

Arctic Ecology land camps promote science for youth

By The Nunami Sukuijainiq Team

Five teams from across Canada's North were awarded a share of over \$2.5 million for their innovative projects to improve the quality of life in their communities during the Arctic Inspiration Prize awards ceremony in Whitehorse, Yukon, on February 22. The Youth Committee from Kangiqsualujjuaq, Nunavik, was awarded \$466,000 for their project Nunami Sukuijainiq.



Youth learn how to collect and preserve plants for making a local herbarium.

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Sampling lichens as indicators of the air quality to track any change in the future.

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Nunami Sukuijainiq (Science on the Land) is a land-based and hands-on Science Education Program designed for Nunavik Youth. It arises from the Kangiqsualujjuaq Youth Committee's desire to start a new land-based Science Education Program, in collaboration with Natural Science researchers. This program is based on Arctic Ecology and Environmental Stewardship through science land camps involving Elders and local experts. The youth will learn about water quality, freshwater and marine edible resources, vegetation change, permafrost dynamics, lake and fish ecology, winter ecology, and will practice different sampling techniques. These themes emerged during interactive consultations with the community, which focused on local research interests and issues.

With this multidisciplinary and intergenerational approach, youth from all Inuit communities in Nunavik will have the opportunity to participate in the Arctic Ecology summer and winter land camps. Nunami Sukuijainiq will also provide mentoring opportunities for Inuit youth already engaged in post-secondary Science programs across Inuit Nunangat (e.g. Environmental Technology Program at Arctic College, Nunavut). In addition, short documentary films will be produced from this initiative to inspire other indigenous communities and regions.

The objectives of Nunami Sukuijainiq are to stimulate and nurture the Nunavik youth's interest in natural sciences and science related careers, to encourage them to pursue secondary education, to reinforce scientific literacy and to enhance their capacities in environmental stewardship. This program can set the foundation to inspire Nunavik youth to become researchers themselves.

The Activity Program offers a good balance between science, tradition and outdoor adventure. The Team hopes to build a sustainable model, based on local entrepreneurship,





Looking at a set of satellite images to track vegetation change over the last 30 years.

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a growing northern expertise, and job creation. For example, the Nunami Sukuijainiq team could support other indigenous communities to identify their research needs and questions and to develop their own community-tailored environmental stewardship program. Long-term funding opportunities will need to be explored to achieve these goals.

Nunami Sukuijainiq can have multiple impacts: 1) increased capacity in environmental stewardship; 2) improved scientific literacy; 3) promotion of Inuit research; 4) a strengthened link between Elders and youth; 5) a greater motivation for pursuing secondary education; 6) a reinforced cultural connection with the land; 7) enhanced community involvement; 8) an enriched networking with other Nunavik and Nunavut communities; 9) an integrated approach in Arctic Ecology for science education; and 10) better exchanges between scientists and Inuit communities.

The Nunami Sukuijainiq team is very dynamic and committed to organizing activities that will contribute to the well-being of youth and their skill development for a better future. This team has gained experience from previous participatory projects, such as Imalirijit, which has been going on since 2016. The collaboration with academic partners and science education specialists will guarantee the scientific aspects of this program. Moreover, the participation of Elders and local experts will allow Inuit Knowledge and Western Science to better connect, in the actual and complex context of global environmental change in the Arctic. **Δ&B**

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