

First announcement and call for contributions

(Free for distribution)

Taking Wing - Conference on Gender Equality and Women in the Arctic

Time 4 — 6 August, 2002

Place Saariselkä, Inari, Finland

Organisers

The Arctic Council, Nordic Council of Ministers and Finland as the host country

Background

The economic, environmental, political and cultural changes of the Arctic societies have had a strong impact on the economic and cultural positions of women and men. However, questions of energy, economy and the environment tend to dominate the political visions concerning the Arctic area. The everyday life of women is mostly missing in this context. It is important to bring gender considerations onto the agenda and into mainstream policies.

Goals of the conference

There is a need to raise awareness on the situation of women in the Arctic and to give voice to women to express their experiences, views and interests regarding future action. The conference offers a forum for discussion and contacts and aims to develop ideas and proposals for further action to be taken by the Arctic Council and other relevant institutions.

Crosscutting themes

The conference is about women and gender in the Arctic so that the issues brought to debate should be considered from an arctic viewpoint, as well as from the viewpoint of indigenous women and indigenous people where appropriate. Social, economic and cultural change is a further crosscutting theme of the conference.

Themes of the conference

1. Women and work in the Arctic

This theme may cover various important issues for women in the arctic economies such as living conditions and occupations, capacity building and knowledge, women as entrepreneurs, women and the public sector, tourism/ ecotourism, land rights, and the use of natural resources as an economic base.

2. Human rights in the Arctic from a gender perspective

There are two main areas to this theme. First, gender in the self-determination of indigenous people, and second, violence against women and trafficking in women.

Gender in self-determination can cover themes such as leadership in the communities, empowerment, gender roles in the governance of indigenous institutions, legislative practices, and traditional knowledge.

The context of violence against women may include issues such as the need to break the silence around violence, impacts of violence on social wellbeing and health, experiences of the service systems in crisis management, and trafficking in women and prostitution.

Participants

Maximum 200 participants from the following groups:
Arctic Council Member States, Permanent Participants and Observers
Indigenous people's organisations
NGOs, especially women's NGOs

Representatives of national and regional governments
Researchers
Representatives from other national and international organisations

The Arctic Council

The Arctic Council, established in 1996, is a high-level intergovernmental forum that provides a mechanism to address the common concerns and challenges faced by the Arctic governments and people in the Arctic. The Council has eight member states: the five Nordic countries, Canada, the Russian Federation and the United States. Six organisations representing indigenous peoples take part in the work of the Council with a status of Permanent Participants. Moreover, the Council has several Observers: states, international organisations and non-governmental organisations.

One of the aims of Arctic Council is to promote sustainable development in the Arctic region, including economic and social development, improved health conditions and cultural well-being, with the full involvement of the Arctic indigenous communities and other Arctic inhabitants. Advancement of the position of women and gender equality should be considered an important part of the overall goal. The Finnish Government launched the initiative of organising the first Arctic women's conference during the Finnish presidency of the Arctic Council.

Languages

Simultaneous interpretation to and from English and Russian

Working methods

Plenary and workshops

Call for contribution and timetable

The organisers especially wish to encourage papers that address one of the above themes or problems from the point of view of awareness raising about women's situation, needs, visions as well as practical results. See Goals of the conference above. What kind of political action is needed to solve the problem? What is your recommendation to the Arctic Council and other actors?

Other kinds of contributions are also welcomed, e.g. videos, appeals, works of art, as these can be put on display during the conference.

The final programme of the conference will be decided by the reference group.

Please submit an abstract or a description of your contribution of approximately 300 words to the conference co-ordinator by 15 February 2002. Do not forget to include your full contact information.

Please see the Arctic Council web-site for updates on the programme
<http://www.arctic-council.org/>

Contact

Because of limited participation, people interested in the conference are encouraged to contact the conference co-ordinator as well as their country's representative in the reference group. The conference co-ordinator and members of the reference group will also answer any further questions concerning the conference. Further information can also be found at the Arctic Council web-site <http://www.arctic-council.org>

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