

# Negotiating Pathways to Adulthood: Social Change and Indigenous Culture in Four Circumpolar Communities

**Project number:** EOI 1266

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**Update (2009):**

This comparative, collaborative, and participatory circumpolar project aims to explore responses to rapid social transition through the life experiences of circumpolar youth. The proposed study will examine 100 youth life history narratives in an Alaska Inupiat, Alaska Yup'ik, Canadian Inuit, Norwegian Sámi, and Siberian Eveny community to identify shared and divergent stressors and patterns of resilience in the transition to adulthood. Youth resilience is defined as the ability to overcome acute and on-going difficulties in the pathway to adulthood. We seek to identify cultural strategies and resources that characterize resiliency across two age groups ages 11-14 and 15-18, and across gender. The collaborative group includes Michael Kral, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, Lisa Wexler, University of Massachusetts-Amherst, James Allen and Gerald Mohatt, University of Alaska Fairbanks. Olga Ulturgasheva, Cambridge University is key personnel, and Kim Hopper, Columbia University and Benedicte Ingstad, University of Oslo are consultants. Krsitine Nystad, Sámi University College, has joined the project and will conduct research at the Sámi site.

**Specific aims are:**

- Specific Aim 1: Describe the stressors and the social and material resources shaping the culturally patterned resilience strategies of Indigenous young people, by age group—early and late adolescence—and gender.
- Specific Aim 2: Compare the stressors and the culturally patterned resilience strategies of young people across sites.
- Specific Aim 3: Describe the influences of diverse cross-national educational and social policies on young people's stressors and resilience strategies across circumpolar sites.

In the first 16 months of this project, the group has:

- Conducted weekly meetings of the international investigatory group
- Recruited a Sámi investigator with external funding and a Sámi research site
- Obtained IRB, research committee, and local tribal approvals at all sites
- Established Local Steering Committees of community members and youth at each site
- Organized and held an international Circumpolar Steering Committee meeting at Scott Polar Institute, Cambridge University, in May 2009 with youth and adult community

members from all five sites to initiate collaborations and to establish the research question, methodologies, and timeline with the communities

- Submitted a manuscript for peer review on the methods used at the international meeting
- Finalized a cross-site core interview protocol
- Completed interviews at the Eveny site
- Conducted visits to all sites by investigators
- Initiated planning for Investigator working conference on cross-site analysis at Scott Polar Institute, Cambridge University, for May 2010
- Initiated planning and application for a proposed video-voice component to the study

Abstract Ipy Oslo Science Conference June 8-12. 2010

## The Circumpolar Indigenous Pathways to Adulthood study preliminary finding and development of a cross site comparative methodology in international collaborative research

Time: Saturday 12 June 12:00 Location: Room E6

T Ford<sup>1</sup>, K Nystad<sup>2</sup>, O Ulturgasheva<sup>3</sup>, M Kral<sup>4</sup>, L Wexler<sup>5</sup>, J Allen<sup>1</sup>

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The purpose of the Circumpolar Ingenious Pathways to Adulthood (CIPA) is to gain a better understanding of shared and divergent stressors and pathways to overcome the stressors as youth develop into adults. The focus of CIPA is on resilience, that is, youths' ability to overcome acute and on-going difficulties. CIPA is an international study examining 100 life narratives from an Alaska Inupiat, Alaska Yup'ik, Canadian Inuit, Norwegian Sámi, and Siberian Eveny communities. The 100 youth include 20 youth from each community (5 females and 5 males age 11-14 and 5 females and 5 males age 15-18). The cross site international collaborative research team has worked together closely to develop the research protocol and methodology. Preliminary thematic qualitative and demographic findings will be presented. This will include summary statistics of the sample and initial findings and basic themes from the qualitative data. In addition, the development of a transdisciplinary methodology will be described for the next phase of the study, which will include the cross site analysis. We conclude with recommendation for participatory research with indigenous communities in collaborative international work.

*(I have photos with permission of the May 2010 meeting in Cambridge)*

Allen, J, Mohatt GV, Fok CC, Henry D & People Awakening team. Suicide Prevention as a community development process: Understanding circumpolar youth suicide prevention through community level outcomes. Int J. Circumpolar Health Special Issue; Occurrence and prevention of suicides in circumpolar areas 68; 274-291.