

# Young leaders tackle climate change

If you want to get things done, just put 60 or so enthusiastic young people in a room with a few guest presenters and scientists and ask them to come up with solutions to the impacts of climate change on Canada's North and how to adapt to them.

Three-quarters of the young delegates, at the first-ever Young Leaders' Summit on Northern Climate Change in Inuvik August 17 to 20, 2009, were from Canada's three territories where the challenges of global warming are more prevalent than anywhere else on the planet. They were there, among other things, to prepare the voice of northern youth to present at the United Nations Climate Change Conference scheduled to take place in Copenhagen in December 2009.

Presentations on the science of global warming, and discussions of community vulnerability, resilience and adaptation were


followed by small breakout groups to study and report back in plenary sessions. One full day was out on the land at the Gwich'in Healing Centre on the Mackenzie River, although the reported presence of grizzly bears nearby kept everybody very close to the building. A delegate head-count before heading back to Inuvik confirmed that the bears had to go hungry!

"I realize in coming here that we as Canadians can do more in making connections, and not act alone in our territories and provinces, to build awareness and take action on climate change," says Cynthia James, Education Support Worker from the Ta'an Kwach'an Council in Whitehorse, echoing the sentiments of many of the youth.

Joe Tulurialik from Taloyoak, Nunavut, shared his grandfather's teaching about changes he had seen during his lifetime with hunting, fishing and trapping seasons coming too

early or too late. "We, the younger generation, need to connect with our elders as one voice."

The final consensus of the deliberations was that the time to act is now. The declaration is prefaced by great concern — "the only thing that frightens us more than climate change is our governments' failure to respond to it." Dawn Tremblay from Yellowknife was enthusiastic about the outcome. "It's a win-win situation," she said, an opportunity for northern youth to come together to bring about recommendations for action.

The Summit was co-hosted by Arctic Athabaskan Council, Climate Action Network Canada, Ecology North, Gwich'in Council International, and the Pembina Institute, and sponsored by 20 organizations with a northern focus. 

David Malcolm



Climate deliberation at the Gwich'in Healing Centre.



Emily Slofstra from Waterloo enjoys Inuvik's greenhouse produce.

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