



**UArctic**

**ConnectED Project Deliverable**

# **Best Practice from Researcher Visits**

# Content

<b>UiT The Arctic University of Norway</b>	<b>3</b>
<hr/>	
<b>University of Iceland</b>	<b>7</b>
<hr/>	
<b>University of Aberdeen, Scotland</b>	<b>9</b>
<hr/>	
<b>University of Lapland and University of Prince Edward Island</b>	<b>14</b>
<hr/>	
<b>University of the Faroe Islands</b>	<b>16</b>
<hr/>	
<b>Academic best practice</b>	<b>18</b>
<hr/>	
<b>Networking best practice</b>	<b>19</b>
<hr/>	
<b>Interpersonal experiential gains</b>	<b>20</b>
<hr/>	
<b>Visit as source of other projects/publications</b>	<b>20</b>
<hr/>	





**Country:** Norway and USA

**University:** UiT The Arctic University of Norway and University of Alaska, Anchorage

**Participants:** Gregor Ross Dørum Maxwell and Anne-Mette Bjøru

## Academic best practice

We presented a master's seminar Building Indigenous and Inclusive Education Across the Arctic at UAA, 17:30-19:00 on 8<sup>th</sup> April 2024.

Across the Arctic, schools struggle to meet the needs of all students, especially Indigenous students and those who have learning disabilities. Education systems are needed that allow students to study in institutions grounded in their own cultures and languages, regardless of whether they are newcomers or Indigenous, and that prepare them to succeed regardless of learning differences. In this seminar,

we discuss initiatives to create more Indigenous and inclusive learning environments and prepare teachers to be successful in these primary and secondary education settings in Alaska, Canada, Greenland, and Norway.

The seminar was recorded and can be viewed here:

[www.iseralaska.org/2024/05/recording-now-available-from-april-8-2024-webinar-titled-building-indigenous-and-inclusive-education-across-the-arctic/](http://www.iseralaska.org/2024/05/recording-now-available-from-april-8-2024-webinar-titled-building-indigenous-and-inclusive-education-across-the-arctic/)



From left to right: Anne Mette, Gregor Maxwell, Kirk Anderson, Diane Hirshberg

## Networking best practice

We attended the Arctic Encounter conference 10-12<sup>th</sup> April 2024.

[www.arcticencounter.com](http://www.arcticencounter.com) where we presented a panel discussion during session twenty one, 11:15-12:15 on 12<sup>th</sup> April.

**Title:** Building Indigenous and Inclusive Education Across the Arctic  
**Hosted by:** UAA Institute of Social and Economic Research & UArctic  
**Moderator:** Dr. Diane Hirshberg, Director, UAA Institute of Social and Economic Research, Professor of Education Policy, University of Alaska Anchorage, and Vice President – Academic, University of the Arctic (United States)

Dr. Kirk Anderson, Professor of Educational Administration, Memorial University of Newfoundland and

University of the Arctic Chair in School Effectiveness and School Improvement Canada (Canada)

Dr. Panigkaq Agatha John-Shields, Assistant Professor of Indigenizing Education, University of Alaska Anchorage (United States)

Dr. Gregor Ross Dørum Maxwell, Associate Professor in Pedagogy and Inclusive and Special Education, UiT – The Arctic University of Norway (Norway)

Ms. Anne-Mette Bjørn, Lecturer, Master's program in Special Education, UiT – The Arctic University of Norway, Campus Alta (Norway)

Mr. Carl Egede Bøggild, Ph.D., Special Advisor, Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Church (Greenland)

## Interpersonal experiential gains

On the first day we partook in an Arctic Exchange Forum of the School of Education: **Perspectives on Indigenizing Education**. Guest Speakers: Anne-Mette Bjørn, Gregor Ross Dørum Maxwell, Kirk Anderson. UAA Speakers: Panigkag John-Shields, and Michele Yatchmeneff. Moderator: Dr. Tonia Dousay. Students and academic staff could attend both in person and follow online.

Further highlights of our two days visiting schools in the local area. We visited the Clare Swan Early Learning Center, Rilke Schule (German immersion school), and Romig Middle School. The Clare Swan Early Learning Center showcased how the Head Start educational program benefits Alaska Natives and American Indian pre-school

Natives and American Indian pre-school children. Rilke Schule gave an insight into how multi-language communities tackle education while sustaining interest in German language and culture. Romig Middle School is a large and diverse middle school with a very rich tapestry of nationalities and cultures represented in the school's population and highlighted how Anchorage successfully builds a cohesive and inclusive school.

In addition to the three school visits, we also visited the Anchorage District Education Center, and met with directors of the various local school programs. We discussed similarities and differences concerning recruitment, inclusive practices, and completion rates, amongst other themes.



# Visit as source of other projects/ publications

All of the participants are active members of the UArctic Thematic Network Teacher Education for Social Justice and Diversity, [Teacher Education for Social Justice and Diversity \(teachered-network.com\)](https://www.teachered-network.com). This network is successfully running seven projects and completed and additional six (see [www.teachered-network.com/projects/](https://www.teachered-network.com/projects/)). These many projects have resulted in over thirty academic publications in the last five years along with a collection of webinars and video resources being compiled (see [Resources: Teacher Education for Social Justice and Diversity \(teachered-network.com\)](https://www.teachered-network.com/resources/)). The active nature of the network means future collaboration is most likely, particularly in light of being able to meet and network in Anchorage.

## Other relevant comments

The visit to UAA in the spring of 2024 gave us the opportunity to combine field visits with a conference. We experienced a rich and interesting program that covered both academic and cultural themes and enabled us to connect with teachers and staff in schools as well as build on academic relationships with a view to further collaboration.



**Country:** Iceland  
**University:** University of Iceland  
**Participants:** Edda Óskarsdóttir and Hermína Gunnþórsdóttir

## Academic best practice

From our visit to Aberdeen, we have taken work on a Framework for inclusion that Kirsten Darling McQuistan presented to us, and we can use in the courses we teach at our universities.

## Networking best practice

We can organise best practice for networking into three main fields:  
**Interdependence:** The importance of agency, learning networks and belongingness for teachers and learners.  
**Inclusion:** Deepening connections to wellbeing and learning through inclusion – breaking down barriers to equity.

**Improvement:** Working together to improve our pedagogy and practice, including digital, in a range of learning contexts.

Kirsten Darling-McQuistan presenting



## Visit as source of other projects/ publications

We have a paper in the making based on connections with partners from Norway.

## Other relevant comments

We find that connecting with colleagues in other universities is of high importance to share knowledge and create bonds for future collaboration.



Visiting Dunnottar school, Stonehaven

## Interpersonal experiential gains

The gains from the visits were the opportunities to hear from our colleagues and discuss our practice. We got involved in collaborative conversations about inclusive education and practice and about university pedagogy. The focus was to enhance professional agency and belonging to support improvement and equity of outcome for all learners.







**Country:** Scotland and Norway

**University:** University of Aberdeen and Arctic University of Norway, Tromsø

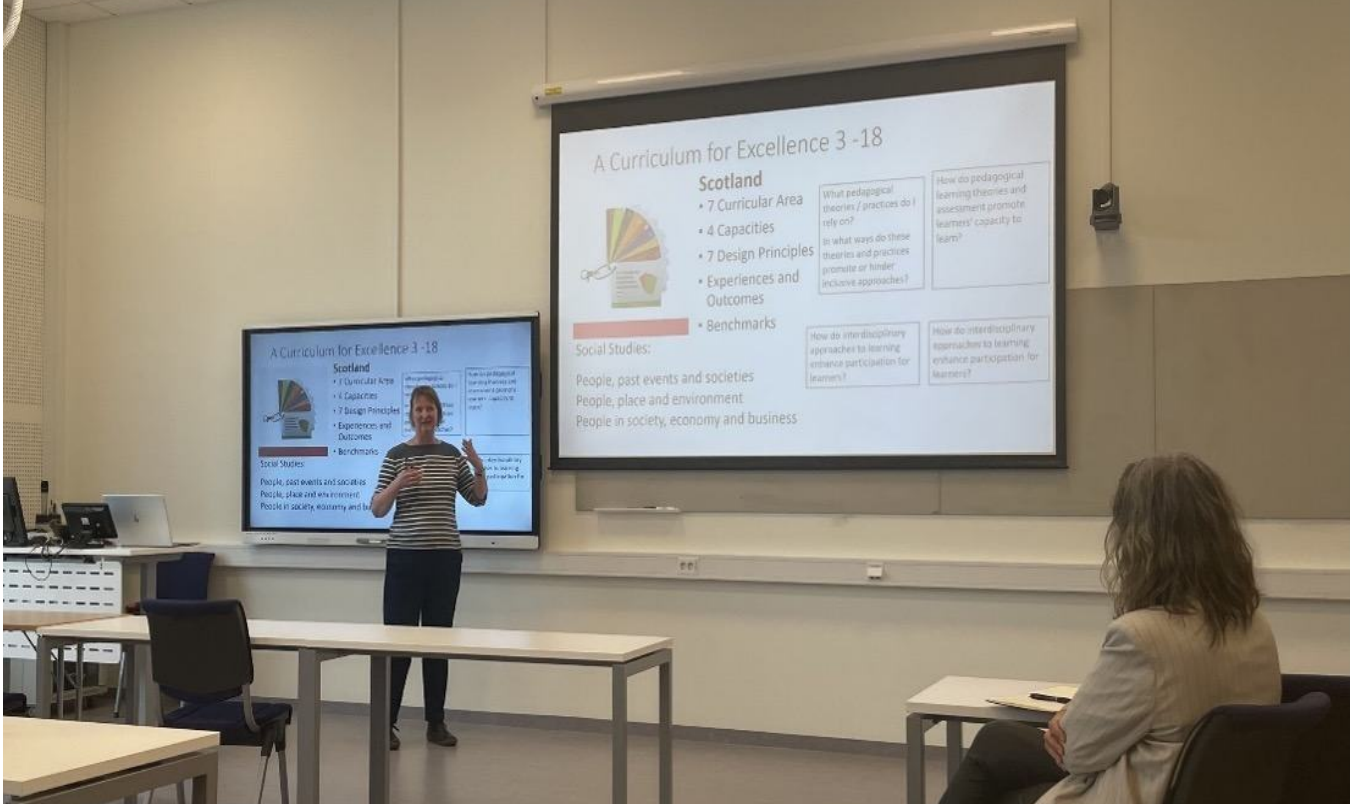
**Participants:** Liz Curtis, Kirsten Darling-McQuistan and Anne-Mette Bjøru

## Academic best practice

Through our visits to local schools and discussions with our colleagues, three main themes emanated that we believe capture the important educational practices: 1) more equal power-relations; 2) place-based responsive practices; 3) decolonising schooling.

**More equal power-relations between children and adults within schools:** It became evident to us that some of the entrenched, uneven power relations that are a prominent part of the Scottish education system, do not seem to be a feature of the practices we observed when visiting schools in Tromsø. This difference was at times an intangible feature of the schools we visited – a feeling, or ‘ethos’ created.

There were however some more explicit indicators that we were drawn to, signalled by seemingly simple acts, including, for example, that children and teachers all refer to each other by first name, which, from our perspective ‘levelled’ relationships within the classroom and school community more widely. Another explicit example was the ways in which children had autonomy over resources. One child took full control over their hearing aids. This may seem something odd to pick up on – of course all children should be ‘in charge’ of the tools that help them to participate more fully in life – but in Scotland such tools would, in some cases at least, be managed by an adult. This observation is particularly



Liz Curtis sharing insights from her work as a Teacher Educator in Scotland, specialising in Social Studies


insightful at a time in Scotland within the UNCRC has been incorporated into Scot's Law. Such a timely insight gives us, as Teacher Educators, much to think about and consider when we think about the 'rights of the child' and how we can 'prepare' students to honour children's rights within a school system that continues to be heavily influenced by understandings of children as 'incomplete' 'immature' and 'not yet fully developed'.

**Place-based / responsive practices:**

During our visits to schools, we saw how schools are harnessing the affordances of the local environment to enrich the curriculum through camping, hiking, swimming, etc. While it is the case that many schools in Scotland make use of the 'outdoors' – these interactions are usually 'planned for', risk assessed (and even

risk adverse) and explicitly connected to the formal curriculum. The engagement with place in the schools we visited in Tromsø had a different tone: the interactions felt more spontaneous and embedded. It also involved a level of risk. For example, children were actively encouraged to play in and with the snow and to play in and with a large puddle in the playground, and one of the schools which we visited had a community built climbing wall in their gym, which children and families alike could use, managing their own risk. In contrast, in Scotland, children are usually brought indoors if it's wet and are actively discouraged from playing in-and-with snow and water in the playground.

**Decolonising Schooling:** During one school visit in particular, we could see how the school had created provision



and space to value and nurture Saami language, heritage and culture within a ‘mainstream’ primary school. While we could not understand the discussion, it was wonderful to observe and ‘feel’ the different qualities of the lesson and atmosphere in the room. The provision is an important act of decolonisation. Whilst similar provision is made for Gaelic medium education in Scotland, such an insight has surfaced questions about how we might think about more linguistically and culturally diverse classrooms in Scotland as an important part of the rights-based agenda and continuing ambitions to enhance inclusion in our schools.

## Networking best practice

Networking occurred in different spheres including within the University and the community.

### University Campus (UiT):

Opportunities to share insights as part of an established research group, led by Professor Gry Paulgaard. Dr Liz

Curtis shared insights from her work as a Teacher Educator in Scotland, specialising in Social Studies. This opportunity led to thought-provoking discussion in relation to themes of colonisation, inclusion and diversity. This opportunity strengthened our connection with Gry and other members of the department, who we have since engaged in further work with.

**Community:** We were invited to attend the opening of a specially curated gallery exhibition named, Gaba. This exhibition created space for the work of female, Saami artists, who are normally excluded from such spaces. The exhibition engaged with and surfaced the themes of colonisation, indigenous practices and ways of being, relationships and connections with place and nature. Given our interactions and experiences within the University and schools, it was therefore a highly enriching space that enabled us to grapple more deeply with the practices we had been discussing and exploring within the context of education. We made a meaningful connection with the curator of the exhibition, who we may be able to work with in the future.

# Interpersonal experiential gains

Not only did the experience enrich the connections within our current networks, particularly with Anne-Mette, through sustained, in-person interactions, there were also opportunities to expand our current network, for example, we discovered that early years' researchers at UiT were already aware of Liz Curtis's work on children's specialities through their mutual work with Prof Abi Hackett, (Sheffield Hallam University). This was an unexpected link and one which we can build on in the future.

The formal and informal interactions and opportunities for growth were equally valuable in offering deeper insights into Indigenous ways of being, particularly the Saami people. The exchange also more clearly surfaced the devastating, colonising impact western forms of education had on Indigenous communities

The damage caused by the eradication of Indigenous languages, ways of being and knowing were evident through almost all our interactions.

Throughout the exchange, the arts helped to provoke these reflections. One particularly powerful example is embroidery within UiT, Tromsø campus (see image 3), which illustrates the movement of Saami people and the intimate relationships they have with the land, nature and seasons. This embroidery makes the disconnect between 'formal 'Western' curricula' and Indigenous ways of being and knowing clear and caused us to reflect deeply on what this means for Arctic regions and also within Scotland where traditions and heritages associates particularly with our rural and remote Highland communities are often excluded and othered.

## Visit as source of other projects/ publications

We used our experience to help support our thinking and the development of a paper titled: Darling-McQuistan, K., Ekberg, N., Snow, K., Alerby, E., Curtis, L. and Jannok-Nutti, Y., 2023. **Arctic teacher education and educator training: a postcolonial review of online approaches and practices**. *Education in the North*, 30(2), pp.24-49, which was co-authored with other academics from across Arctic regions.

Our experiences also shaped a conference presentation, titled: **Northern Pedagogy: continuing the conversations** (SERA conference 2023)





**Country:** Finland and Canada

**University:** University of Lapland and University of Prince Edward Island

**Participants:** Pigga Keskitalo and Laila Nutti

## **Academic best practice**

Supervisor and doctoral student traveling together share a peaceful living experience and get to know each other, creating a domino effect of positive outcomes. Indigenous content was significantly enriched.

## **Networking best practice**

It's useful to see how Indigenous practice are carried out in different parts of the northern world. It was different enough. It was great to learn that Island Studies is such a well-developed field.

## **Interpersonal experiential gains**

The experience of traveling and working together allows the supervisor and doctoral student to build a stronger interpersonal relationship, gain a deeper understanding of each other's perspectives, and foster collaboration. This shared experience not only enhances their professional rapport but also contributes to personal growth and mutual respect. This insight gained through such close interaction can lead to improved communication, increased empathy, and a more cohesive working dynamic, which can have lasting positive effects on their academic and research endeavors.



Pigga Keskitalo observing a class session

## Visit as source of other projects/publications

The academic exchange at the UPEI served as a fertile ground for generating new ideas and potential collaborations for future projects and publications. Engaging with different educational practices, cultural experiences, and academic perspectives provided unique insights that can be translated into research articles, conference presentations, and collaborative studies. The diverse interactions and shared knowledge gained during the visit have the potential to inspire innovative approaches to Indigenous education and language studies, paving the way

for impactful academic contributions and continued international partnerships.

## Other relevant comments

The program was great and rich. People are really nice. We experienced such warm hospitality. The people at UPEI were incredibly welcoming and supportive, creating a friendly and conducive environment for both academic and cultural exchange.

You can check the video of the lecture here:

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=EvZPoOWRC-A&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EvZPoOWRC-A&feature=youtu.be)





**Country:** Faroe Islands  
**University:** University of the Faroe Islands  
**Participants:** Kalpana Vijayarathan-R and Knút Háberg Eysturstein

## Academic best practice

The close cooperation between the Faculty of Education at University of Lapland and the Lapin University Teacher Training School in Rovaniemi makes for a meaningful integration between teacher education and teacher training at various levels of education.

## Academic best practice

Getting to meet with PhD students and researchers in educational fields was a rewarding experience. An opportunity to share insights, frustrations and personal stories on the journey both to and from PhD studies.

Kalpana Vijayarathan-R & Knút Háberg Eysturstein outside the University of Lapland







The Teacher Education School, Rovaniemi, Finland

## Interpersonal experiential gains

Many opportunities for fruitful discussion and reflecting upon the visits, meetings and observations done during our research visit to University of Lapland.

## Visit as source of other projects/publications

The universities all belong to the [Teacher Education for Social Justice and Diversity \(teachered-network.com\)](https://teachered-network.com). The seeds for other

projects were sown here. A book proposal was born of this inviting the network participants to contribute to it. It also tied in with the Northern Pedagogies project, out of which have been established cooperation for funding for further projects and academic publications.

## Other relevant comments

Great to see how highly regarded and respected teacher education is in Finnish society, and especially good to see how the pupils at the elementary schools we visited expressed a feeling of safety and security, that there was no bullying.



**Country:** USA

**University:** University of Alaska, Anchorage

**Participants:** Diane Hirshberg and Panigkaq Agatha John Shields

## Academic best practice

In the schools, we saw innovative and diverse learning spaces – designing buildings that encourage flexible grouping, hands on learning, also that provide opportunities for high level technical training on advanced equipment to youth interested in trades and technical vocations rather than academic pursuits. The upper secondary school provides both advanced career and technical training and academic training, so students can make an informed choices about their futures.

But there's a balance between investing in facilities and equipment and investing in

teachers to make sure there are sufficient numbers of educators and that they are prepared to teach effectively in different spaces and to use the facilities in ways that genuinely enhance educational experiences. That is something that may not be fully in place yet from our conversations with educators there.

In the teacher education institution, there was a great deal of focus on community building with the students. Having the all-college gatherings on Fridays made for a very strong sense of shared purpose and a genuinely caring and connected group of future teachers.



Frískúlin - a private, rural school

## Networking best practice

The visit included a really good mix of school visits and opportunities to learn about the culture, history and nature of the place. We were somewhat time-constrained with only 5 working days in our visit, but we developed a good sense of the place, and the evening meals with colleagues helped fill in some of what we didn't glean during the site visits. We also had time on our own especially on the last weekend and in bits and pieces during the week that allowed us to walk through the town, visit museums, and to meet local residents through casual interactions. We didn't have a chance to give any talks to students or other faculty, and that is

something that I think should be required in networking visits. There was a useful visit to the Faroese Research Council that offered insight into the fields of research, the funding options and challenges and opportunities for research in the islands.



From left to right: Knút Háberg Eysturstein, Martin Zachariasen (Rector), Magni Mohr (pro-rector for research), Panigkaq Agatha John Shields, Diane Hirshberg & Kalpana Vijayarathan-R

## Interpersonal experiential gains

This was the first trip abroad for Panigkaq. She described this as a “different worldview experience”. After the law conference, she reflected on the different languages spoken, academic terms she wasn’t familiar with and information overload – a very accurate description for us both, and a huge learning curve.

## Visit as source of other projects/publications

This visit allowed Diane to talk with the University of the Faroe Islands Rector and Vice Rector Research about UArctic engagement, and I believe that helped contribute to the interest in more direct engagement; the UArctic University of the Faroe Islands will host the next UArctic Congress in June 2026!

Literacy horse in Skúlin á Fløtum





**UArcctic**