

Northern Scientific Training Program

Community Engagement

The NSTP Committee wishes to remind universities that an important part of northern studies is the opportunity for students to work with local partners and to engage with the local community on their research.

Supervisors are encouraged to create these opportunities for their students, and should encourage their students to spend more time in the north to make these connections.

Below you will find examples (strong and weak) taken from the 2019-2020 university submissions/applications as well as observations from the NSTP Management Committee.

Strong examples of community engagement

Researchers are giving back to the community of Kluane Lake by sponsoring the first clean up involving divers removing garbage from the lake.

Engagement program and involvement in a high school program for students from Whitehorse with courses in environmental science and Indigenous culture with the Kluane First Nation ran out of the Kluane Lake Research Station.

Co-develop some of the research projects with communities. Those projects that have been clearly co-developed with the community have the clearest outreach plans.

Informal social gatherings as venues where research was shared and locals shared indigenous language.

Good stakeholder engagement through the Indigenous Steering Committee.

Conducted hands-on activity with school students – collecting pond water and looking at it under a microscope.

Collaboration with GNWT Environment and Natural Resources and utilized Norman Wells Renewable Resource Council to hire wildlife monitor.

Employed the services of local Indigenous guides for their experience in travel by snowmobile, and to ensure the fieldwork was completed in a safe way that respected the territory and community.

Organized meetings with the community in order to share research and exchange knowledge.

Formed a project committee whose members include 2 representatives from Nunavik and 1 from Kawawachikamach, and is working in direct collaboration with the Nunavik Research Centre.

Participated in several hunting and fishing expeditions and took the opportunity to stay in Pond Inlet for 2 days to discuss research with the community at the co-op.

Hiring locals to assist with fieldwork.

Research plan is being directed by the research needs of the communities. This aligned with appropriate and respectful approaches to research, and ensuring that the results will be useful to the community.

Establish relationships with the community/ies - activities can range from hosting events in communities, welcoming visitors to field sites, employing locals.

Project involved the local community to a significant extent given that it implicates community members in environmental monitoring. In addition to consulting the mayor, Hunting, Fishing, and Trapping Association, Land Holding Corp., and youth, education and cultural committees, researcher planned field-sampling with the community, recruited participants for a science land camp, participated in the camp as a science educator for youth, disseminated research results via conferences and radio, and hired local outfitters and guides.

Most students speak to outreach by employing local community members, giving presentations, sharing fish caught for sampling purposes with community members.

Many students cited examples of volunteer work/social activities within communities during their research stays (e.g. watching the Stanley Cup with locals or volunteering at the local Humane Society). These are important parts of northern research but should also complement engagement specific to research to ensure that projects have appropriate local direction.

Research is in response to community concerns about water quality and project goals were developed in partnership with 2 local community groups – good to see link between research and community interests.

Kluane squirrel project described excellent outreach activities - science talks at bakery, Canada Day Parade, etc.

Student was particularly innovative in offering sewing/sewing machine maintenance and repair classes in community. This complemented her research topic (Inuit sewing) but also seems to have been greatly appreciated by the community.

Many of the students spent time in the local communities before and after their fieldwork, where they attended community events, set up information kiosks, and organized learning events where local youth were taught about the scientific method, how to collect samples, and how to use laboratory equipment. Two students who studied the decline of eelgrass bed on the eastern James Bay Coast lived on a Cree reserve during their fieldwork and hired members of the Cree nation to help navigate and operate canoes for their sampling excursions. They also attended several local social and cultural events including Indigenous Peoples Day and a Pow Wow.

Student undertaking major engagement with communities and organizing a donation drive to give back to communities (sock drive, acquiring support from the northern airlines to get free transport of goods north). For upcoming field season, student will take on more of a leadership role and have direct participation in teaching classes on Arctic fish species ecology, participating in community meetings to explain research objectives and bringing western science and Traditional Knowledge together.

Student speaks to how her work on Coates Island with Inuit community members hired as field assistants allows her to experience the bridge between Inuit knowledge and science.

Description of efforts to build relationships with communities by hiring three community members as wildlife monitors/field assistants.

Sharing results with frequent community meetings, hiring of community members to support data collection and camp tasks.

Description of efforts to build relationships with community mentions all field work at the research camp involving community members, with specific mention of individuals with long term involvement in the project. These two individuals are now mentors to new community members that come to the project. An Inuit Field Training Program was organized for Inuit youth in 2018 by the research team.

Engagement examples where improvement is needed

Random encounters with locals of a northern community eg. purchasing supplies at the local store, going to the post office, etc.

Plans to promote work in the community once it's published.

Engagement with communities was informal and relied on happenstance (eg. whoever shows up in camp is welcome). No formal presentations or engagement with local authorities for dissemination.

Some weak efforts at outreach described for the high arctic students where they are working outside of communities. Researchers should be encouraged to have more efforts at creativity around outreach eg posters prepared for communities – why not website or facebook page/ posts/ presentation/ interactions?

Outreach activities within the Churchill Northern Studies Centre and with visiting tour groups/researchers but did not undertake any activities within the community itself.

Outreach activities for the hydrological-types of projects based out of northern Alberta (national park or north of Fort McMurray) seem very weak. Understandably, there are outreach limitations imposed by industrial partners in some cases, however most industry companies are open to dissemination about project plans, expected outcomes etc. within communities. It would be nice to see outreach, or at least a clearer understanding on if a given student is co-participating in outreach activities with an industrial partner, rather than just saying that the industrial partner is handling the outreach - especially for those students who are staying in the north for 1/3 of the year.

In regard to students working at the DeBeers Victor Mine, effort should be made to work with the mine to be part of their community engagement and extend stays to allow for meaningful engagement.