic Network Program Chair Kari Laine. "It's important to provide the tools for Northerners, and others who have an interest in the North, to be able to adapt to these changes."

24 people from various academic and professional backgrounds participated in the workshop. Its purpose was to identify gaps in course offerings on the subject of global change at UArctic member institutions, and create courses to fill in those gaps.

Chair of the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment (ACIA), Bob Corell, was one of the participants in the workshop. Corell said global change should be in the soul of every person who gets an education. He said global change, especially climate change, is already having a profound impact on the world, especially the North.

"It's changing so rapidly and already changing lives of people in arctic and sub arctic areas," he said.

Representatives of indigenous organizations who participated at the workshop also agreed with these sentiments. Jan Idar Solbakken, an assistant professor at Saami University



College in Kautokeino Norway, said climate changes are beginning to affect reindeer herding in his community. He said there is a need for more education about these issues.

"It creates awareness, so people will know," he said. "If you know, it will be easier to adapt."

In March, a web survey conducted by the UArctic Thematic Networks Office found over 600 courses on global change at UArctic member institutions. The courses were mainly in the areas of science, particular in environmental sciences and biology. Obvious gaps were found in the subjects of health, engineering, and economics.

During the workshop, participants created outlines for six new interdisciplinary courses on global change. Some of the courses were in the areas of health, economics, technology and human rights. One of the next steps for the thematic network is to flush out the ideas for these courses during the next month. The network is also planning to meet again next year.

Workshop participants said the first meeting of the network was a productive and positive one.

"This is a refreshing experience because this is issue oriented instead of discipline oriented. This doesn't happen very often," said Corell. "We have done a huge integration along many different fields."

## UArctic Shared Voices Newsletter

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