

How the Emerging Leaders 2018 program helped to 'connect the Arctic'

The Emerging Leaders program is an inspiring 5-day program that brings together 30 young professionals from a diversity of fields that have one thing in common: a passion for the Arctic. The goal of the program is to learn about and discuss Arctic issues, and to facilitate that people who are at the start of their careers can have their voices be heard. The product of the program is a group presentation at the Arctic Frontiers conference in Tromsø for a VIP audience.

Marjolein Admiraal, a 33-year-old Archaeology PhD student at the Arctic Centre was funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Willem Barentsz Stichting to participate in the Emerging Leaders 2018 program: "I have a broad interest in Arctic issues that expand beyond archaeology. It ranges from climate change to exploitation and exploration in the polar regions in the present as well as in (pre-)historic times. In my PhD project I investigate the subsistence strategies of prehistoric peoples in Alaska through the application of organic residue analysis on cooking vessels used about 2000 years ago".



The Emerging Leaders program: Marjolein's experience

On January 17th the Emerging Leaders 2018 met for the first time in Bodø. At the Scandic hotel we formally introduced ourselves to each other as well as to our mentors. Our mentors were experienced and knowledgeable people from different fields. The diversity of our group really stood out; there were geologists, oceanographers, engineers, managers, etc. from different countries and backgrounds varying from Norway to Austria, Hawaii to China and Nunavut in Canada to Yakutia in Russia. Together we traveled from Bodø on the Arctic Circle, north through the Lofoten Islands on the Hurtigruten coastal express, to finally visit the Arctic Frontiers conference in Tromsø.

On the way we were challenged to discuss and learn about various topics related to the Arctic during an intensive daily schedule. We had days full of presentations by invited speakers as well as by the participants. The topics were intriguing and we learned a little bit of nearly everything that is going on in the Arctic in the present as well as in the past. Classic presentations were alternated by various social and cultural events such as a visit to the Lofoten Viking museum and subsequently a traditional meal at the Viking longhouse of Borg in the Lofoten Islands. A boat trip in the Lofoten Islands allowed us to experience this part of the Arctic for ourselves, to breathe the crisp air, feel the waves, and see all the rugged natural beauty with our own eyes.



The day the sun returned in Tromsø: 21-01-2018 onboard the Hurtigruten (photo: M. Admiraal)

Our vision

Throughout these five days it became clear that, as diverse as our group was, we all strived towards the same goal: sustainability in the Arctic. This year's theme of the Arctic Frontiers conference was *Connecting the Arctic* and we felt our cooperation as a diverse group was a beautiful personification of this theme. As the Hurtigruten MS Nordkapp slowly moved along the most spectacular of sceneries, we worked together as a group on the preparation of our presentation at the conference on Monday evening. This was our chance to get our message across, to get our voices heard by the decision-makers. Our chance to make a difference.

Our vision was clear and developed naturally throughout the course of the program. We understand that the further development of the Arctic region is undeniable. But we stress that it is of the utmost importance that this happens in a sustainable way with great respect for the local people and the environment. In our presentation we put emphasis on the role of indigenous people and experts in academia and business, we want that role to be more prominent. We asked our audience to make well-informed decisions, based on the knowledge and opinions of these parties. We asked them to be truthful, transparent and trustworthy to ensure a bright future for an Arctic in which we as a group felt so connected for this past week.

The result of the Emerging Leaders program and our group presentation, coupled with what we heard at the Arctic Frontiers conference, left me hopeful about the future of the Arctic. I am hopeful that actions will be guided by the voices that we heard in Tromsø last week. Knowledgeable voices from science and business, but also voices with thousands of years of experience of living in the Arctic. I sincerely hope that the plea of the mayor of Nome (Alaska) was heard: that we listen to the people who are living in the Arctic and are experiencing the change on a day-to-day basis. I hope that we all will listen and connect, connect to different people with differing opinions and views. Because if

we want the Arctic to be a place of connection, working together is the most important ingredient.



The 2018 Emerging Leaders with our mentors in Svolvær, Lofoten (photo: Artur Wilczynski)

Acknowledgements

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