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Navigating International, Interdisciplinary, and Indigenous Collaborative Inquiry

Olga Ulturgasheva
University of Cambridge

Lisa Wexler
University of Massachusetts, Amherst

Michael Kral
University of Illinois

James Allen
University of Alaska Fairbanks

Gerald V. Mohatt
University of Alaska Fairbanks

See next page for additional authors

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Authors

Olga Ulturgasheva, Lisa Wexler, Michael Kral, James Allen, Gerald V. Mohatt, and Kristine Nystad

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Abstract

This report describes how multiple community constituents came together with university researchers to develop a shared agenda for studying young indigenous people in five international circumpolar communities. The paper focuses on the setup and process of an initial face-to-face methodological planning workshop involving youth and adult community members and academics. Members of Yup'ik, Inupiat, Eveny, Inuit, and Sámi communities from Siberia to Norway participated in the workshop and engaged in negotiations to arrive at shared research interests. This was essential since the ultimate goal of the research is translational and transformative, spurring social action in communities. Describing the beginning stage of this project and the underlying participatory methodology offers insight into how the approach engaged community members with varying degrees of sustained interest and practical success. It, therefore, articulates a methodological approach for international community-based participatory research.

Community-based participatory research (CBPR) promises to bridge the gap between research and practice, and extend the benefits of both. This is particularly important in indigenous communities that are often the subject of researchers' scrutiny but too rarely reap direct benefits from the research process (LaVeaux & Christopher, 2009). This paper describes the first phase of an international, interdisciplinary CBPR study of indigenous resilience in the Arctic. The project builds on and extends local understandings of Alaskan Inupiaq and Yupik, Canadian Inuit, Norwegian Sámi, and Siberian Eveny people by bringing them into dialogue with international perspectives from youth and adults from these five different communities. The paper recounts the development of the project and how the process worked with varying degrees of sustained interest and practical success. It articulates a methodological approach for international CBPR.

The aim of this project is to document indigenous understandings of resilience in circumpolar settings. This is of intense interest to participating communities and important to the academic literature. Rapid social change has dramatically affected the political, cultural, and economic systems of circumpolar indigenous peoples. The impact of a shared colonial history and contemporary social suffering among indigenous communities in the Arctic has been extensively documented over decades of Arctic social science research, most recently in the *Arctic Human Development Report* (2004) and the *Survey of*

Living Conditions in the Arctic (2007). More recent directions in the literature considered the protective value of community and cultural factors in the lives of young indigenous people. This research links indigenous resilience and well-being with cultural continuity, enculturation in the culture of origin, and community control and action (e.g. Allen, Mohatt, Fok, Henry, & People Awakening Team, 2009; Chandler & Lalonde, 1998; Kral & Idlout, 2009). These studies identify a connection between positive outcomes, or resilience (the ability to overcome acute and cumulative stressors), and the successful negotiation of indigenous and dominant cultural expectations. However, they fail to provide a coherent understanding of how this is done in adolescence. The project attempts to generate new insights into how rapid social change is manifested in the moving expectations and challenges young indigenous people face in worlds much different from that of their parents and grandparents. This study aims to understand how these youth negotiate these difficulties as they become adults.

To investigate indigenous youth resilience, the project focuses on pathways to adulthood in five indigenous circumpolar communities: Northeast Siberia (Eveny); Northwest Alaska (Inupiat); Southwest Alaska (Yup'ik); Nunavut, Canada (Inuit); and Norway (Sámi). The research aims to describe how young people understand and respond to the challenges they face, and to portray the contexts that give rise to them. The study aims to explore youth resilience within categories of

kinship and relatedness that are core to circum-polar indigenous cultures (e.g., Bodenhorn, 2000; Briggs, 1998; Brody, 2001; Condon, 1990; Kerttula, 2000; Nuttall, 1992; Vitebsky, 2005). To gain a culturally grounded picture of how indigenous youth negotiate tensions of rapid social change, we intend to elicit the experiences, meaning systems, and cultural contexts using collaborative discursive processes (Wexler, Dufulvio, & Burke, 2009). This focal point came from many years of collaborative research in the participating communities.

The project embraces a CBPR perspective defined as:

a collaborative process that equitably involves all partners in the research process and recognizes the unique strengths that each brings. CBPR begins with a research topic of importance to the community with the aim of combining knowledge and action for social change to improve community health and eliminate health disparities (Minkler, Blackwell, Thompson, & Tamir, 2003, p. 1210).

All of the academic researchers involved in the study have a long history in their host community. Each of the four non-indigenous university researchers has over a decade of collaborative research experience with their respective communities, while two of the university researchers are indigenous and working with their home communities. These previous CBPR relationships have enabled researchers to engage local people more fully in the research process and with a tone of shared respect (NAHO, 2007; Smith, 1999). Community member involvement ensures that local, situated knowledge guides research and informs the production of knowledge, and communities are invested in (and in joint control of) the outcomes from it.

CBPR and participatory action research (PAR) developed out of collective action for social justice, much of it taking place outside of academic settings (Brydon-Miller, Kral, Maguire, Noffke, & Sabhlok, in press). Rather than being a particular research method, it is a relational method of sharing power in the research process from beginning to end, a decolonizing method of collaboration and respect (Kidd & Kral, 2005). Many indigenous communities have had bad experiences with researchers who have studied their lives and then never returned or brought anything back to the community that might be helpful (Smith, 1999). CBPR and PAR are ways of

doing research that have become acceptable, even required, in indigenous communities (Cochran et al., 2008; Holkup, Tripp-Reimer, Salois, & Weinert, 2004; LaVeaux & Christopher, 2009). In the United States, a tribal participatory research model has been developed that emphasizes the inclusion of community members and the social construction of knowledge (Fisher & Ball, 2002; Fisher & Ball, 2003). Such tribal participatory research has been conducted on topics ranging from health (Manson, McGoughh, Henderson, & Buchwald, 2007) to environmental justice (Minkler, Vasquez, & Tajik, 2008) and water quality (Crescentia, et al., 2010). Internationally, numerous indigenous organizations, commissions, and health research groups have developed ethical principles of research that include indigenous community participation as standard practice (American Indian Law Center, 1999; Australian Health Ethics Committee National Health and Medical Research Council, 2005; Canadian Institutes for Health Research, 2007; National Aboriginal Health Organization, 2007; National Health and Medical Research Council, 2003; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1993), and several researchers have highlighted these ethical standards for work in indigenous communities (e.g., Castellano, 2004; Trimble, 2009).

Although there have been some examples of successful university-indigenous community partnerships (e.g. Mohatt, et. al, 2004; Kral & Idlout, 2006; Wexler, 2006), the practice of doing truly participatory research remains murky. It is particularly unclear how to facilitate and manage a large-scale international research project that actively engages diverse groups. Very little description of methods of community participation exists to guide the researcher in international research. This is particularly difficult with the variability of colonial timelines, sequences and details of colonial experience, differing contemporary national social policies, and critical cultural and linguistic distinctiveness. By describing details of the process of our participatory, international collaboration, this paper will identify benefits (and drawbacks) of one particular approach. More specifically, we will discuss the participatory research process we implemented as it unfolded in the first year of the project, which concluded with an international, face-to-face workshop. We concentrate on the work during this first year, as it has proven crucial and formative to the quality of the cross-site data we are now collecting, and more importantly, to the nature of the community co-researcher

relationships that we have now established, relationships that will outlive this project.

The international workshop aims were: to (1) develop platforms to negotiate across indigenous communities, age groups, and researchers and to use them to agree on decision-making protocols for a circumpolar research program focused on indigenous youth resilience; (2) identify consensual research questions on common stressors, resources, and developmental trajectories shaping resilience strategies in the circumpolar north among young people; and (3) link imposed social change and diverse cross-national social policies to stressors and resilience strategies of young people across sites. Basically, the research meeting between youth, adult, and elder community members and researchers established a shared set of research questions and data collection strategies to use in the circumpolar study. Moreover, the meeting was intended to provide indigenous youth and adults from each community with an opportunity to articulate their own social experiences while encountering and communicating with people from other field sites. This exchange was essential for facilitating community member participation in the cross-site study. In addition, the workshop was meant to generate new ideas about how to pursue collaborative inquiry across cultural, national, and disciplinary boundaries.

Developing Local Oversight, International Representation and Scientific Integrity

In this first phase of the study, each community established a Local Steering Committee (LSC) to guide the research from start to finish. The LSCs developed local research questions to structure the research in an emic (intracultural) way. The international workshop was intended to bring members of the LSCs together to arrive at a consensus around a shared core set of cross-site research questions. The local questions, then, needed to be modified in order to fit with the ecological frameworks across all the participating sites. Lastly, the university researchers were responsible for a research process and questions that were scientifically defensible, met sponsor expectations, were feasible, and could be accomplished within the time constraints of the study.

Though not the primary focus of our discussion, university researchers from diverse disciplines and cultural and ethnic backgrounds also were required to forge common ground through a merging of different perspectives. In this way, the experience of the university researchers,

by virtue of their composition of indigenous and non-indigenous researchers from North American and European perspectives, mirrored processes that unfolded when working with (and translating between) circumpolar indigenous communities in the participatory study. This interdisciplinary approach required the academic research team to think outside of their respective disciplines (clinical, community, and cultural psychology; public health; social work; medical and social/cultural anthropology; and education) in order to compromise and come to a shared approach. This is something each university researcher had already been doing in terms of collaborating with communities, but for this study we had to come to consensus on method from different epistemologies, synergistically merging them into something larger, and different, from any of the component disciplines.

Pre-Workshop Activities: Creating Space for International Collaboration

In order to initiate this process of international collaboration, the team of university researchers and LSC members (including youth) in each community helped develop the circumpolar workshop agenda to reflect their communities' perspectives and local interests. Several months before the workshop, the LSC from each community selected one adult and two young people from the communities to travel to this first international research workshop at the Scott Polar Research Institute, University of Cambridge. Selection of workshop participants involved local variations of a community nomination process. One site conducted a formal essay contest in their middle and high school, with the winners traveling to the workshop. Other sites nominated young people who best represented their community or who had promise and would benefit from the international experience. There were nine young people selected to attend the workshop, and as will be discussed later, only one of the selected youth was male. All the participating communities sent two young people, except the Siberian site where only one youth was selected due to passport and visa issues. Only three of the young people (both of the Sámi and one Alaskan Inupiaq) had traveled outside of their country before.

To encourage their participation, youth participants were asked to prepare a community portrait, in the form of a digital photographic slide show or video paired with a narrative they composed about their community. This, in effect, gave young people the opportunity to

“introduce their community to other groups across the circumpolar north at the workshop. The level of academic researcher involvement in this was different for each site. For instance, young people from one of the communities put together their community portrait without any outside guidance or equipment. Other sites developed their presentations with help from local adults or with academic researchers who were from the communities. The digital images, films, and accompanying stories kicked-off the international workshop.

In addition to the youth community portrait, the LSCs were asked to develop a historical timeline of their communities. All sites experienced a shared colonial history characterized by rapid, imposed social transition and forced acculturation. For instance, Siberian Eveny hunting and reindeer herding was subject in Soviet times to special development policies, which included constructing villages and placing children in boarding schools beginning in the 1930s. Mandatory schooling of Inupiaq children began 20 years earlier, but also involved curtailing traditional seasonal migrations. Although done differently and within different timeframes, the colonial policies of all participating communities included forced schooling, political domination, and suppression of the indigenous language. This results in a common legacy of cultural disruption. Asking community members to reflect on their colonial histories encouraged the participants to identify with potential shared areas of interest related to social and political policies that affected them all.

International Workshop Design

While designing the workshop, it was important for the researcher group to model a spirit of communication and cooperation with youth and community co-researchers. To emphasize the collaborative nature of the project, each component of the workshop was facilitated by a university and community co-researcher team that encouraged equal participation. This co-leadership format encouraged youth and adult community members to participate more fully in the exchange. This was vitally important for the workshop outcomes. The university researchers had conceptualized the original research proposal based on extensive work in these communities; this venue was intended to elicit exchanges and build a shared research agenda across the communities based on community members' input.

Researchers, as well as indigenous youth and

elders, spoke more than seven different languages. Our Sámi, Yup'ik, Inupiaq, and Nunavut Inuit colleagues agreed to use English to reduce logistical complexity and costs, as all but the Siberian Eveny participants spoke English. For them English was translated into Russian. Power imbalances were inherent in the choice to hold the meeting in English, since it is the third or second language of some of the participants. This also meant that meetings conducted in English were asymmetrical on an additional level. Language is a key form of expression, and some of our participants at times described the feeling of being paralyzed by not being fluent in English, unable to express their opinions. This caused some silences to be misunderstood. The researcher group often risked arriving at a false consensus as a result of these language issues.

To foster equal participation and ensure one group or individual did not dominate the proceedings, we organized the sessions in such a way that all groups and individuals were sequentially offered an opportunity to speak. Speaking was elective, and no one was required to speak at their turn. Participants were also asked to refrain from directly commenting on what a previous speaker had said. Following this initial turn taking, a second inclusive go-round was initiated for comment, discussion, or elaboration on what was stated previously. Often a participant's opinions were followed by a few more comments until no one had anything additional to add. Finally, at the end of a discussion session, one community-university co-researcher pair summarized what they had heard. To close a particular discussion, everyone was given a final chance to speak before moving on. These comments were integrated into summative statements. Though time consuming, we found this procedure increased opportunities for all attendees to speak, especially nonacademic participants.

To facilitate active exchange of ideas between indigenous youth and the older participants, the workshop included youth breakout sessions. This enabled young people to identify and discuss with each other their shared challenges, difficulties, and problems. The youth breakout sessions occurred alongside concurrent adult/elder breakout sessions. Breakout sessions conducted in a friendly and non-intimidating way encouraged youth participation, providing them with a key role in developing the research agenda. Each evening, a brief summary of the day's meeting and draft consensus statements from the day's work were compiled and translated for morning review.

How the Circumpolar Workshop Worked. International, Participatory Dialogue

The workshop began with youth presenting their shared ideas about the project and then presenting the digital community portraits. Young participants were encouraged to think about and utilize their collective voice by beginning the gathering with a youth meeting. Just prior to the start of the workshop, the youth met without adults to develop ideas about what they saw as the most important goals for this study. One young woman acted as spokesperson and shared their views with the full group to orient the workshop toward youth priorities. The youth views focused on strengths, struggles, and issues the youth thought were important to keep in mind as we began the research. After this short youth introduction, digital images, films, and accompanying stories produced by youth from each community launched the international workshop. They provided a context for discussion and introduced, in tangible form, a way to conceptualize cross-cultural and international research. The community portrait exercise proved to be engaging and invigorating as indigenous co-researchers introduced their communities to one another. These portraits also highlighted the viewpoints of young people, the priorities of their communities, and the value of youth involvement.

Digital images served as a rich source providing an accessible way for youth participants to begin to discern similarities and differences across sites. Youth asked each other questions about the social lives of the communities. Their cross-questioning raised a whole set of research interests, particularly involving issues related to challenges and difficulties of Arctic young people. Questions asked by the audience covered traditional food, clothes, transportation, schooling, family lives, subsistence activities, social events important for youth in their communities, indigenous language, sports activities, governments, housing, racism, institutional exclusion, and how to maintain strong native and cultural identity. The similarities of experience across communities served as another mode of solidarity.

Through these activities, young participants observed that many youth struggles across communities were strikingly similar and offered rich possibilities for comparative study. As just one example, the youth report identified a shared problem of trying to be successful in the face of the sometimes contradictory demands of their indigenous culture and those of the dominant one. This idea was extended when a school building

was shown in the portrait of one community. Young people talked about the challenges brought by the educational trajectories they feel compelled to follow in order to succeed. Because higher education is unavailable in most of the participants' home communities, many youth feel confronted with a hard choice between continuing school or staying in their community. This choice introduces a whole cluster of problems, including lack of jobs in local communities, outmigration to find employment, unavailability of local housing, high living costs in remote rural villages, and the prospect of leaving families and aspirations.

Such discussions highlighted rich, shared areas to pursue through data collection. These threads were identified at the close of each day of the workshop. On the last meeting day, the dominant themes served as a shared cross-site focus of the study. For instance, a young Siberian participant brought up young people's sense of "feeling trapped" in one remote settlement far from regional and urban centers. She expressed local sense of isolation by pointing at repercussions of withdrawal of the state support and collapse of transport infrastructure that has happened over last 15 years in Siberia. The expressed sense of "feeling trapped" resonated among young Alaskan Inupiat participants, who responded by speaking about a friend who had committed suicide after his girlfriend moved out of the community. His inability to join his girlfriend was seen as one of the reasons for his suicide.

This latter sense of "feeling trapped" among youth emphasized their sense of powerlessness in dealing with the lack of social and spatial mobility. This sense is especially acute when it comes to youth romantic relations, which have recently become more important for many indigenous young people than family relations. In contrast, Canadian Inuit pointed out that they do not feel so isolated from the Western world or from urban Canada, and their lives are still very family-centered. In responding to this comment, an adult participant from the Sámi community highlighted the local sense of rapid social change and its implications for Sámi youth:

[A]mong Sámi, life and social norms are changing too fast; young people do not know how to deal with their emotional feelings and deal with such important things in our lives as relationships and education. Lots of youth don't know what they need to be doing.

In regard to the issue of education and youth outmigration, a young Siberian Eveny reindeer herder responded by saying:

[Y]ou need a better degree of education to get a job in the city. Once you get a degree, you can't get hired in the village. Since there are no jobs in the village, everyone strives to move to the city. As a result youth leave the community.

Thus, the tension between fulfilling community and family expectations and succeeding in the dominant society became a recurring theme.

This strain was even articulated in regard to participating in subsistence activities, but this was different across sites. For example, one young participant talked about needing to have a job and regular wages in her Inupiaq Alaskan community in order to engage in traditional subsistence activities such as hunting and berry-picking. To summarize, she said: "Traditional ways do not fund our everyday needs. That is why very few are engaged in it." That is to say, one has to survive by earning money from a job, which then enables pursuit of traditional subsistence activities that require gas, boats, snow machines, etc.

The opposite was true for the Eveny community, as a youth explained:

It's crucial to be involved in reindeer herding on full-time basis. If it disappears, then there is no way you can survive. It's absolutely crucial to stay next to your family reindeer herd all the time. There is no alternative way to support ourselves and we can't have two jobs at the same time or have a job which would fund reindeer herding. There are no other ways to support yourself.

These juxtaposed perspectives were explored through dialogue at the meeting, and enabled cultural perspectives to be clarified and extended through the development of collaborative accounts. A young Alaskan Yupik participant mentioned her first dance without drawing out the significance of this initiation (or "coming of age") ritual for girls, a cultural developmental milestone. An adult community member made certain to emphasize this point, praising the girl for her accomplishment and humility in recounting it. Later, an Alaska youth encouraged all participants to dance in a circle as part of our meeting, bringing further immediacy to the significance.

At other points, elders and adults provided participants with a valuable intergenerational link that clarified distinctive local histories, customs, and institutional practices. As a Sámi elder explained:

[M]any young mothers from Sámi community, who had to work and earn money, were supposed to give children to kindergarten. As a result neither children had time to learn from their mothers, nor [did] mothers have a chance to teach their children Sámi ways of cooking food and sewing clothes. So the young generation of that time lost their chance to gain that knowledge. Nowadays, young women are able to learn those skills as a part of educational curriculum. These institutional arrangements bring hope to the community as knowledge and skills now might be taught and transmitted to our younger generation.

In this way, the methodology of structured engagement allowed for the exchange of ideas across generations, and for ideas to flow from youth into a broader historical interpretative frame provided by adults and in particular, elders. This was particularly valuable for the circumpolar youth who had not always been given the opportunity to have their own experiences put into a historical frame.

In addition, the format allowed youth to be heard by their elders, something that is not offered to young people in the participating communities as often as they would like. As one young Inuit participant put it:

In our community, we, the youth, are pretty fluent in Inuktitut and know well about our culture, [more] than the rest of communities in the Canadian North. But the important issue is that our adults need to try to understand us youth. We are dealing with the stuff they didn't have to deal with when they were young. We know their life was hard but we are dealing with the problems which are also quite hard.

Here, the issue of interaction and exchange across generations emerged as a vital community interest, and another important point for inquiry.

After three days of such youth discussions, highlighting both similarities and differences, an adult representative from the Inupiaq community summarized in this way:

We have heard lots of positive things here. This is what inspires youth in so many positive ways, 'cause...Native elders know [have been through] so many negative things. So youth don't have to repeat the mistakes we did and some of the stuff we had to go through growing up—oppression, losing our cultural ways and languages. Our youth don't have to. In my home area there needs to be strong relationships between adults and youth. ...To help each other, especially when youth come from problem families and there is no support from the family, youth can help; they can sit and speak to each other. Youth often step up for each other and that's a good thing. I saw today how it is done internationally. I admire the stories, especially international ones.

Differences across sites were another dominant theme. Youth participants continually questioned and compared what they noticed about their home communities and those of other youth participants. Although all young participants were indigenous, a major difference between communities is the extent of use of the indigenous language in each. Two of the Alaskan Native young people mentioned to one of the adult members that the Sámi youth spoke to each other only in their native language. One of the young people then asked the adult, "How do they do that, how have they learned to speak their own language?" In contrast, none of the youth in her village spoke the indigenous language although the adults and elders did. She was perplexed, asking about profound issues of cultural and linguistic retention, and learning about varying effects of colonial language policies.

In this way, throughout the days of the workshop, participants began to discern convergent interests and define the parameters of future work. We have illustrated the process through a few examples, which suggest important areas for comparative analysis. Listening to suggestions, personal reflections, and points raised by young, adult, and elder community members allowed the university researchers to formulate common cross-site research questions and identify important content areas for inquiry.

The final day of the workshop was devoted solely to arriving at consensus. The core research questions were finalized. These common cross-site research questions can be summarized as:

- What challenges do youth face (i.e., drugs, suicide, transportation, finances)?
- What are the common and distinctive values shared between the circumpolar, indigenous regions represented and across the generations living in these regions?
- What are the experiences of racism and exclusion, and how are youth, in response, navigating ways into the larger society?
- How are young people fitting into local, regional, and national institutions, including education, work, and family?
- How are young people making these perspectives known to adults, elders, and other young people in their community?
- What are youth perspectives on their identity and culture, including language, and how does culture help youth to grow and be healthy?

Preliminary ideas were recorded and discussed in the aforementioned round-robin style to allow all participants to comment on, extend, or change the areas of focus.

Reflecting on What Worked Best

This paper describes how we brought youth and adult community members from five cultural groups across four countries together to develop a shared research program. The established relationships between the university researchers and the communities enabled the research process to begin locally even before funding was secured. More specifically, the research questions were established collaboratively across researchers and communities in a two-tiered process, beginning locally and culminating in a face-to-face workshop. This process began with each LSC first discussing research questions of interest to their community. This was followed by community representatives meeting at the Cambridge workshop. Before coming together, each community agreed to have the same cross-site interview protocol for comparison, and each had established some general areas of local interest. This preparation facilitated lively discussions about overlapping interests related to youth stress and resilience across the circumpolar north. The workshop structure gave youth many opportunities to influence the direction of the study, and the ongoing process of listening, reflecting, and engaging in dialogue, encouraged a form of consensus that was essential to reaching the goals of the meeting.

We think it vital that this meeting was in

person, not over email or a phone conference. At this first international workshop, we were able to get to know each other better this way, moving beyond the development of methodology to having people introduce their communities to one another and to share their experiences and ideas. We ate meals together, took a short boat trip together, were hosted one evening by Pembroke College of Cambridge University, explored Cambridge together, and developed a working solidarity that we believe is critical to the success of this study.

In retrospect, the workshop design worked to facilitate youth involvement. Starting with a meeting of young people and opening the general discussion with youth-produced digital portraits of their communities gave young participants an active role in setting the meeting goals and working to meet them. It also catalyzed communication across generations and cultural groups. The visual imagery of the community portraits gave all participants the opportunity to see other communities with shared environmental characteristics, presenting both similar and very different youth experiences. This modality of engaging youth in the research process has emerged as one way to integrate their perspectives and voices into the research agenda. This allowed participants to reflect on conditions that could account for both differences and similarities. Through continued dialogue, along with the historical personal perspectives of adults and elders, young participants began to talk about the ways in which their life experiences both converged and diverged. The deeper intergenerational and cross-site dialogue brought social, economic, and political issues of difference to the forefront, and encouraged community participants, young and old, to investigate the ways that these also play out in their everyday lives.

These discussions and consensual research foci structured the subsequent directions of the project. The university researchers continued working with their respective communities, and a cross-site interview protocol was constructed based on the ideas developed at the workshop. This protocol was shared with the LSCs at each community and blended with additional local research questions of interest. At the time of this writing, Phase II of the study is under way as interviews are completed in all communities. The Siberian community was first to complete data collection, and we learned lessons from their experience that helped in the other communities (for example, having shorter interview sessions with younger participants and

clarifying some of the questions). Phases III and IV are data translation, transcription, collaborative analysis, and dissemination.

In Phase IV we will meet again as university researchers and representative LSC youth, adult, and elder members to discuss cross-site analysis, dissemination, and action. The resilience strategies identified among youth in this study will be used by the communities for programs and policies to develop youth well-being. In one community, the LSC is already planning for the elementary and high schools to use the findings, in addition to the local Community Wellness Committee. It is thus the intention of the participating communities to employ these results for community action toward youth suicide prevention and well-being.

Conclusion

We have provided in some detail the participatory methods in this international, community health research project. This approach is not only symbolically important for indigenous communities who have been the subjects of much inquiry; it also directs the research to incorporate the questions of significance to the participating communities. This kind of knowledge generation both extends the literature and has real effects on the community members who participate in it. Participatory research fosters engagement by community members, who then have a stake in these projects. This is the meaning of community-based research; it is the community's research project. This is how the LSCs in this study view the research, as they have helped develop the research questions and methods and gather the data and will be involved in interpretation and dissemination. This form of research is thus member-driven and meaningful to community members, and is designed to be of benefit to the community.

We believe the workshop was successful, in part, because of how the meeting was structured. Beginning with the youth meeting, young people were able to coalesce as a group and begin to articulate their shared experiences and interests. Starting the larger gathering with an accessible platform—in this case images and stories about each of the participating sites—invited youth and adults to represent themselves as experts about their communities. This empowering model was strengthened by the equal turn-taking process and the co-facilitation of the meeting by university and community participants.

This workshop was an important first step, but only a first step, in the research process. Though it provided ideas and even shared hypotheses for the

next phase of data collection, it left open many unanswered questions. Out of our work, a core set of cross-site interview questions was finalized. The next task in this process will require similar agreement surrounding a consensual cross-site analytic strategy spanning a diverse set of cultures, countries, communities, and academic disciplines.

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About the Authors

Olga Ulturgasheva is a post-doctoral research fellow at the Scott Polar Research Institute, University of Cambridge, United Kingdom. Lisa Wexler is an assistant professor of Community Health Studies in the School of Public Health and Health Sciences at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. Michael Kral is an assistant professor of psychology at University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. James Allen is a professor of psychology at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. The late Gerald V. Mohatt was director of the Center for Alaska Native Health Research and a professor of psychology at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. Kristine Nystad is an assistant professor at Sámi University College, Kautokeino, Norway.