



Young Leaders' Summit on Northern Climate Change 2015 Final Report

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Introduction

The *Young Leaders' Summit on Northern Climate Change 2015* occurred August 24th-28th, 2015 in Yellowknife, NT (also visited other communities such as Kakisa, Hay River and Behchoko). The mandate was to 1) equip northern youth with knowledge of climate change effects as they are specific to the north, 2) give northern youth the confidence to use these skills to better their communities, 3) create a dialogue and facilitate networking for youth on climate change. Ecology North and the Pembina institute guided the development of the summit. We sent out invitations to applicants, which were comprised of representatives from the three Territories.

This year we chose to focus on a traveling summit with intermittent presentations on a variety of climate change related topics such as permafrost, fishing, water quality, northern agriculture, forest fire research, etc. We also wanted to include local elders and get a traditional viewpoint of how climate change has affected traditional life (who depend on living “off the land” to support their communities).

Participants had the opportunity to engage hands on with local elders, climate change experts, farmers, scientists, researchers, government officials and even politicians. Dialogue and networking between and among participants and presenters was facilitated and occurred naturally during the Summit.

Objectives of the Summit

The objectives of the Summit were for young leaders to building leadership skills, learn how to effectively communicate the impacts of climate change, develop recommendations for climate policy, create a strong network, and stimulate stronger climate action by leaders in the North. Leadership skills, communication skills, and networking were key focus areas during the Summit. The Declaration on Northern Climate Change, which was developed during the summit and has a strong call to action for leaders, educators and local government, was incorporated into various projects and presented at the press conference. The goal of networking was achieved through social media and email contacts. A Facebook page has been created for the Young Leaders to participate in ongoing connections and networking.

Planning and implementation:

In preparation for the summit we sent out an invitation to various groups and community leaders in all three of the territories, hoping to receive applications from a variety of communities. Applicants had to submit a one-page essay outlining their interest in attending the summit and a letter of recommendation from a member of their community. Out of 15 completed applications that were submitted by the deadline, ten young ladies were chosen and 8 were able to attend. Unfortunately we did not receive many male applications and our preference would have been a more gender-balanced summit with five male and five female participants in attendance.

These ten youth were selected based on their interest in climate change and their demonstrated ability to be leaders in their communities. Through on-land-learning and engagement with elders, scientists, politicians, and other community members, the Northern delegates developed a better understanding of climate change and its impact in the North. The young leaders returned to their homes equipped with the knowledge and resources to create positive change in their communities. In addition to

gaining new insight into the impacts of climate change through meetings and workshops, the participants developed a network of like-minded individuals from across the three territories with whom they can collaborate with on local and pan-territorial projects.

The Summit Agenda

Day 1 – August 23rd at Craig’s House

Official welcome BBQ

Day 2 – August 24th in Yellowknife

8:00 Wake up/breakfast and pack up camp

The day began at 9:30 am with a brief Watershed Model demonstration and tour of the Ecology North Office with Jeremy Flatt. The rest of the morning was filled with a meeting hosted with Bob Bromley out of the Legislature Building in which the girls discussed current climate change issues, how they relate to politics and any suggestions they had for their political leaders.

Lunch was catered by the Legislative Assembly and hosted by Bob Bromley. The participants were able to chat with local MLAs and the Premier about each of their related fields of work, such as Industry, Tourism and Investment, Public Works and Services, Transportation, and Environment and Natural Resources. All these fields have been effected in some way by climate change, most noticeably for ENR and Finance is the amount of money it is costing Yellowknife to run generators on Diesel fuel due to low water levels, or the amount of money it costs to fix roads due to melting permafrost damage.

After lunch we met with Sara Brown to learn more about permafrost, what it is, why we rely on it and what happens when it begins to melt.

Then we walked from the Legislative Building to Samba K’ Park, stopping in the Museum along the way to meet with the Mayor of Yellowknife –Mark Heyck. Mark shared with us the city’s role in mitigation and adaption to climate change and how they are working towards lowering the City’s carbon footprint.

Our last presentation of the day was with Artic Energy Alliance as they shared with us the potential for renewable resources and using wood pellets as a sustainable source of energy for heating in the North. They also do work with solar panels and electric cars.

The day ended as we set up camp in the beautiful Fort Providence Campground.

Day 3 – August 25th in Kakisa

That afternoon we arrived in Kakisa and took a hike of the waterfalls before setting up camp.

We then met with Xanthe Walker and her team for a tour of the Forest Fire Research Science Camp. Last summer Kakisa was evacuated due to a massive forest fire that threatened the community. In between the campground and the community was a burn site in which we could see how the fire has devastated growth in that area and changed what is able to grow in future years. Burn areas are also being researched for changes in permafrost levels and lack of animal presence. Xanthe mentioned that although small plants such as moss, fireweed, mushrooms and cloudberry are growing in the burn areas, they still don’t see a lot of Caribou, bears or other animals in these “dead zones” due to lack of food and the danger of being in exposed areas.

That evening we hosted members from the community of Kakisa for a dinner around the campfire at the local campground. We made spaghetti dinner and had smoked fish from the elders. During dinner we heard from the Chief Lloyd Chicot, his wife and Melaine Simba about changes they have noticed in their community due to climate change.

Day 4 – August 26th in Hay River

Fossil Hike with Kim Rapati and tour of the Alexandra and Louise Falls

Tour of Northern Farm Training Institute with special guest Kyle Napier

Dinner with Elders on the Hay River Reserve of fish, potatoes, bannock cooked over the fire.

Interview of an Elder

Tour of Hay River and camping at the Beach

The evening ended with us sitting at the beach watching the beautiful Northern Lights fill the night sky.

Day 5 – August 27th in Behchoko

Meeting with Tony Rebesca and John B. Zoe in Behchoko. We had a tour of the community with Tony and got to see points of development, the growth of the community, expansion of residential areas and met with the Youth Center's director, Joe.

Day 6 – August 28th in Yellowknife

Water quality presentation with Jennie and Katarina

Jim Sparling talked about the politics of climate change.

Inspirational chat with Jamie Bastedo, who donated books to each of the young leaders

Mike Palmer – permafrost science and ground movement around the legislature

Pete Cott and Bruce Hanna met us at the Statue in S'amba K Park and talked to us a bit about the life for fish in the north and the struggles they are facing due to warming temperature in the water, and lower water levels. Climate change messes up with the fish' ability to rely on spawning sites they have used before and threatens the health and survival of their young. Pollution, lower water quality and high turbidity in the water also negatively affects the health of fish, and can sometimes end up in creating "Dead spots" in bodies of water which lead to an absence of abundant life, a loss of a potential food source and gaps in the food chain.

We met with Brian Sieben and Ben Linaker from ENR by the Statue in S'amba K Park and heard all about ways that we can adapt to Climate Change in terms of infrastructure and the types of research that prove that climate change is happening (bank erosion, melting permafrost, etc).

After the final presentation the Young Leaders had lunch and two hours to work on their projects. Aletta, Naomi and Stephanie created a beautiful map of all the places we had visited along with accompanying pictures and descriptions of each community.

At 3:00, the youth presented their projects (detailed below in Chapter 3) and highlights of the summit at a Press Conference held at the Legislature Assembly.

It was hard for the girls to create quality projects with such a short amount of time to work on them. It was a good learning experience for them to have to work to a deadline and create realistic projects, and some of them turned out a little rushed or unfinished. What worked best was having them do group projects with the option to do an individual project so they could work with people they were comfortable with. One of the participants is working on creating a blog that I am looking forward to seeing when it is finished.

The press conference went well and concluded with two individual interviews for CBC News North. A short story was featured on North Beat and on their website.

Bob Bromley and Craig Scott, two strong supporters of the Summit, made closing remarks.

The Summit drew to a close with group photographs and dinner at the Wild Cat Café.

Outcomes

The main outcomes of the Summit were the projects produced by the young leaders, the lasting link for an effective youth climate movement, and the network of engaged and energetic young leaders. We also wanted the young leaders to create a detailed declaration, which they would share at a press conference on the last day of the Summit. (see below)

Project work: the young leaders broke into four different groups to complete a variety of projects that would summarize their learning and experiences of the summit. They were encouraged to pick one of the topics we covered, focus on a particular presenter/elder or briefly cover the summit as a whole.

- A. Photo Essay and Map: one group created a visual photo essay/map of all the places we visited during the summit. This included pictures of highlights, who they met, what they saw and where we went. The photos were partnered with descriptions and some information that they had learned. The map also included points of visible climate change (forest fire damage, low water levels, etc).
- B. Interviews of the participants: one group conducted lengthy interviews of each of the participants to get a sense of what each participant got out of the summit, their views of climate change (adaptation versus mitigation, what they could do in their home communities to respond to the changes) and highlights of their experience.
- C. Interview of an Elder: one group had the chance to interview an elder while we were in Hay River. They asked her about her traditional life, harvesting, hunting, living off the land, her personal history, who they are, her culture, and other interesting questions they thought of. They used a recording device for this interview and prepared a written summary.
- D. Online Social Media Blog: one group were tasked with making blog posts on a social media account along the way. The posts included what we did, who we met, highlights of the trip and some things they have learned related to climate change. All posts included #YLS2015 or YoungLeadersSummit. They also had to write a final summary blog post in a style similar to a journal entry or newspaper article.

Declaration: One key result of the summit was to write up a formal declaration identifying key ways the North can act on Climate Change. The full document can be found in the appendix but the main four points are as follows:

1. Northern Communities need to develop and strengthen local agricultural and animal harvesting systems to improve food security in the North. This includes sustainable local wild harvesting of animals and plants, with a basis in cultural and language revitalization.
2. Climate Change educations should be prominent in elementary and secondary school curriculums and we encourage communities to include climate change education in their on-the-land learning programs.
3. Northerners must recognize that we have significant energy needs for space heating, electricity and transportation, but we can meet these needs through renewable energy. We urge all individuals to reduce their impact on the planet.

4. Territorial governments have an opportunity to take a leadership role in responding to climate change. (Policies should focus on both mitigation and adaptation; governments should invest in renewable resources and cease support for the further development of fossil fuel industries).

Ongoing projects: We are hoping to continue on the good thoughts, ideas and work that has been started through this summit by supporting the participants in any ongoing projects they become involved in related to climate change topics.

Network and on going communication: The projects facilitated lasting links and networking. They allowed participants to get to know each other on a more personal level as strong bonds and working to produce and share projects formed connections together. As previously mentioned, the participants decided to create a Facebook group to maintain and enhance this link. Information and opportunities have already begun to flow as a result of these connections.

Next Steps: Upon completion of the Young Leader's Summit the organizers met and talked about lessons learned and how to improve in two years. With four summits now under our belt we think this was one of the best and most innovative, and we would like to continue this travelling summit in two years time.

One thing we thought would be valuable would be to invite all the past Young Leaders to participate in a broader network. This may include webinars, impromptu meetings, lectures etc. Our goal would be to get this group excited, engaged and ready to tackle climate change, both politically and in a professional manner. Ecology North will develop webinars based on climate change specific topics and participants from the Summit will be able to access and take advantage of this opportunity.

Acknowledgement of funders:

We would like to acknowledge that without the help and financial support from all of our funders we would not have been able to make this event happen, let alone successful. We are very grateful for the help to cover costs of such an event including transportation, flights, food, rentals and campsites. The financial support we received was crucial in the planning and implementation of the summit and allowed for us to connect the participants with experts in the field across the Northwest Territories. These bonds will allow for further work to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

Recommendations

Young Leaders

(Collected from exit surveys submitted by each participant)

- Discuss changing weather patterns and the ability to predict them
- Include youth presenters who are currently leading activities in the community
- Spend less time driving
- Spend time driving with prompted discussions
- More hands on learning presentations as opposed to lecture style

YLS Committee

- More time for planning prior to the event.
- Continue using conference calls to get ideas flowing and make decision.
- Maintain a list of contacts and key organizations in each Territory to help spread information and for ongoing use.
- Ask the 'out-going' participants if they are interested in being involved in the Steering Committee for the next Summit now.

Partner organizations

- Continued support of a biannual weeklong traveling style Young Leaders' Summit on Northern Climate Change.
- Continue the trend of partners acting as mentors & supporters, while youth organize and run the event.
- Connect past and current attendees to connect the old with the new alumni of the summit

Media Coverage

CBC News North beat

“Youth summit on climate change wraps up”, CBC News Posted: **Aug 30, 2015**, accessed on **Sept 1, 2015** at

<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/story/2011/11/12/north-youth-climate-change.html>,

Moose FM –Yellowknife and Hay River

“Youth issue recommendations following climate summit”, Moose FM Posted: Sept. 1, 2015, accessed on September 4th. 2015 at

<http://www.myyellowknifenow.com/7601/youth-issue-recommendations-following-climate-summit/>

Northern Journal – Fort Smith

News North –Yellowknife