

Wising Up: Learning to Share Knowledge between Canada's Northern Communities and Southern Classrooms

UBC POLAR CLUB

Introduction

Out of concern for the shortage of courses dedicated to the Arctic at the University of British Columbia (UBC), the *Wising Up* project began to develop Arctic-focused content appropriate for students from a range of disciplines. Despite the proliferation of research initiatives on campus in this area and the mounting importance of the 'Arctic agenda' nationally and internationally (e.g. the federally funded Canadian High Arctic Research Station [CHARS]), there are currently few places in which UBC students can learn about the North. Other than the UBC Polar and Alpine Research Committee, which coordinates funding programs for graduate students conducting field research in the Arctic, there is also no coordinating structure for research and instruction related to the Arctic at UBC.

Through a partnership with Green College, the UBC Polar Club received financial support to develop and pilot an Arctic module at UBC through the Teaching and Learning Enhancement Fund (TLEF). As a first step to developing constructive dialogue for sharing knowledge between northern communities and students and faculty at southern universities, *Wising Up* aims to engage Northerners where possible. The underlying aim of *Wising Up* is to assist students in thinking beyond the colonial model of academic encounters.

During the course of one school year an educational module on caribou co-management was developed with the support of UBC professors. It was piloted and then reviewed with Northerners in Nunavut and the Yukon. Where possible, feedback has been incorporated. The module serves as an important first step towards creating an entire course focused on a range of Arctic content to be available for instructors in a range of different departments. Drawing on the UBC Polar Club's current links and networks, one important goal of *Wising Up* will be to eventually offer the module to the Yukon College (YK), Aurora College (NWT) and/or Nunavut Arctic College (NU) for use in Arctic and subarctic community classrooms.

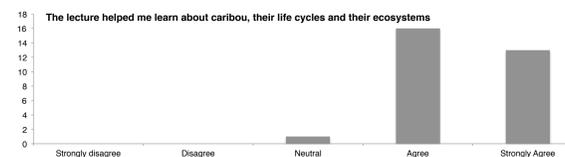


Acknowledgements

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Results

UBC students expressed overwhelming support for the module. Evaluations were conducted with the students. These evaluations indicated the students found the material interesting, clear and easy to understand and left them with a greater understanding of the topic. Students also found the website easy to navigate, visually pleasing and supported their learning of the material.



Conclusion

Although UBC has over 30 professors who conduct research related to the Arctic, there is only one course that focuses specifically on this area. *Wising Up* aims to build upon the knowledge that is collectively held at UBC and share this with both UBC students and Northern communities. The goal is to developing an Arctic-focused course that is accessible and interesting to students from any discipline. Having completed the initial module on caribou co-management with overwhelmingly positive results, the UBC Polar Club is preparing to develop an additional ten modules to complete an entire course.

Further Information

Please visit <http://wisingup.arts.ubc.ca> to learn more about the *Wising Up* project and <http://www.thepolarclub.ca> to learn more about the UBC Polar Club. All questions and comments can be directed to ubcpolarclub@gmail.com.

Materials & Methods

Wising Up is a project stemming from *ARCTIC-WISE*, a partly student-led initiative that is working to engage students and faculty across UBC on topics and research related to the Arctic. Students with the UBC Polar Club have been involved in every stage of *Wising Up* from conception to implementation. UBC students have also been integral to the outcome-based criteria used to evaluate the project's success.

During the fall and winter of 2015/2016, five graduate research assistants conducted interviews, collected information and developed educational content for *Wising Up*. The material was then incorporated within a website designed to be accessible to UBC students and faculty members.

The *Wising Up* website <http://wisingup.arts.ubc.ca> offers resources for both students and instructors, but also provides work activities suitable for working with both large and small groups of students. This material was reviewed by Northerners to ensure accurate representation of the topic area.

