



**5<sup>TH</sup> INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS  
OF  
ARCTIC SOCIAL SCIENCES (ICASS V)**  
University of Alaska Fairbanks, Fairbanks, Alaska, USA  
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**Conference Purpose:**

The theme of this year's Congress was "Connections: Local and Global Aspects of Arctic Social Systems." It provides an opportunity for people around the world to share their ideas on social science research in the Arctic. This international congress is held every three years in different locations. The last congress was held in Quebec City in May 2001.

Every morning started with a plenary followed by a variety of sessions. Some session titles included: globalization and self-determination; herding reindeer and hunting caribou; integrating indigenous knowledge; ways of knowing and worldviews into the educational systems in the Arctic; locating circumpolar environmental change; media and telecommunications; and sites of memory.

Junior Policy Analyst Karin Kettler's abstract was accepted in the session titled "Who Knows Best: How to balance research-based best practices and culturally based best practices in prevention, treatment and healing?" She presented the results of her project called "Building the Capacity of Inuit in the Health Field."

**Key Information Obtained:**

Jack Hicks, from the Government of Nunavut, gave a presentation about suicide prevention in Nunavut in the same session. One of the major findings is that Inuit men are committing suicide more than Inuit women. In Kettler's presentation, women are pursuing post-secondary more than men. One of the comments afterwards concerned this issue, suggesting that maybe there should be more services or emphasis on Inuit men. It is something to consider.

Some key notes from presentations attended:

- Delivering distance education to rural communities must take into account several items: location, logistics, organization design, and the information centre. For organization design, it means finding an organization that exists in the community to have a safe place for equipment (computer and satellite dish).
- The first ABC book in Sámi language was produced in 1690. Higher education can be achieved if access to knowledge, including literature and media, is provided in the mother tongue.

- The University of Alaska Fairbanks has been offering a Rural Development Bachelor of Arts program since the mid-1980s. The purpose of this degree looks at the whole person for a foundation of healing and wellness so that the person becomes an effective indigenous leader. Students do a lot of networking through intensive seminars to attain this goal.
- Digital video is an accessible tool for community development and promotion of community-based education.
- Nunavut Arctic College produced a series of books about Inuit traditional knowledge. The law, nursing and environmental programs are using these books.
- Sámi books do not reflect the Sámi way of life, including childrearing. For example, Sámi do not punish their children. People outside the Sámi think their children are disobedient. It was interesting that in Sámi language there is a positive word for teasing: *nárrideapmi*. This term means: teasing or jocular form of togetherness; a way of interaction; a diverting strategy; and allows the children to learn self-control.
- Traditional knowledge cannot be transformed into school knowledge, but must be provided in school activities.
- Russia has a large number of ethnic groups many of whom do not take higher education. While native knowledge is often included in urban curricula, it is less and less accessible the more remote the community. Elders are not involved in education. In comparison, Alaskan elders have input into the contents of education.
- Kaupapa Maori are using theory to develop effective and culturally appropriate education. They have developed some learning values and intervention elements. Some of the learning values include: knowledge belongs to all; everyone has a contribution to make; the group is as good as the least able member; knowledge in, knowledge out; and take what you need for the benefit of the group. It is by no means perfect but can be used as an example of how native knowledge and traditions are incorporated into the school setting.

### **Conclusion and Follow-up:**

Attending the ICASS V was a positive experience. Much information was available about education initiatives in other Arctic regions internationally. Feedback to Kettler's presentation indicated that NAHO should promote further research and discussion regarding the foundations of educational issues and problems.