



# Best Practices in Collaborative Research with Northern Communities: A Synopsis from Early Career Researchers

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#### **Abstract**

Combining scientific and traditional knowledge is crucial to understand environmental systems across circum-Arctic regions, where climate change is most striking. However, building collaborative partnerships between visiting scientists and local, indigenous traditional knowledge holders in Northern communities presents challenges. The workshop "Community-based Research: Do's and Don'ts of Arctic Research" was organized as an IASC cross-cutting initiative at ICOP2016 in Potsdam, Germany, to facilitate dialogue between Early Career Researchers (ECRs) and Northern residents. This workshop resulted in a diverse list of considerations and sustainable practices to improve traditional and scientific knowledge exchange, and collaborative Northern research. An extensive list of positive (Do's) and few negative recommendations (Don'ts) was generated together with ECRs and Arctic representatives. Many good ideas on research design, active communication and community involvement developed from fruitful discussions. This study provides an example of bottom-up strategy development in order to enhance knowledge transfer between scientists and northern indigenous communities.

**Keywords:** science communication; community-based research; citizen science; Early Career Researchers; PYRN workshop; ICOP2016

## Introduction

Research in Arctic and Sub-Arctic environments presents unique challenges and obstacles, in particular when research is undertaken near indigenous communities by non-local, non-indigenous researchers. Non-local researchers may be less familiar with local norms, customs, social systems and protocols, leading to inevitable challenges for the scientists, and the communities.

## The Idea

Fellows of the International Arctic Science Committee (IASC) initiated an IASC cross-cutting activity to facilitate

dialogue between Early Career Researchers (ECRs) and Northern residents. A workshop session on "Community-based Research: Do's and Don'ts of Arctic Research" was organized during the Permafrost Young Researchers Workshop on 18-19 June 2016, during the 11th International Conference on Permafrost 2016 (icop2016.org) in Potsdam, Germany.

## Workshop Organization and Structure

Two 90-min sessions were held in order to allow up to 60 participants to take part in the workshop. Four experts were invited to discuss their background in the context of

scientific activities in the Arctic: Richard Gordon who is Inuvialuit and Chief Ranger of Herschel Island Territorial Park (Inuvik, Canada); Anna Annasyeva, a Russian Saami living in Norway and Indigenous Peoples Adviser at the International Barents Secretariat; Jan Otto Habeck, a Professor at the Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology at the University of Hamburg (Germany) and co-leader of the IPA Action Group "Permafrost and Culture" in the region of Sakha (Yakutia, Russia); and Robert Way, an Inuk and a PhD student at the University of Ottawa and part of the IASC Fellow organizing team.

The participants were then split into four smaller breakout groups which discussed their research experiences in Northern Communities together with one of the invited experts. Moderated by an IASC Fellow, each group was asked to create a list of Do`s and Don`ts for working with communities in Arctic research which was then gathered and discussed with the overall group.

#### Results

A lively exchange between all workshop participants and experts resulted in a comprehensive and diverse list of Do's and Don'ts of Arctic Research. These included, considerations of: (1) the research design and early planning; (2) the contribution of science to northern communities; (3) the relationship of researchers and indigenous people; (4) the communication and overall impression of visiting scientists; and (5) ways to get involved with local people (Figure 1).

## Conclusion

The representatives of various Arctic communities and student participants from across the globe participated in an interactive and fruitful discussion that resulted in a set of best practices on how to maintain strong partnerships in collaborative research with Northern Communities. Overall this workshop was a great example of bottom-up strategy development to enhance knowledge transfer between scientists and indigenous communities.

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FigFigure 1. Word cloud created with *wordle* visualizing the most frequently mentioned terms in the lists of Do's and Don'ts of Arctic Research.