



DISPATCHES

STORIES OF HOPE, RESILIENCE

AND CHANGE FROM THE

NORDIC-CANADIAN FELLOWS

IN ENVIRONMENTAL JOURNALISM

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Foreword

From the vantage point of 2022, 2019 seems like a distant world. Fake news and the distortions of social media were tightening their grip on the media. Urged by Greta Thunberg, Autumn Peltier, and other young activists, students across the globe went on strike to bring awareness to climate change. But their clear and urgent message was drowning in the tide of half-truths and misinformation.

This was the moment that moved us to create The Nordic Canadian Fellowship in Environmental Journalism. Harbourfront Centre, an institution that celebrates contemporary culture, identified a need to cultivate and nourish new voices. Together with the Nordic Council of Ministers, we created the Fellowship, to give emerging journalists from Canada and the Nordic Region the space, time, and resources to investigate and confront the most urgent crisis we face.

It is with pride that we share the work these aspiring journalists have created. We are grateful to the Nordic Council of Ministers who shared our belief that engaging young people is crucial to the cultural exchange of ideas. We are proud of the fellows and the work they have shared with us. And we are inspired.

With special thanks to:

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And to all of the scientists, journalists and community leaders who shared their wisdom and passion with us and helped inform these stories.

Laura McLeod
Producer
Nordic Bridges

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Executive Producer
Nordic Bridges

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It is the voices of young people leading the charge and this group is no exception. I hope their work inspires you like it has me.

Introduction

There has never been a more urgent time to document how climate change is affecting our communities and our planet – and what we can do to adapt.

Around the world, young people have been at the forefront of climate action, highlighting the effects of rising greenhouse gas emissions and demanding more from politicians and corporations.

It was with these two notions in mind that the Nordic-Canadian Fellowship in Environmental Journalism was born: a chance for emerging journalists under 25 from the two regions to report on some of the biggest threats and opportunities related to the climate crisis.

This anthology features the work of the thirteen Nordic-Canadian fellows. They collectively represent seven countries and come from a range of professional and personal backgrounds, but all share a passion for the environment and evidence-based storytelling.

In the past year and a half, the fellows have learned journalism fundamentals – from feature writing to podcasting to video storytelling – and engaged with some of the most important questions at the feet of journalists and policymakers today, such as: How can we report with, rather than on Indigenous communities? How can we continue to collaborate on Arctic issues while Russia wages war on Ukraine? And: How can we tell climate stories in new and exciting ways that keep audiences engaged?

With support from Nordic Bridges, the fellows have been able to travel throughout Canada and the Nordic region – from Attu, Greenland, to Old Crow, Yukon, and many places in between – to tell stories about the perils of fast fashion, about Iceland's efforts to replant its lost forests, about one Sami community's resistance to a mining proposal on their land, and more.

The work you will read in this book is the culmination of nearly two years of work on behalf of the fellows. It is a true testament to the power of cross-cultural collaboration, demonstrating the magic that comes from bringing together like-minded people from countries oceans apart to tackle some of the world's most pressing issues.

It is the voices of young people leading the charge and this group is no exception. I hope their work inspires you like it has me.

I will end my note with a quote from Kim Holmén, a senior advisor at the Norwegian Polar Institute:

"We must question everything we do all the time and look for ways of decreasing our collective footprint on the planet. We are eight billion people, and we all have a responsibility for keeping it livable for all of us."

Lex Harvey

Project Coordinator,

Nordic-Canadian Fellowship in Environmental Journalism



01

THE
CLIMATE
CHANGE
PARADOX
GREENLAND'S
FISHERS
ARE
FACING

TEAGHAN HAYSOM &
THOMAS KELLERMAN HANSEN



Aslak Wilhelm Jensen holds a red fish he has just caught off the side of his small boat in the Nuuk fjord.

An island of just over 56,000 is at the forefront of the impacts of climate change but how does it reconcile the harms to come with the prospect of economic growth?

Aslak Wilhelm Jensen's boat is messy from the successful reindeer hunting trip he has just returned from. He apologizes for the blood soaked into his camouflage hoodie and pooled at the bottom of his boat. Jensen quickly offers a taste of the raw reindeer fat he is saving to put in his coffee in lieu of cream.

Jensen has built an identity through his boat, something he has in common with many Greenlanders. He agreed to meet and sail into the Nuuk fjord to talk about the challenges the fishing industry in Greenland faces.

He talks about climate change's impact on sailing routes, but also the cultural importance of small fishermen and how they are struggling. These small fishermen are facing inequity emphasized by climate change. Many are worried how this will affect Greenland's culture and traditions.

Exiting the harbour, there are few icebergs. This is partly because it is summer in Nuuk, but also reflects the impacts climate change is having on this area. Usually there are many more giant masses of ice floating around Nuuk, but higher temperatures and warming waters have changed this.

Greenland has a natural landscape not unlike that of the Canadian North. It is remote and ecologically diverse. The city of Nuuk is built around a central harbour filled with commercial fishing companies alongside independent fishermen and their boats.



A group of fishermen by the harbour gut and cut fish that will be used as bait. Nuuk, Greenland.

The locals explain that the symbol of Nuuk is the Ukkusissat mountain, a peak that can be seen from many points in Nuuk. They have a saying that you can only consider yourself a local if you have climbed Ukkusissat.

Greenland is financially supported by Denmark, but is still considered selfgoverning. The country maintains a level of independence by exporting fish to Denmark, where their catch is sold at a higher rate.

Nuuk is a resource and industry town filled with hard working people. Many make a living from hunting and fishing.

Jensen is one of these people. He is a figurehead in his community in Nuuk, the capital of Greenland. He is a self-employed hunter and fisher, known for catching the most lumpsucker eggs in all of Greenland.

Although Danish by blood, he moved to Qasigianniguit, a small town in Northern Greenland, when he was five and speaks the native language. He refers to the Greenlandic people as "us."

He steers the small boat away from the city of Nuuk, deeper into the fjord and begins fishing. He easily catches several redfish and cod with his equipment. He smokes a cigarette as he guts fish and places them in bags at the bottom of the boat.

"I always wanted to hunt and fish to provide for myself," Jensen explains in Danish.

Jensen, a member of Parliament for Greenland's social democratic Siumut party, was encouraged to go into politics because of his knowledge about climate change.

Climate change is becoming a more pressing issue around the world, and many of the effects are impacting our oceans. Sea levels are rising, temperatures are getting warmer and ice is melting. These changes are affecting not only species, but also the economy.

Fishing is a major international industry and climate change will inevitably force changes and challenges to this sector. Greenland's fishing community already sees these changes.

For Greenland, fishing is vital to their political stability, economy and traditional way of life. The fishing industry is truly at the heart of the island's identity.

Jensen grew up learning about the strong hunting and fishing lifestyle in Greenland. He was drawn to the idea of providing for his family.

The boat slows down as it approaches an iceberg. The beauty of the crystal blue ocean, surrounded by mountains, makes it easy to understand Jensen's connection to the water.

"It hasn't always been easy, but I've been able to adjust and to go and fish something else, when different challenges arose."

"Climate change creates a lot of opportunities here. New species such as herring, flatfish and mackerel are moving up to Greenland because of the warmer water temperatures," Jensen says.

He explains that Greenland is in a unique position; climate change could create economic opportunity, while also threatening the culture of Greenlanders.

Many fishermen by the Nuuk harbour also confirm this, explaining that new species are coming to Greenland because of the change in water level and temperatures. However, some species, like salmon, are becoming more difficult to find.

Like Jensen, these fishermen must learn to adapt to a changing environment.

A Danish newspaper, Berlingske, reported in 2016 that new species are becoming a bigger factor in the Greenlandic fishing industry.

"When we see the great amounts of mackerel that have been fished by Greenland the last couple of years, it is clear that the fishing industry will become a new business miracle", Teunis Janen, a scientist with the Greenland Institute of Natural Resources explained in Danish.

As the oceans get warmer, sea life changes, and certain species are at risk of extinction. Conversely, the warmer waters give some fish, like mackerel and tuna, an opportunity to travel further North to places like Greenland.

Although new species present an opportunity for growth in the industry, many fishers say that it is only the large companies who can take advantage of these changes.

Jensen says "it's easy for a big company with a big trawl to adjust, but if a small fisherman wants to go for mackerel, it will cost millions to get the necessary equipment and boat."

He argues that while climate change is not a good thing for Greenland, there are certain opportunities worth taking advantage of in terms of making them accessible to small fishermen.

However, not all the effects of climate change will have a positive effect on the fishing economy.

"In the southern part of Greenland around Paamiut, glaciers blast out mud on a scale so large that you can't sail there. You can already see it in some places, but it's not everywhere yet. It is a great concern of mine that this mud will affect the sailing routes," Jensen says.

"We need these routes. Our country is built on being able to sail by the coast," he adds.

Another local, Peter Davidsen, is well known in the fishing community and with the independent fishermen by the Nuuk harbor. He echoes much of what Jensen says about climate change only benefiting the larger fishing companies.

As he walks along the dock, Davidsen says that the Nuuk harbor is not built to service small fishermen. Unlike bigger companies, small fishermen do not have access to the latest fishing technology, nor do they have the number of employees to keep up with maintenance requirements.

He walks towards a small warehouse that looks more like a garage. It is full of men preparing fish. They listen to music as they gut fish, prepare bait and repair fishing equipment. These are some of the independent fishermen that Davidsen is speaking about.



Icebergs floating in the Nuuk fjord, surrounded by mountains.

"If a small fisherman has to spend three days cleaning his fishing net, he easily loses 90.000 Kroner (or \$16,500 CAD)," Davidson says in Danish. Adding that these fishers "do not have the necessary tools by the harbour."

"The wharf in Nuuk is built to service the bigger companies and to service the whole country, which the smaller fishermen suffer from," he adds.

Davidson says that many of these people are losing money by spending time trying to maintain old equipment. The fishers rely entirely on the fish they can sell, so when they are not out catching fish, they are losing money.

Similarly, Davidson points to the inequity in mackerel quotas.

He explains that in 2022, only large companies have been given quotas on mackerel. This prevents independent fishermen from legally fishing and selling fish. While there may be certain benefits to climate change, Davidson fears a changing climate may leave independent fishermen behind.

While this means that Greenland's economy could benefit from climate change, their culture may suffer.

The fishing industry seems to be facing a paradox when it comes to climate change.

Davidson points out that it is vital to consider the cultural importance of these independent fishers.



Peter Davidsen walks by the Nuuk harbour as he speaks about the hardships small fishermen are facing.



Nuuk harbour packed with the small boats of independent fishermen.

He explains that fishing has a "huge cultural impact", and that many families have been doing this for a long time. For them, fishing and providing for their families fosters a sense of pride.

"There is a whole lot of identity for a small fisherman to be on the boat in nature. It is a very difficult thing to explain. It is just part of the Greenlandic culture. It would be a shame if we didn't have a place for them anymore, and instead they would need to work in a big fishing factory," Davidsen says.

Although smaller fishermen may feel like they are being left behind, this could be an unavoidable consequence (consequence?) of a changing world.

Kuupik Kleist, former Prime Minister of Greenland (2009-2013), explains that climate change is happening quickly, and Greenland must adapt.

"Climate change definitely has some consequences and is affecting everything in Greenland," Kleist says adding that the "Arctic has become real hot," and there is no prediction for what the future could bring.

He explains that the frustration small fishermen feel is nothing new.

"That's the way it always has been...small fishermen fighting the big ones."

He says that the government has been giving out licenses and quotas to small fishermen that exceed the amounts encouraged by Greenland's Institute for Natural Resources.

This has created an environment of "overcrowding," where the fishers are all "fighting for the same quotas," he says.

"The licenses for small fishers is far too many."

Kleist explains that while it is easy to view big companies like Royal Greenland as working against independent fishers, these companies do provide resources for the country.

"Of course big companies have responsibilities, but they provide services for small fishermen," he says, adding that Royal Greenland has lent money to independent fishermen to help purchase equipment.

The bigger problem, Kleist explains, is that fishing is not sustainable.

"Talking about sustainable fisheries is almost impossible," he says.

While it is essentially the only source of income for Greenland, Kleist says the country must diversify the economy, and quickly.

The amount of fishing is not sustainable. He explains that it is also not sufficient for an economy to only have one resource.

Kleist says that Greenlandic culture "must be protected," but that they need to continue to modernize and look at diversifying into sustainable energy and resource extraction.

He explains that the only thing predictable about climate change, is that it is happening, and it will bring changes.

If climate change makes it more difficult to fish and to sell fish, Greenland will lose almost all of its revenue – forcing them to become more reliant on the Danish government.

"I hope that one fine day we will be able to provide for ourselves and be self-sufficient. If fishing becomes harder, it will be impossible to replace the Danish money," Kleist adds.

However, Paninnguaq Heliman, an Indigenous influencer, actor, and director warns that diversification may be dangerous.

She speaks about how much of Greenland's culture has been erased by the Danish government.

"Growing up, I was taught that being Greenlandic was shameful," Heliman says. It is only recently that she's begun to take back pride in her culture.

Heliman explains that so much of her country's traditional culture has been lost through colonialism. She is worried that climate change may erase even more of Greenlanders' ways of life.

"Diversification is dangerous," she says, "we have always relied on fishermen."

She explains that while she does want more independence from Denmark, that the small fishers are at the heart of Greenland's culture. Heliman says that she is scared that diversifying the economy could further threaten her community's way of life.

Looking Forward

The impacts of climate change are not unique to Greenland, but the island is more vulnerable to its consequences. Exploring the ways Greenland may be able to take advantage of global warming could present a new lens for other countries to try to adapt.

As Jensen puts it, "[Greenland does] have the opportunity of benefiting from climate change. And don't get me wrong that's not an ideal situation. But it's not Greenland alone that is going to change the climate, so we might as well take these opportunities and try and make them accessible to small fishermen."

Climate change is already impacting Greenland and, inevitably, will continue to; a changing climate will affect the island's coastline, sailing routes and seasonal temperatures.

Climate change could enhance Greenland's economy and enable them to phase out Danish funding. The question of preserving traditional culture, however, remains difficult. Greenland must find a way to protect its rich culture, while continuing to modernize the economy to take advantage of the opportunities climate change is creating.

HOW
URBAN
FARMERS
GROW
GREEN
MINDS

JOËL NDONGMI & SARA TINGSTRÖM

Across urban centres, urban farming is experiencing a surge in popularity. In this article, urban farmers from Toronto and Malmö draw their community to their farming practices through various means such as culturally relevant foods. Through their endeavours, farmers are facilitating an ecological mindset shift within the minds of city inhabitants.

Saba Nazarian's apartment in Montreal, Canada was growing crowded and humid. His place was starting to look like a rainforest. While his partner had become a bit frustrated by his newfound arrangement, Saba was dedicated to growing his microgreens in his apartment. He would toss them on a fresh salad and enjoy them with a fresh drizzle of olive oil. He had also turned his passion for growing microgreens into a profitable business, supplying 10–15 homes with microgreens. Over a period of a few months, he had been able to pay half his rent this way. His passion became a new way to connect with people.

The community that has come with Saba's small scale growing operation mimics that of the urban farms across Canada and Sweden. Across the various people we've interviewed for our story, this became a theme in their farming practices. People come together around food for this sense of belonging and community. Urban farming is a way for communities to reconnect with the food system.

As a musician and sound engineer, Saba had no prior knowledge of urban farming or how to grow his own food. He came to urban farming due to his frustration with the food system. He started by asking himself the question: Where does my food come from and where is it produced? Through the question, he got a deeper understanding about food production, which led him to the follow up question: What can I do as an individual? Saba found it difficult to find local goods in conventional grocery stores and, as a result, he felt disconnected from the food system. By purchasing the products available in these stores, he felt he was enabling a food system that does not value local produce. "We vote with our wallets," Saba says. "With every single purchase that we, as consumers, make, whether that's clothes or food that we buy, I think in one way or another we vote for how we want the future to be shaped."

Processes of industrialization have caused city people to be far removed from the production of our food. According to a 2019 report from the Canadian Centre for Food Integrity, "a large proportion (91%) of Canadians claim they know little, very little or nothing about modern farming practices." The average Canadian knows very little about how the food they consume has gotten from the farm to their plate. People don't know where their food comes from.

Saba suddenly ran out of space in his apartment due to the microgreens he started growing while also supplying them to his friends and neighbours. He got inspired by the possibilities and started to teach others how to grow their own microgreens. "I wanted to pass on the knowledge and inspire others to have a bigger impact." This passion burgeoned into a desire to immerse himself in urban farming at various farms in Canada.



Saba Nazarian holding up carrots. According to him, farmers holding a bunch of carrots in hand can be a political symbol of self-sufficiency.



One of the many entry points to Botildenborg in Malmö. The farm is integrated within the city.

He says, "I had the privilege to be mentored by Jean-Martin Fortier and Curtis Stone, two of the most iconic organic growers in Canada who have inspired hundreds of young entrepreneurs to start their own farms and that experience has led me to where I am now."

Eventually, Saba travelled to Scandinavia with the hope of finding food producers and entrepreneurs that were doing similar things as his mentors did in Canada. "Food culture doesn't start in what we eat, it has to start where food is produced in the region," he says. During his visit, he met the founder of the urban farm and meeting spot, Botildenborg, in Malmö, Sweden. This is where his dream of building up a farm and teaching new farmers began.

While Saba's journey to urban farming may have been unique, it resonates with the experiences of today's urban farmers, many of whom do not have a background in agriculture. Urban farming deals with the production of food in urban areas. It can take the form of allotment gardens, rooftop farms, or indoor production. Across Sweden and Canada, the farmers we have interviewed have expressed the new-found popularity urban farming is experiencing in their local areas. In Toronto, this popularity is demonstrated through the City of Toronto endorsing the movement through the "growTO: an urban agriculture action plan for Toronto." In Sweden, there's been a surge of interest in urban farming as a way of becoming more self-reliant when it comes to food imports.



Jacqueline Dwyer proudly holding her colourful peppers.

Saba moved to Sweden a couple of years ago thanks to Botildenborg's Stadsbruk project. He is now the farm director for the commercial farm at Botildenborg, and an educator and mentor at Stadsbruk. The program combines entrepreneurship and small-scale agricultural practices with the mission of increasing the number of local farmers in the region. Botildenborg also has programs such as "Growing Buddies," where people from different communities are brought together through urban gardening. This is one of the many ways Botildenborg builds community.

Community building is central to the work of urban farmers. Across the ocean, in Toronto's Downsview Park, Jacqueline Dwyer and Noel Livingston at the Toronto Black Farmers Collective and Growers Collective overcome their own set of challenges to foster a greater community. On a warm August day, Jacqueline and Noel are opening their greenhouse. Due to the heat the previous day, their plants have burned. As Jacqueline walks through the rows of plants, she uncovers more damage. She is exasperated. What she's experiencing is a warning for what is to come, she says. Jacqueline discusses how inefficient leadership regarding the climate has resulted in a wide range of weather patterns in Toronto summers.

Although the atmosphere is grim, this doesn't stop her from excitedly showing us how large her peppers grew. Foods that are culturally relevant to Black people, such as scotch bonnet peppers, are central to their farming practice. Apart from those peppers, they grow other culturally relevant foods such as okra and amaranth. Cultural relevance goes beyond creating comfort dishes.

Jacqueline explains that racialized individuals are disproportionately more likely to be food insecure in the city of Toronto. "We see through an upfront lens that all people are food insecure and food poor," says Jacqueline. Poverty, low-income, and lack of affordable housing are all issues that contribute to food insecurity.

Urban farming that centres culturally relevant foods makes food more accessible to the city's marginalized groups. In her own experience, Jacqueline has realized that the Black community in her corner of Toronto is disenfranchised from Toronto's food system. The statistics prove to her the realities she interacts with. According to the City of Toronto's Black Food Sovereignty Plan, "28.4 percent of Black households are food insecure." This is especially relevant within the context of Downsview Park, where 9–17 percent of the population is Black. Jacqueline and Noel's focus on food insecurity is in line with the Black Sovereignty Food Plan as they help to create systems "centred on the decision-making power of people to define how to access their culturally appropriate foods."

Jacqueline and Noel are attempting to be the solution to the problem of food insecurity by democratizing access by donating part of their produce while also selling it at the Afro-Caribbean Farmers' Market. Jacqueline and Noel's approach emphasizes encouraging people to see the value of fresh local foods. "When people come to our farm, we don't ask them if they're hungry. We give food. Whatever we have, we share." To farmers such as Jacqueline and Noel, building community and building stronger food systems are done cooperatively.



Noel Livingston holding the leaves affected by the heat.

The future of solving food insecurity may heavily involve urban farming. This hope is embodied by Toronto City Councillor James Pasternak. He says groups like the Black Farmers Collective "can grow the fruits and vegetables relatively cheaply. They can get it to market very cheaply, and they take it where there's a need. They have that flexibility that many agricultural corporations don't have."

Combating food insecurity is one way that urban farming builds community. Other organizations such as Växtnätet in Malmö, Sweden, focus on combining spaces of interaction with urban farming. Nicolas Keller is a project manager at Växtnätet. His association seeks to create green meeting spaces. He sees urban farming as a way of reconnecting with the nature around us. He says "gardening is an important element of this because it allows for physical creation. You can actually transform the space by gardening. In doing so, you influence the space that you're inhabiting." According to Nicolas, this physical intervention of space leads to a change in mind-set. It's about using one's thoughts to create a "green space which they would like to interact with themselves. People will get used to them, and then start thinking in a way that becomes sustainable."

By getting on the ground and farming, people are more likely to act in a climate conscious way because they have a point of reference. In this way, urban farming is an entry point for city inhabitants to develop a sharpened sensitivity to the Earth.

The social benefits of urban farms are often initiatives that get funded on a project basis and it could therefore be a risk that the operation will cease when the project period ends. For this reason, it could be difficult to sustain an urban farm economically or get people interested to invest in an urban farm. If urban farms are only utilized by beginners, a lack of experience can have consequences such as: a higher risk of nutrient leaks and ground pollution, the space could look untidy, or attract rodents to the area. Beyond this, Canada and Sweden both have short growing seasons. This inhibits the production of food all year round. Land and infrastructure are also factors preventing the spread of urban farms. While Malmö has potential farmland available, Toronto's real estate is not in the same condition. For urban planners, it comes down to utilising the green spaces already available in the city. "We're not going to buy a vacant lot at, you know, Yonge and Bloor at \$10 million an acre to plant," says Councillor Pasternak. "That's not realistic. What is realistic is using our parks."

In addition to using parks for additional space, rooftops are becoming an important source of space for the creation of urban farms. This is the case with the Toronto Metropolitan University that has established a rooftop farm in the middle of Downtown Toronto. Apart from building rooftop farms, Jesse Njau from Zawadi Farm in Toronto also emphasizes more rooftop farming in the future of building cities. Currently, we have a lot of what he calls "naked buildings." He says "there's no reason why we should have naked buildings, I call them naked because they are just buildings, dress them up. I'm part of a group that is trying to bring rooftop farming to literally all condos, on any factory we can create a farm."

While Saba is cleaning the carrots he just harvested in Botildensborg's commercial garden for the local restaurants, he is also thinking about the future of urban farming.

He believes that more municipal and governmental support is needed to not only make more land accessible to young entrepreneurs but also help them financially kickstart their small-scale farming enterprises. In the future, Saba predicts that the next big thing is going to be agrihoods popping up in and around major cities. He defines them as "a neighbourhood that is fed and nurtured by a small scale farm."

Ultimately, imagining a different future and being an agent in that change comes down to engaging in your local community. Sometimes, there's much discussion about sustainability but a lack of action to pair with that ambition. In fact, Saba says he's "allergic to the word sustainability and its misuse." He adds, "students who have joined the internship program on Botildenborg's farm often say that they sit through university classes, and study what sustainability is without taking any actions. Unfortunately there is a lot of green-washing happening around companies that 'speak' of sustainability goals whereas in practice they take little to no action adopting any sustainable practices."

He views sustainability as something more than a marketing ploy, a true call to action. With conviction, he adds, "If you want to do something that's going to work towards sustainability, you really need to pick up something, roll up your sleeves, get on your knees and do it. Find a problem that you can be part of the solution and be the change."



Community members gather around a bonfire and grill their recent harvest to create a communal dinner. From L-R: Vilgot Wiahl (a summer worker for three weeks), Ivan Nordensson Stenberg, Emmeli Stjärnfeldt with her child Vinter Stolt Stjärnfeldt, Milano Zada (the second summer worker for three weeks), and Kajsa Högfeldt (nature educator at Guldängen's construction play).

PAVING
THE
WAY
FOR
THE
FUTURE
OF
FASHION

ANDREA KUNZ SKREDE & ERICA NGAO

The Nordic region is home to innovative technologies, environmentally-conscious designers and ambitious political promises that have formed their reputation as leaders in the transition to a sustainable fashion industry. Are they living up to it?

Transforming Textile

Heaps of old, tattered textiles go to Paimio – a rural town about an hour and half drive from the Finnish capital of Helsinki – for a second life. Although it's been open for just a year, the 3,000 square-metre facility, surrounded by one of the country's many forests, is stacked to the lofty ceiling with pastel-coloured bales of recovered fibres – the shards of cloth that remain after being chopped up in the recycling process. Each cube, weighing in at 200 kilograms, has a different destiny – none of which will be the landfill.

That's the goal of Rester, the Finnish company hoping to recycle 6,000 tonnes of end-of-life textiles from businesses across the country each year. Rester is now the largest textile recycling plant in the Nordic region. Workwear, linens and towels are accepted, sorted and fed into the mechanical recycling process. Inside the plant, CEO Outi Luukko hands out ear plugs to soften the hammering of the machine line. Two workers toss textiles onto a conveyor belt, where they're processed step-by-step: removing hardware like buttons and zippers, cutting them into patches and separating the fibres to turn it into raw material. "There used to be two collections a year when I was young, [and now there's one] every few weeks," Luukko says of the relentless churn of new styles and trends.



Rester CEO Outi Luukko holds shredded textiles processed at the company's recycling plant in Paimio, Finland.



CEO of Rester, Outi Luukko

"It doesn't make sense. [The fashion industry is] producing a large quantity of material that doesn't even have the chance to get into stores [before] it's incinerated. That woke me up."

The increased textile production Luukko is referring to is putting unprecedented pressure on the planet. In the last sixteen years, the global consumption of clothes has increased by more than 60 percent. Today, over 100 billion garments are produced every year, and 30 percent of those are never sold. As much as 87 percent of all used textiles are either incinerated or end up in the landfill once they reach their so-called "end of life." According to the United Nations Environment Programme, today's fashion industry is responsible for up to 10 percent of global carbon dioxide emissions annually, which is more than all international flights and maritime shipping combined.

"A shirt doesn't have to be the same shirt when it comes [back] from the circulation," Luukko says of clothing's second life, describing the potential of Rester's mechanical recycling process. The recovered fibres can be used to manufacture anything from yarn and fabric, or in insulation, acoustic panels or filters. They collaborate and share the space with Lounais-Suomen Jätehuolto, a garbage collection company responsible for the management of residents' waste from 18 municipalities in southwestern Finland. Together, they're aiming to process 10 percent of the country's textile waste annually – about 10 million kilograms.

In the Nordic region, where Rester is located, politicians are taking notice of the many problems with the fashion industry. "The Nordic Region – leading in green growth" is the official title of a textile strategy from 2015 created by the Nordic Council of Ministers, the official body for intergovernmental cooperation in the

region. The same year, the group created another action plan called "Well Dressed in a Clean Environment," which outlined specific initiatives focused on design, production, consumption and reuse, to lead the countries towards a circular economy.

The region's fashion industry is also brainstorming. In 2009, the first Copenhagen Fashion Summit took place, held in connection with the UN Climate Change Conference. Since then, it's become the leading event for industry players to convene on sustainability in fashion, evolving into the Global Fashion Summit and spawning international editions, with the 2022 event taking place in Singapore. More recently, Copenhagen Fashion Week introduced a set of 18 sustainability standards – created with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals in mind – that brands must meet to participate in 2023. This includes mandating designers to offset the carbon footprint of their show, and ensure their hiring practices are diverse and equitable. Across the region, it's clear the fashion industry is increasingly undergoing a transformation, with everyone from independent designers to international brands talking about sustainability. What that looks like – and how effective it is at truly creating positive impacts for the planet – varies.

Reality of Consumption

An inherent appreciation for the natural environment is deeply ingrained in Nordic culture. *Friluftsliv* is a Nordic expression that translates to "open-air living" and popularized by Henrik Ibsen, the nineteenth-century Norwegian playwright known as the father of realism. The term is used to describe the act of being outdoors and appreciating how it nourishes the body and mind. The region's long coastlines, dramatic glaciers and thick forests, combined with its relatively small population, means nature has become synonymous with identity. It's no surprise, then, that this ethos extends to sustainable living, and, in turn, fashion.

In recent years the vocal push for increased sustainability – from both government and industry – has given the Nordic region a reputation of leading the transition to a sustainable fashion industry. But this green image is in sharp contrast with the reality of Nordic consumption habits: Nordic consumers purchase 365,000 tonnes of new clothing and home textiles each year – as much as the weight of 36 Eiffel Towers. While a third of that is collected for reuse and recycling, the rest is thrown out or incinerated. And each person buys between 13 and 16 kilograms of new clothing per year – equivalent to more than 60 new garments.

A pioneer of fast fashion also has its roots in the Nordic region: H&M founder Erling Persson opened his first store in Stockholm in 1947, preceding other major fast fashion names of today, such as Zara and Uniqlo, by several decades. Today, it's one of the largest – and most financially successful – fashion companies in the world, producing about three billion garments annually. The H&M Group has announced plans to double their revenue by 2030 while also acknowledging the need for sustainable changes in fashion. On their website, the company writes it's "committed to leading the change to a better fashion future" through initiatives such as "achieving toxic-free fashion" by 2030 and "become a fully circular business" where all clothes will be designed for circularity by 2025.

But the company has a long way to go to meet these promises. It's estimated it would take H&M as much as twelve years to recycle what the company produces in two days, which raises the question of whether the company can actually achieve these goals in the foreseeable future.

Bestseller, a Danish fashion retailer, is also scouting for solutions. The company sells more than 20 brands in 3,000 stores around the globe. With revenues growing by a third over in the last three years, the company has been designing and creating clothing with the circular economy in mind. Morten Norlyk, the company's sustainability communication manager, said by email that a sustainable fashion industry will require "a focus on not growing business more than the impact reduction." From Bestseller's perspective, achieving this means focusing on the specific impact of materials and process, as well as introducing other business models such as resale and repair. In a move towards using more sustainable materials, the retailer's sustainable fashion investment arm, Invest FWD A/S, was announced as one of the investors in Infinited Fiber Company's latest financing round. The biotechnology company, sought after for their breakthrough recycling process that creates a completely circular material, has raised over 60 million CAD in funding since it was founded in 2016.

Inventing New Materials

Kirsi Terho sits cross-legged on the couch in Infinited Fiber Company's showroom in Espoo, about an hour drive east of Paimio. It's headquartered in Technopolis Otaniemi, a smart office space near Aalto University, home to numerous start-ups and tech companies. Terho is the key account director of the Finnish company which, like Rester, seeks to be a part of a circular fashion industry. She travels around the world, negotiating deals with brands who want to use their technology. While Rester specializes in mechanical recycling, Infinited Fiber Company uses waste to create a completely new type of fabric through what they call "responsible chemistry."

At their facilities, post-consumer waste made of cellulose-based materials – ranging from a pair of cotton jeans to the cardboard box they arrived in – can be reborn as Infinna, a fully degradable fibre which looks and feels like cotton. With a number of small, clear beakers on the table in front of her, Terho explains the different steps in the process. "It's not so simple," she says. But she breaks it down to the essentials: Infinited Fiber Company turns post-consumer textile waste into powder, which is transformed into a liquid and then respun to create new fibres.



Infinna, a fully degradable fibre which looks and feels like cotton.



Garment made from Infinna fibre.



Kirsti Reitan Andersen,
a postdoc at
Copenhagen
Business School.



On the wall beside Terho are the results of this technology – a display of clothing samples from brands like H&M and Zara, which have used Infinna in their collections.

The company is in the process of building a new facility in Kemi, a Finnish town near Sweden's border, to meet growing demand for their product. They're aiming to produce 30,000 metric tons of fibres annually – enough to make about 100 million T-shirts. According to Terho, the factory's capacity is almost fully sold out for the first year, with orders from big fashion brands like Tommy Hilfiger, Adidas and Ganni.

Companies like these are working on solutions to a few challenges, such as increasing awareness and finding ways to repurpose certain textiles. But currently, less than one percent of textile waste is recycled into fibres to make new clothing. Even if recycling technology advances rapidly, it's still not a perfect solution; every time a textile is recycled, the fibres get shorter and decrease in quality, and therefore usefulness. Recycling also isn't possible without the use of resources, making it a less sustainable option than prolonging the life of the garment.

At the same time as it grapples with its waste, the fashion industry has also seen an explosive increase in synthetic material use. Two out of three new garments are made of synthetic materials and it's estimated as much as 35 percent of all microplastics in the ocean stem from synthetic clothes. Although clothing labels are frequently embellished with a "recycled polyester" tag, these fabrics tend to be made out of recycled PET bottles, such as standard plastic water bottles – the result of downcycling other plastics into fabric, and not of recycling clothes themselves. The current size and production methods of the fashion industry constitute challenges that are yet to be met with technological solutions, neither in the Nordics nor elsewhere. But for some experts, the solution isn't in better technology, but in reimagining our relationship to our clothes.

Addressing Mass Production

Minna Halme, a professor of sustainability management at Aalto University, says the environmental footprint of textiles "is actually one of the easiest to change." She holds up a hand to shield her eyes from the Helsinki sun on the terrace of a coffee shop in a busy shopping centre. She allows the sun to blind her for a moment and gestures to her dark blue cardigan. "This is actually a good example, because I bought this secondhand from London in 2016. I've been using this a lot and it's lasting well," she says. It's simple: We just have to buy less and prolong our garment's lifetimes, Halme explains. Compared to the challenges relating to transportation, food and energy, reducing the environmental pressure of the textile industry doesn't require large infrastructure changes to not compromise people's basic needs. In short, she says, there is no need for the amount of clothing being produced today.

Not surprisingly, the issue of overproduction is not the topic of choice for companies whose business models are built on quick and cheap manufacturing, enabling the sale of large quantities of clothing needed to generate a profit. Instead, mass-producing brands tend to focus on changing materials and increasing recycling. Also in the political sphere, there's a tendency to avoid addressing mass production in the numerous action plans, strategies and political measures aimed at reducing the environmental pressures of fashion – to the frustration of the scientific community researching sustainability in the industry.

At a different coffee shop in a different Nordic capital, Kirsti Reitan Andersen, a postdoc at Copenhagen Business School, agrees with her Finnish colleague. She's spent the past decade researching sustainable fashion, focusing on how to change current business models. "There's a lot of talk in the industry about circular business models," she says. "Elements of that are amazing, but I also think it's quite problematic that parts of the industry seem to think we can just keep producing all the same shit and then it's going to circulate somehow, magically – which is definitely not happening at the moment." She takes a break from talking while a train passes, drowning her out – another buzzing noise of a fast-paced society making it difficult for a researcher to be heard. After a few seconds, she continues. "The material focus is a way to avoid looking into the real problem, which is the amount of clothing."

Researchers agree: the spurring technological innovators like Rester and Infinite Fiber Company are important for the future of fashion. By making profits on resources that have already been extracted from nature, these companies are curbing the linear use of natural resources, making it look more like a circle. But Halme and Andersen both argue there's a need for new approaches along the whole value chain of textile production aimed at making the industry thrive on a slower production pace. "It's about making longevity fashionable," Halme says, arguing fashion is in need of systemic change. While fast fashion may have found its legs in the Nordic countries, they are also home to countless designers and brands intent on bringing back a culture where clothes are meant to last.

The Designers

In the Nordic countries, celebrating individuals driving change has cultural roots, which is mirrored in the concept of *ildsjel* in Norwegian, *ildsjäl* in Swedish and *ildsjæl* in Danish. The word directly translates to "fire soul" in English, and can be understood as an expansion of the word "agency." The concept stretches further by embodying a burning passion for community empowerment through lighting fires in others and provoking a desire to generate transformations. The concept of *ildsjæl* encompasses the belief that change is possible – when the fire spreads, a better future can rise from the ashes.

Ildsjæl is on display at local designer Nikolaj Storm's cozy basement studio, just a short walk away from the Copenhagen botanical garden, where racks full of colourful garments hug the wall. Storm won the Zalando award at Copenhagen Fashion Week in 2021 with his eponymous brand, taking home 20,000 euros and a partnership with the popular retailer to create a limited-edition collection that explores sustainable solutions in design.

But he's been working on sustainable fashion long before it became a trend. In the back room, inspiration boards and piles of fabric take over the space as his assistant works on getting the samples ready for Copenhagen Fashion Week 2022. Storm is as known for his bold and vibrant takes on genderless streetwear as he is for making sustainable practices the cornerstone of his brand. Despite this, his website exclaims, "We are not a sustainable brand." The word has become a point of annoyance for Storm, especially when used in the fashion industry, where its unregulated definition means that it can be used as a cover for greenwashing. "There's no specific structure on how to define sustainability in fashion, and that's the biggest issue – because then you can say everything is sustainable," says Storm. "I actually like that everybody is trying to do something." But he raises red flags when brands start to use the term without backing it up and consumers can't tell the difference.

Despite concerns about greenwashing, shoppers are showing signs of becoming more eco-conscious. In 2021, searches for brands that offer repairs grew by 145 percent on Lyst, a global fashion search engine and shopping app. That same year recorded a 117 percent increase in demand for upcycled, recycled, repurposed and reworked items, and a 348 percent increase in views on the platform for biodegradable sneakers. Consumers can also rely on online directories to find sustainable and ethical brands, such as Good On You, which rates according to its impact on the planet, people and animals.



Designer Birgitta Helmersson



Helmersson's zero-waste, slow and locally produced garments.





Jarkko Kallio, co-founder of Finnish brand FRENN.



Designer Nikolaj Storm's collection.

When customers first stumble across Birgitta Helmersson's clothing, they're drawn to her earthy palettes and flowy dresses. According to the Swedish-Australian designer, most don't even realize that her clothes are zero-waste. Through the window of her studio-cum-shop in Malmö, one of Sweden's fastest-growing urban centres and a burgeoning creative hub, you can see a seamstress' work space alongside hanging garments. The laid-out fabrics, patterns and scissors are clear signs the workbench is not just a prop for decoration but in active use. Here, Helmersson makes her zero-waste, slow and locally produced brand. Having previously worked as a designer and pattern maker in Melbourne's fashion industry, she saw the downside of industrial clothing production firsthand. "I was watching the sampling and the production, and seeing the actual waste," she says. "That's what really made me think."

Now, she's built a brand where waste is designed out of the business model. The absence of collections encourages consumers not to buy something new as soon as the season shifts, and the production process is as transparent as can be by letting the consumer literally see how clothes are made up close and in-person. A part of her business also consists of selling patterns to home sewers, allowing them to gain an even deeper understanding of the construction process behind Helmersson's designs, and hopefully, inspiring people to give a second thought to how the other garments in their closet are made as well.

A few decades ago, textile production was common in the Nordic region. Today, most of it is outsourced, and garments hanging in clothing stores have often travelled far to reach their racks. But Andersen can see a countering trend emerging: An increasing interest in bringing some of the production back to the Nordic countries. In her opinion, that's a good thing. "Having things closer gives bigger opportunities for exploring and finding more sustainable solutions," she explains. Shorter and more local value chains might make it easier for brands to control all steps in the production process and perform better in terms of both social and environmental sustainability.

The Value of a Garment

Jarkko Kallio sits on the edge of a table among his store's elegant menswear garments. Kallio is the co-founder of Finnish brand FRENN, a word created by combining the words "fresh" and "Nordic." Here, in the middle of Helsinki's design district, he works on marketing, while his business partner and designer Antti Laitinen creates the collection, both working to "update menswear traditions with innovation and ease." While doing so, they have earned the title of most sustainable brand in the country from Pro Ethical Trade Finland, a non-profit organization that advocates for fair trade and responsible production processes.

All of FRENN's garments are hand-manufactured in the Baltic region with eco-certified European materials. The clothes are also meant to be easily repaired and modified. Keeping the material quality high and the value chain close necessarily results in higher prices per garment than those of global, mass-producing companies, as production costs are greater. The extra zero on the price tag might intimidate some of the consumers trying to build a more sustainable wardrobe, but that's not a concern to Kallio.

"We don't have to sell for everyone," he says. In a high-income region like the Nordics, there are undoubtedly still consumers who can afford FRENN's designs. "The main point is that the people who have the money, they have to think a little bit more," he adds. The fact that not everybody can afford more expensive clothes due to responsible manufacturing shouldn't stop those who can. What's more, Kallio tries to encourage consumers to rethink the cost of a product – defining a garment as expensive should be based on its durability, not the price of acquisition. "How long can you actually wear it?" Kallio asks rhetorically. In his perspective, buying a new garment that will last long to replace a worn-out piece is not necessarily more expensive than buying low quality clothing again and again.

Clothes are not just textiles and the footprint they leave. Clothes express personal identity, reveal social belonging or even symbolize a political standpoint. Is slowing down and valuing longevity putting a stop to such expression? "It's not like people should just be wearing the same T-shirt forever and ever," says Andersen. In her view, being a sustainable consumer doesn't have to come at the expense of personality and style either. Fashion should be fun, and people should be able to play with identity, she argues. But having fun with clothes does not have to equate to buying a new garment every time you pass a shop. "In many places in the world, [there's] an understanding that the more we shop, the more happy we'll be," she says. "I don't know if that's true."

Like Kallio, Andersen argues for valuing garments differently. Clothes should be taken care of and mended. For however long possible, clothes should circulate as clothes, not fibres. This isn't a new idea – society has been doing it long before fast fashion existed. "If you look back in time, there's a lot of knowledge about how to repair and recycle," Andersen argues. "If you can come to that point where the mending is part of giving value to your clothing, and the clothing is made in a quality that is worth mending, then things can start circulating in a completely different way."

Looking into the Future

Sisu is a Finnish concept used to describe the inner strength and courage one needs to overcome a challenge. It's a term that dates back hundreds of years and is held by Finns as the truest expression of their national character. But perhaps it should also be a framework in which to tackle the environmental impacts of fashion – with unrelenting determination against the odds. "Nobody can do this alone," says Luukko, surrounded by hundreds of raw fibre bales stacked in Rester's plant, each half her size. To create impactful change in the industry, everyone must join the journey, she argues.

Considering the social meaning that clothes bear, the systemic change of fashion must in many ways be a change of culture. It's a question of what knowledge and perspectives are valued, and how these are acted upon. As Luukko moves outside, the heavy metal door silences the industrial noise, allowing the forest surrounding Rester to silently demonstrate Nordic peoples' proximity to nature. And like the forest, the Nordic fashion industry is a community working collectively to create a system. If guided by a combination of *friluftsliv*, *ildsjæl* and *sisu*, the industry might be able to create another destiny for itself, one where the spirit of collaboration, valuing nature and unwavering determination, can be the seams piecing together the future of fashion.

**REWILDING
DESERTS
IN ICELAND
AND LOGGING
RAINFORESTS
ON VANCOUVER
ISLAND**

ÓLÖF RÚN ERLENDSDÓTTIR
& FERN MARMONT



Marísson shows how wind cover greatly improves vegetation growth in Iceland.

One island is trying to regrow it's long lost forests, while the other is cutting them down.

The wind whistles through desolate grasslands at the foot of one of Iceland's most active volcanoes, Helka. Scattered throughout are small stubborn outcrops of young birch trees.

Ellert Arnar Marísson – a young Icelandic forester with a bristly blonde beard – seems at home walking through these windswept lands. Surprisingly, as a forester, Marísson rarely cuts down trees. His job is to plant as many new ones as possible.

Marísson doesn't blame the generations before him for cutting down nearly all of the country's native birch forest – they couldn't have foreseen the consequences.

Two islands, the same reforestation

One island, known for wind, lava, and ice; and another, defined by rain, lush greenery, and breathtaking biodiversity. Separated by continents and oceans, both Iceland and Canada's Vancouver Island have seen a drastic decline in their natural forests; one in the past and one ongoing. While activists handcuff themselves to massive 800-year-old redcedars by the Pacific Ocean, frail birch trees emerge from once green volcanic deserts by the Atlantic. Whether the ancient forests will remain standing, or the deserts will turn green once more, remains to be seen.

This is a story about trees – about what they give us, and what happens when we destroy them. It's also a story about how they can grow on lava fields, be made into sea crossing canoes, and sustain ecosystems. This is a story about trees, and the communities of people trying to understand, grow, log, and save these forests. In Iceland, people have been trying to regrow their native birch forests – lost due to past logging – in the hopes of stopping desertification. On Vancouver Island, trees grow quick and tall, desertification seems far off, yet concerns are arising that their ancient forests could disappear, and the island's rich and delicate biodiversity with it.

These two drastically different islands, so little in common, and yet perhaps, they share an inevitable call to save and rewild their forests.

Planting on "a blank canvas"

"I see it as working with a blank canvas" says Marísson, while walking along a seemingly endless black desert, black sand crunching underneath his hiking boots. If you look closely, you can see the recently planted birch saplings, hundreds of them in uniform lines, each one stretching only a few centimetres out of the sand. Marísson oversees the tree-planting, on behalf of the government-run Icelandic Forestry Association, and explains that this is a prime example of what has been going on in Iceland for decades – a rewilding.

Desertification has become an enormous issue in Iceland, and many experts believe it to be the biggest threat to the country's ecosystems. Desertification, as the word suggests, describes the process when fertile land becomes a desert. The UN stated in 2017 that desertification ranked "among the greatest environmental challenges of our time", affecting biodiversity, eco-safety, poverty eradication, socio-economic stability and sustainable development.

Once desertification has started it's not only very difficult to reverse, but once it has spread as much as it has in Iceland – it has a kind of snowball effect – the bigger the desert, the faster it spreads, like a disease. In Iceland this process was escalated by the loss of almost all forest cover over a thousand years ago, which led to the current dire situation.

The finish line to stopping desertification is nowhere in sight, but Icelandic experts have found that continuously rewilding the deserts, or restoring the ecosystems, is the best chance they've got.

From lush forests to vast deserts

When settlers, most likely from Norway, came to Iceland for the first time around the 9th century, they were greeted with a familiar landscape. Birch forests stretched out across the lowlands, making this isolated, remote island seem like home.

In 2022, more than one thousand years after settlers first stepped foot on Iceland, those lush birch forests have almost entirely disappeared, leaving behind a landscape of vast deserts and tundras. Forests once covered over 25 per cent of Iceland, yet years of deforestation and logging have lowered that number to barely two per cent.

Iceland's government has made it clear it wishes to recover the native birch trees. They are vital in the fight against desertification, provide shelter for fragile wildlife, and sequester carbon – meaning they capture, store and remove carbon dioxide from the Earth's atmosphere. Birch forests have also proven to have a very positive effect on the cycle of nutrients, and fertility of soil.

But the process of tree planting, fertilising and sowing has been slow and very expensive. The rewilding started just over a century ago, but has gotten a boost in the last three decades. Today over 3,000 square kilometres of land has been restored, or are in the process of being restored. However, there are still over 40,000 square kilometres of barren, deserted land.

The turbulent weather doesn't make rewilding Icelandic deserts any easier, and even with these efforts the Icelandic ecosystem is still classified as one of the most degraded in Europe.



Standing in a clearcut near the Walbran Valley in BC, Canada.



In a small birch forest in Iceland, Wolfram explains the fragility of Icelandic forests and how difficult an ecosystem it is to regrow.

The cost of surviving on an isolated island in the Atlantic

"We just wanted to survive. It's always the strongest element in us, humans and other animal species, to survive," says Þórunn Wolfram, an Icelandic soil conservation expert. She feels empathy for her forefathers' need for survival, but she has also seen first hand how hard it is to bring forests and other flora back from the brink.

Those forefathers had to fight for survival on this isolated island, in the harsh northern Atlantic climate. That meant using nearly every resource they could get their hands on, including one they could not live without: trees.

Wood was essential to survival in those early years, from the 9th century and way into the 19th. Trees provided life-sustaining materials like heat, housing and boats for fishing. The first generations cut down forests fast and taught future generations to view the forest in the same way, as resources used to survive. Yet this way of thinking has left Iceland scrambling to stop desertification, stabilise fragile ecosystem, and maintain the already dwindling farm land.

Any talk of sustainable forestry practices in Iceland didn't really begin until the mid 20th century, when the survival of the native birch forests was deemed so fragile that the authorities banned clearcuts completely.

Yet, the ban was rarely enforced, and clearcuts continued, to keep up with demand for coal for heating.

"When you have such a fragile system, it's hard to build it up again," says Wolfram, who explained to us that recent research shows that more than half of all of Iceland's land is considered to be in a degraded or collapsed condition.

Unique black soil smothers the greenery

The speed of desertification across the island wasn't something Icelandic scientists had predicted. The soil conservation expert Þórunn Wolfram says the matter is quite clear, too much was taken from the land too fast. "We were misled by the fertility of the land."

The soil is unique: it's black, volcanic, light and highly erodible. Mixed with Iceland's arctic winds, the soil sweeps over large areas eerily fast and buries them in dunes of black sand. Where the sand hasn't already smothered the greenery, over 400,000 of Iceland's free roaming, grazing sheep, do their share of damage to delicate flora.

Marísson walks us through one of his planted birch forests, Hekluskógar, where the trees measure up to his shoulders. He jokes that these trees will never be as tall as the ones in North America, but seems proud of these birch trees and their stubborn survival.

Hekluskógar was planted in 2005, and while it is not a flourishing forest abundant with birds and animals, it's a stark contrast to the desert across the road. The ground is covered in soft grass. Mushrooms poke out of moss and the fragrance of heather fills the air.

Like most tree planting projects in Iceland, Hekluskógar is a collaboration between state agencies, municipalities and landowners in the area. They see a common benefit in regrowing the forest. Although it's unlikely they will see a large forest there in their lifetime, they plant knowing the future generations will benefit.

Marísson points out how much calmer the wind is near the trees, which act as a windblock, thwarting the wind from stealing the nutrient rich soil.

The location of Hekluskógar was not chosen at random; the area used to be one of the most fertile farmlands in the country, but has been a growing desert for decades.

Marísson sees the tree planting as a fundamental step in keeping the growing deserts at bay. They have found that healthy forests will spread naturally, if they are managed well in their first years. "We have to get to thresholds where these natural systems can take over and do the rest of the work for us. Because there's no chance that we can physically plant every square inch by hand – it's just too much work and too much money." He says, however, he would like to see a lot more planting happening.

A booming wood harvesting industry

Five thousand kilometres west of Iceland, on one of the hottest days of the summer, Timo Scheiber, the Chief Executive Officer of Brinkman Reforestation, makes his way through a clearcut that his company had just recently replanted, the sun glinting off his sunglasses.



A clearcut on Vancouver Island that Brinkman Reforestation has replanted, the recently replanted seedlings will be harvested in 30 – 50 years.

On Vancouver Island, in Canada's British Columbia, the cool breeze of Iceland's forests are a far away thought. Here, the sun is harsh and heavy in the clearcut. The smell of burnt wood escapes the earth with each step.

Vancouver Island lies in a temperate rainforest, one of only seven ecosystems in the world, and BC has roughly one-fifth of the world's remaining temperate rainforests. The constant rain and rich soil have created the perfect environment for trees to grow into towering giants for thousands of years.

In the clearcut, with the lush temperate rainforest pushed to the horizon, the air itches with buzzing flies. The atmosphere seemingly aches with the loss of the forest. And yet, scattered around, newly planted tree saplings grow.

Scheiber, who has been in the business for 30 years, gestures with a shovel to the brand new pine seedlings that he has just planted. Similar to the Icelandic birch in the desert, these tiny trees reach just a few centimetres from the ground. Yet, growing conditions could hardly be more different – these trees are growing out of nutrient rich timber mulch and mud.

"You don't get much better growing conditions. It's fertile, it's wet. And it's warm all year round here. Like even in the winter the trees are putting on rings," Scheiber points at a tree stump, and by counting the rings it's clear that the tree had been around for over 30 years.

A common forestry practice in Canada is to mechanically log huge areas of trees, leaving a bare and desolate clear cut, then replant the area with tree seedlings. The cycle is repeated every 30 to 50 years.

Scheiber says, leaning against his Tacoma Toyota truck, that this environment is perfect to "farm trees." The rain and nutrient soil allow for trees to grow fast and big, allowing for trees to quickly replace what was cut down.

Yet, a study done by Frontiers in Forests and Global Change has shown that mechanical logging has a lasting effect on soil, ecosystem function, and productivity. This repeated damage to the soil, paired with a high volume of rain washing the nutrients from the damaged soil, has the very likely potential of causing desertification.

Canada is the home of one of the world's largest forestry industries, with BC at the forefront, with over 1,500 logging companies. In the province alone, over eight million hectares of tree cover has been lost in the last twenty years, and environmentalists have been growing increasingly concerned about the state of their ecosystems.

Frustration builds when the legal routes fail – "Blockades don't come out of nowhere"

In recent years, logging companies on Vancouver Island have been met with powerful resistance from Indigenous communities, who have lived on the land for centuries. Never in Canadian history have more people been arrested for civil disobedience than at the blockade in Fairy Creek on Vancouver Island, where over 1,100 activists were jailed for protesting the planned logging of one of the last remaining old-growth rainforests in the area.

Torrence Coste has a closer view than most of why people lock themselves to logging equipment or block a logging road. He is the National Campaign director for the Wilderness Committee, an influential Canadian grassroots environmental organisation that was founded in Victoria on Vancouver Island over 40 years ago.

Coste says he understands why people find themselves taking such drastic measures to protect the forests from logging. The Wilderness Committee, however, is barred by law from encouraging or taking part in civil disobedience.

"There are individual trees that were here 1,000 years ago. That depth goes so far beyond our own lifespan," says Coste, likening standing in these ancient old growth forests to seeing a great pyramid, or walking into an ancient church. Coste, who often takes groups on guided tours to the old forests on the island, says many have what they describe as spiritual experiences, standing beside trees that have lived there since long before their own country got its name.

"Our job is to encourage people to try and affect change, before it gets to that stage. And we have people daily or weekly, saying, I'm going to write to my MLA, I'm going to try to meet with my elected representative, but they're not going to listen. We need to send this message more directly."

One of the Wilderness Committee's roles when it comes to blockades and protests has been to document what goes on. Recently, however, their access to logging areas in BC has been limited by injunctions from forestry companies. These injunctions have also blocked many journalists and Indigenous land protectors from the forest.

The tree of life

Along the west coast of North America grows an abundance of the western redcedar; nowhere else does this tree grow. Sometimes as tall as the Leaning Tower of Pisa and as wide as a shipping container, the tree gets its name from the red, clay coloured wood and is known by its pungent, soothing balsamic smell.

The western redcedar, which has earned the name The Tree of Life for its fruitfulness by coastal First Nations, is also an antiseptic against common bacteria.

An enormous western redcedar tree, with the very fitting name of Castle Giant, grows in a pocket of old-growth forest in the Walbran Valley, on the west coast of Vancouver Island. This valley, similar to the better known Fairy Creek, has seen people putting themselves in harm's way, by blocking logging roads and disobeying the law, in an attempt to save the remaining old-growth trees like Castle Giant.



Young western redcedars grow on the side of the Castle Giant in the Walbran Valley, BC, Canada. The over 600 year-old western redcedar is a mother-tree to the hundreds of trees surrounding it.

The Castle Giant tree hums with life. Countless smaller trees and plants grow from its bark, as if its sustaining its very own little ecosystem. Castle Giant has lived in that very spot since long before Europeans settled in North America. This tree is estimated to be over 600 years old, older than the Black Plague, and yet considered young compared to other western redcedars that often live for over 1,000 years.

The Walbran Valley, with a mild climate and high rainfall, is home to an incredible variety of wildlife, many of them considered to be at risk or endangered. In the trees of the valley's dense, humid forest, marbled murrelets, screech owls, and Queen Charlotte goshawks play. Sheltered by the immense trees, on the wet forest floor, red-legged frogs, cougars, black bears, and elk can be spotted year-round.

What attracts the wildlife to the Walbran Valley, and other forests like it in BC, is what makes it a sought-after forest for logging companies to harvest massive amounts of high quality wood.

Just a short walk away from the towering Castle Giant is a fresh clearcut, where the western redcedars, along with almost everything else, have been cleared out. The Walbran Valley, as well as Fairy Creek, are unprotected by Canadian law and therefore, perpetually at risk of being logged.



The view atop a waterfall in the Walbran Valley. The waterfall is surrounded by old growth forest, yet across the valley a clearcut reminds how precarious these ancient forests are.

"Mother nature will provide our need but not our greed"

The western redcedar is a keystone species for First Nations, as its wood is soft and light, providing clothing, shelter, transportation, and a medium to express art.

Joe Martin, an Indigenous Nuuchah Nulth man, also known by his traditional name, Tutakwisnapšič comes from a long line of canoe carvers. Knowledge of wood and forests has been passed down through the generations, and with it, the respect for the delicate balance of the natural world.

"One of the things our ancestors would say about taking resources from the forest, is to take only what we need. Because Mother Nature will provide our needs but not our greed."

He says Canadian forestry companies, however, have shown no interest in his people's philosophy or their relationship with the forests.

"We're not allowed to cut a tree down within a hundred metres of an eagle nest, or beside a salmon bearing stream. We're not allowed to, that was against our law. But forest companies don't give a shit, they cut all year long. They don't care."

Another way of forestry — "Let a tree die, let it fall over, let it rot"

From the shoulder-high birch trees in Iceland, to the sky-high old growth red cedars on Vancouver Island, both places are battling with the consequences of logging and loss of forest cover, and trying to come to terms with how to move forward.

A small ecoforest on the east coast of Vancouver Island might have some answers.

Wildwood is a charming ecoforest in an unlikely place, tucked beside farmland, some residential areas and an airport. The 77-acres are filled with coastal Douglas firs, western redcedar, big leaf maple, flowering dogwood, and Arbutus trees. This small but lively forest is home to great horned owls, brown bats, eagles, ospreys, deer, and giant anthills.

Since 1945, Wildwood trees have been selectively logged in a way that maintains the ecosystem, without compromising the needs of the forest or species that reside in it. They have found it to be a sustainable way to harvest small amounts of wood while maintaining the health of the forest, stopping soil degradation, and staying far away from anything resembling desertification.

"You can have tree farms like how we grow carrots, but you are changing the soil, and you're never going to have that healthy forest with healthy soil," says Heather Pritchard, a registered professional forester, ecosystem-based planning specialist, who volunteers her time at Wildwood.

"In order to have healthy soils, you have to let things live a natural lifespan. Let a tree live, let it die, fall over and rot. That's going to add nutrition, and give the soil the ability to hold water."

Barry Gates, the co-chair at Wildwood, briskly walks through the ecoforest and points out places where trees have been harvested. The day is hot but the air is cool underneath the trees.

"Particularly with climate change, we've actually reduced our harvest, because we can't predict what will happen climate-wise in the future," explains Gates, who speaks in a soft voice as he lumbers through the ferns, and makes sounds like he has spoken about this countless times before.

Gates and his colleagues at Wildwood were surprised by a recent die-off in the forest. They found the reason to be a lack of nutrients and water to sustain saplings, and have since decided to stop harvesting trees until they are able to accurately predict the impact of it. Gates explains they don't want to take any chances as the impact of climate change rages on. While he speaks, the warmth from the ongoing, unprecedented heat wave now feels suffocating, even in the shade of the forest.



A carving of a bald eagle eating a salmon rests at Wildwood Ecoforest in BC, Canada.

Planting trees for the climate

The science on the climate crisis has been clear for decades – the earth is warming, fast. One of the biggest contributors is carbon, but thankfully, carbon is sequestered by all types of vegetation.

"I wouldn't say that we should look at carbon sequestration as the one ultimate goal for forestry, but it's definitely a bonus," says Brynhildur Bjarnadóttir, an associate professor at the University of Akureyri in northern Iceland, and a doctor of forest ecology.

She has studied the regrowing of Iceland's forests – the work of Marísson's tree planting – which in recent years has started to take carbon sequestration into account when it comes to tree planting.

Brynhildur says the forests do impact the climate in a significant way, and even though Iceland's forestry could be described as "a drop in the ocean," that shouldn't be an excuse not to work towards more trees planted, and more carbon sequestered on the island.

"In my opinion, even though Iceland is small, and we have a very low cover of forest, I think that it all matters, of course. And we should always have the aim of increasing the vegetation cover of the island, to contribute to the fight against climate change."

A study by Science found that by planting over half a trillion trees, roughly 205 gigatons of carbon would be sequestered by the trees. This would reduce atmospheric carbon by about 25 percent, which is potentially enough to negate 20 years of human-produced carbon emissions.

Recovering the forests still in the distant future

Thick-trunked birch trees sway far overhead, the wind whistles gently through the leaves. Deep forest surrounds, and although it's still short of touching the clouds, it's significantly above shoulder height. Moss squelches underfoot, and mushrooms slowly grow on dead trees littering the ground.

While a common sight on Vancouver Island, this lush forest is actually a precious treasure nestled in the east of Iceland.

It is a far cry from the wind battered birch trees seen earlier.

The forest is Hallormsstaðaskógur, Iceland's first national forest. It has been legally protected since 1905 and hosts what comes closest to being Iceland's version of old-growth trees. Hallormsstaðaskógur is a unique window into what could have been – tall birch trees cover over 250 hectares and sustain one of the healthiest ecosystems in Iceland.



These Icelandic planted forests, while sparse compared to those of Vancouver Island, Marísson is proud that these ex-desert are now flourishing green spaces.



Polypore mushrooms cover a decaying birch tree in the Icelandic forest Hallormsstaðaskógur.

The mushrooms are a sign of a healthy forest, as nutrients are returned to the soil for other vegetation to use.

A joke known to most Icelanders is that if you are lost in an Icelandic forest, you just need to stand up. While that is definitely true for most of the country, Hallormsstaðaskógur is one of few exceptions. The air hums with a richness that only comes from an old, thriving forest. Hallormsstaðaskógur is managed by a team of foresters, who allow this forest to go through the natural cycle of decay and regrowth, and the trees vary in age and species. While a lot of it is planted, the forest is a cohesive, rich ecosystem that has stood the test of time.

Similar to Wildwoods, this forest is selectively logged, trees are cut down but the health and continuation of the forest is kept in mind.

Hallormsstaðaskógur shows the potential of Iceland's damaged soil: how all it needs is nutrients, cover from wind, and a few generations, for it to turn into a thriving forest that echoes the giants on Vancouver Island.

With each seedling planted in the ground, Marísson reclaims more land from the desert – creating the possibility of more Hallormsstaðaskógurs – creating the possibility of Iceland reclaiming its forests.

"And so no one knows exactly where we're gonna end up with all this," says Marísson, standing in his field of shoulder-high birch trees, the volcano Hekla silhouetted behind him. The wind has gone quiet in this future forest.

Marísson refers to how the end goal of reforesting Iceland's deserts is an unknown idea – it is unknown if these trees will become a park, or logged, or left to their own devices.

"Most of it is just pristine, barren land that we're experimenting on, seeing what will be possible in the future. I think that it's important not to close anything off prematurely, because I have no idea in 50 years what will be possible here."

"That's something the future generations will hopefully have better ideas on what to do with this land," explains Marísson, who believes that while there is no clear use for these rewilded lands, the true goal is to give the future generations that decision.

It rings similar to the beliefs of Pritchard and Wildwoods, creating a future forest for the next generations. It rings similar to a Haudenosaunee philosophy, the Seven Generations Teaching, which believes that decisions made today should create a sustainable world for seven generations into the future.

These two drastically different islands, so little in common, and yet they share an inevitable call to save and rewild their forests for the future generations.

GETTING
THEIR
VOICES
HERD

LAURIE TROTTIER

With respect, I would like to acknowledge that the project and interviews took place on the traditional territory of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation. Thanks to the people of Old Crow for their time and their warm welcome.

– Laurie Trottier

The northernmost community of the Yukon territory, 128 km north of the Arctic Circle, is home to the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation. The community of Old Crow is well known for its environmental activism and made international news in 2019 when it declared a climate state of emergency, the first one by a First Nation in Canada. They emphasized that Indigenous values and knowledge come from the land and that climate change is a threat to their traditions and ways of life.

For the Vuntut Gwitchin people, climate change is not a far-off concern; it's here now. As the permafrost melts beneath their feet, the forests burn, and the animals on which their livelihoods depend deviate from their age-old migration routes, they raise their voices.

"We are adapting. We have no choice. So as those change and evolve into what we know today, then we change along with it however best we know," says Lorraine Netro, an elder and longtime environmental advocate.

"What people in this world need to know is that the First Nations Peoples, in the world, can offer solutions. And they need to listen."

Three years after the declaration of emergency, global warming still hits the Arctic four times harder than anywhere else in the world.



Paul Josie
Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation
deputy chief



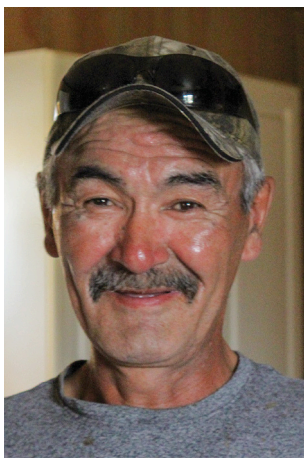
Robert Bruce Jr
Former Vuntut Gwitchin First
Nation deputy chief



Bruce Charlie
Former Vuntut Gwitchin First
Nation deputy chief

When I arrived in Old Crow in July, 958 kilometers north of Whitehorse, the picture couldn't be clearer. As I stepped out of the airplane, a wall of heat struck me and followed me throughout the week. A heat wave was radiating across the Yukon, sending the thermometer soaring to 29.3 °C. Because of the heat and drought, more than one hundred forest fires were declared this summer in the Yukon alone. It's not only the 300 or so residents of Old Crow that feel the impacts of climate change. The caribou do, too. The Vuntut Gwitchin strategically placed themselves near the seasonal migration routes of the 100,000 to 225,000 strong Porcupine caribou herd. For at least 12,000 years, according to archeological evidence, they have depended on these animals – members of the deer-family that can weigh up to 700 pounds and mainly eat lichens – for food, clothes, tools, and crafts.

"It's such an amazing animal," says Paul Josie, Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation deputy chief. "And it's so much that is ingrained in our culture as well because we have lived with them for thousands of years. It's part of the reason why we are here today, it's because of the caribou."



Danny Kassi

Longtime resident and
former Vuntut Gwitchin
First Nation councillor



Lorraine Netro

Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation elder
and longtime advocate for the
protection of the Arctic National
Wildlife Refuge



Wildfire smoke is seen on the way down Old Crow Flats, in July 2022.



Moose are seen from afar on a tiny island on the Porcupine River, in July 2022.



Caribou hooves are hung on a tree near Bruce Charlie's house. They are used when hunting to reproduce the sounds of herds, so that the caribou don't run away from the hunters.



The meat is often smoked and dried for conservation purposes.



Old Crow Flats are rapidly changing. The growth of willows are making it harder for the community to follow the migration of the caribou.



Bruce Charlie offers his dog a piece of caribou.



Nate Morisson is looking at the Old Crow Flats, where thicker and taller willows grow each year.

When I arrived in Old Crow, Bruce Charlie, the First Nation's former deputy chief, greeted me with dry caribou meat and bone marrow, as well as freshly picked berries while we discussed the animal. He smoked the meat in a small shed by his place, to keep the meat from spoiling.

As the Vuntut Gwitchin people watch the climate and their land changing, they wonder how the changes will affect the caribou, and other species they rely on, like the Chinook salmon.

"When they talk about willows. Well, it's growing. You look at those willows over there. Thick. You think the caribou are going to come through there? I doubt it very much," says Robert Bruce, another former deputy chief for the First Nation.

As unprecedented global heating increases the flammability of Yukon's forests, the caribou are seeing their habitat change. Caribou avoid burned areas in the winter. For the Vuntut Gwitchin people, the forest fires that rage in the summer equate to fewer and fewer caribou each winter. The impacts are well felt.



It's lunchtime for Bruce Charlie. Soup, freshly picked berries and dry meat is on the table.



Old Crow is situated on the banks of the Porcupine River, named after the Porcupine caribou.



According to Danny Kassi, there are fewer caribou passing through the community in recent years.

"A lot of people in Old Crow don't have caribou meat," says Danny Kassi, one longtime resident and former councillor for the First Nation. "The migration didn't come this way and there was nothing. They already passed. We are lucky we get a herd go through, we are lucky, but a lot of people don't have caribou right now."

Another threat the species faces is the potential for development in the resource-rich region.

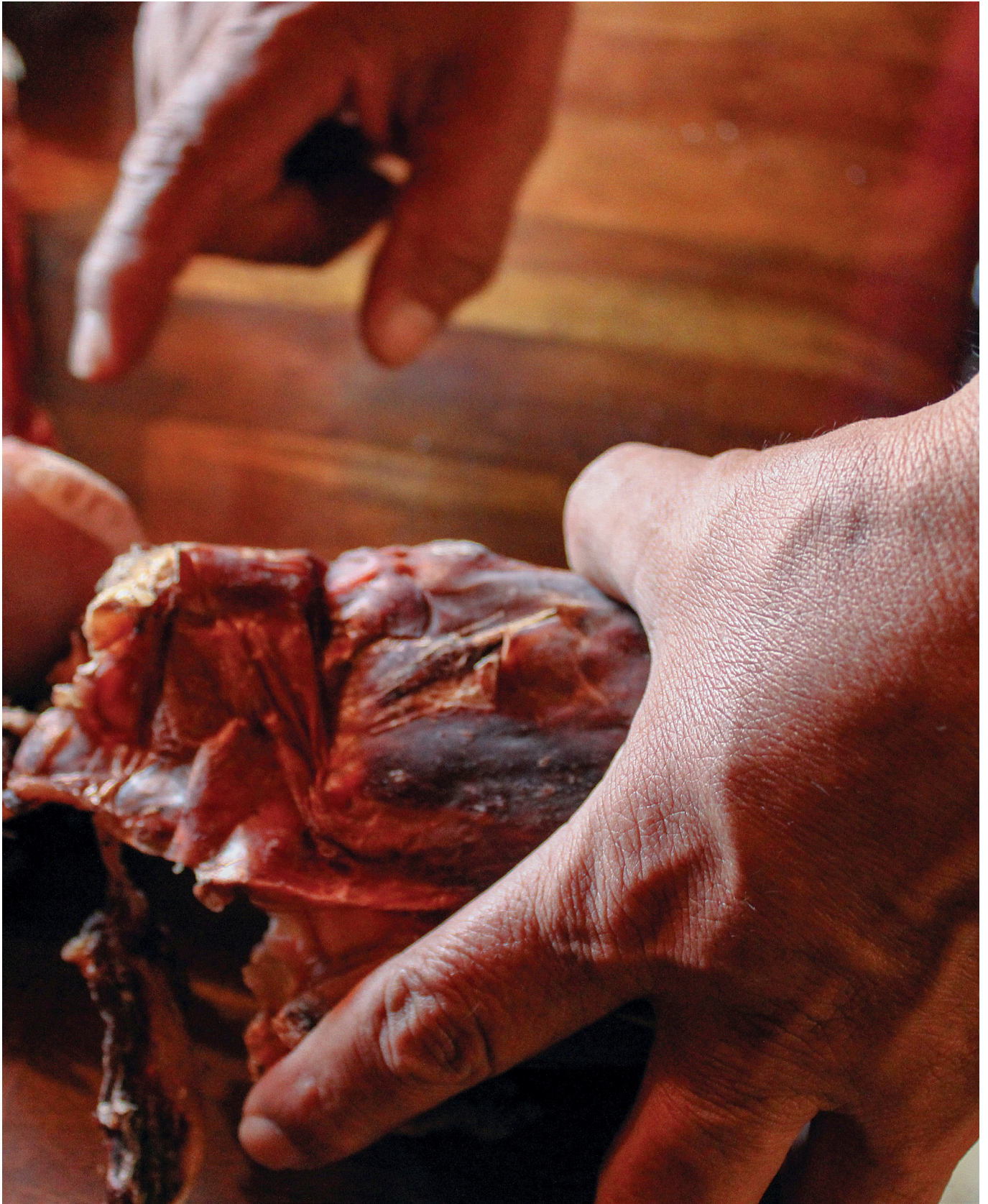
For more than 20 years, Old Crow has been at the forefront of protecting the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, in Alaska, considered home to the calving grounds of the herd. These lands, rich in oil resources, are so coveted that a Gwitchin delegation had to travel to Washington many times to advocate against drilling in this area.

"Right now, today, there are no oil and gas developments in the National Arctic Wildlife Refuge. That work is not easy," says Netro.

"We have to be the voice at the forefront. We make sure of that. That we are at the forefront. That they see our face."



Paul Josie explains the different migration paths of the caribou, on a map in John Tizya Centre.



Bruce Charlie cuts caribou bone marrow for lunchtime.



Robert Bruce Jr is pointing to the Porcupine River as he explains the growth of willows in the community in the recent years.



On warm days, the river becomes a place of choice for the community to go for a swim and cool off.



In July, in Old Crow, the sun never really sets. It goes down and back up again.



A piece of caribou is hanging to dry near Bruce Charlie's place, in July 2022.



Paul Josie missing hunting on the river. In July 2022, the levels were really low, making it nearly impossible to navigate.

THE POWER OF THE LAND

HOW A MOUNTAIN BETWEEN NORWAY
AND SWEDEN TELLS THE STORY OF
INDIGENOUS RIGHTS AND COLLECTIVE
RESISTANCE OF A WORLD IN TRANSITION

LAUREN BEAUCHAMP & NORAH LÅNG



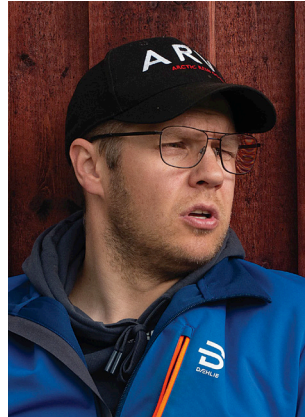
View of Nasafjell.

Who will take the strain when climate and human rights are at stake?

Norah Lång and Lauren Beauchamp went to the scene of a case twenty years and counting to find out. Chinese corporation Elkem is seeking to build a mine on Nasafjell, a mountain touching both Sweden and Norway. Elkem wants permission to extract quartz, a mineral necessary for the green shift. But, this land is home to reindeer herded by the area's Indigenous people, the Sámi. This appeal is cause for concern for the Sámi people. Read, watch and listen to Norah and Lauren's trip to Nasa mountain and learn about the ongoing dispute that has no verdict after two decades.



Dan Ingemar Fjällman



Per Thomas Kuhmunen



Anders-Erling Fjällås

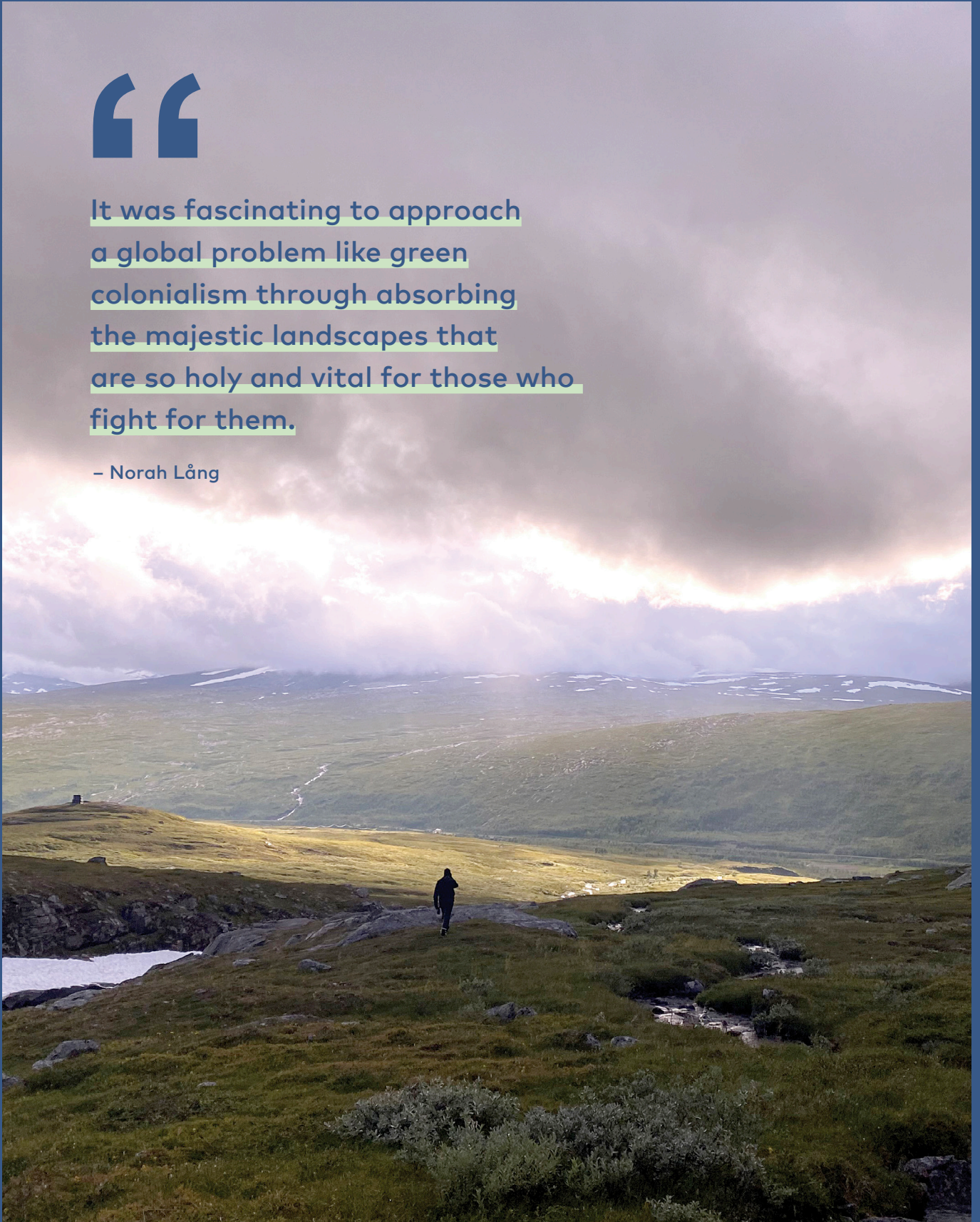


Top: Three of the many reindeer herders fighting a mine establishment on Nasafjell. Above: Reindeer antlers.

“

It was fascinating to approach a global problem like green colonialism through absorbing the majestic landscapes that are so holy and vital for those who fight for them.

– Norah Lång





A cairn marks the border between Norway and Sweden, right on top of the 1,211 metre tall mountain Nasafjell.



Chinese corporation Elkem is seeking to build a mine on Nasafjell, a mountain touching both Sweden and Norway, to extract quartz – a mineral vital for the green shift.

“

Digging deeper into such a timely issue makes one realize the urgency for finding the way forward between human rights and climate action.

It was also eye-opening to take in how we are partly responsible as our society demands electronic products that derive from natural resources such as those found at Nasa mountain.

– Lauren Beauchamp



**REFLECTIONS
FROM ATTU:
FIVE DAYS
WITH MR. AKATU
JAKOBSEN
ON THE WEST
COAST OF
GREENLAND**

MERAL JAMAL & DIELLZA MURTEZAJ



We reached out to Mr. Akatu Jakobsen very early on in our research for the Nordic-Canadian Fellowship in Environmental Journalism.

Almost a year before we actually met him in-person, he hopped on a Zoom call with us to explain what the PISUNA project really is and why it's important to the livelihoods of those in Attu.

This photo is from our first day in the community. With a mic and camera following him around, Mr. Jakobsen showed us important landmarks like the fish factory and church, and introduced us to community members like the bishop.

Our experience throughout the project and especially on that first day showed us that journalists are always relying on the kindness and generosity of their sources, and that sometimes you get lucky when a person trusts you to share their life and their story.



While we were in Attu, we also navigated through quite a big language barrier. Meral only spoke English, Diellza spoke English and Danish, and many community members in Attu like Per Ole Frederiksen spoke only Greenlandic.

Mr. Jakobsen was our saviour in these moments, crouched beside us the way he is on the boat, translating everything from Greenlandic to Danish to sometimes English for us to understand.

We were so aware that we were the outsiders in this community, not speaking the language and not knowing enough about the culture. But Mr. Jakobsen was there with us every step of the way, guiding our work through translations and introducing us to the Greenlandic culture in a myriad of ways.



We also lived together with Mr. Jakobsen at the municipality accommodation. He lived on the ground floor while we lived on the first.

Initially, it was a little scary. As young journalists from completely different cultures and with more than a 40-year age difference between us and Mr. Jakobsen, we were a little awkward and often wondered how to even hold conversations.

But over time, we got comfortable. Living together provided us with so much access to Mr. Jakobsen. We were able to learn much about his personal life and who he is as a father and husband and Inuk. We enjoyed dinner together every evening. We introduced Mr. Jakobsen to ramen and frozen pizza. We couldn't carry much food and snacks for our trip because most of our luggage included camera equipment.

Mr. Jakobsen gave us far richer meals in return, cooking whale steak and whale soup for us – a first for both.

After most meals, we had a cup of coffee or tea. Sometimes we watched TV together.

We talked about everything. And even though some things got lost in translation, thankfully laughter is universal.



Before heading back to Aasiaat, we took a group photo in Mr. Jakobsen's boat.

The journey ahead was long and it took us roughly four hours to get back to Mr. Jakobsen's hometown.

In spite of this distance, it was the most surreal experience being out together on the water because we got to see firsthand what is at stake when it comes to nature and climate change.

We also learned so much about Mr. Jakobsen and his love for his home. This was different from when we sat down to talk and tape interviews because those were more planned, prepared and involved questions we had brainstormed before.

Out on the water, with the winds so loud, there was no talking. It was the silence and Mr. Jakobsen looking out into the distance that told us everything we needed to know.



There was only the skies ahead of us and the water behind us. In some moments, we stopped to witness Mother Nature in action: seeing a family of whales travelling together, narwhals below the surface of the water.

It was an example of letting go of the talking and just trying to experience the feeling of being there.

It's something we're not always told to seek as young journalists – what it all feels like.

Journalism relies on facts, on the physical, on things that are said and done.

But climate change is as much a feeling as it is a fact. And the knowledge that people like Mr. Jakobsen are seeing their lands change and not always having a say in how to preserve it – those moments on the boat provided some much-needed perspective on this lived reality for us.



Even after five days of talking and walking around, when we got to Aasiaat we knew we had only reached the tip of the iceberg with our story.

Mr. Jakobsen invited us to his home for one of our last conversations. His wife Karina had some coffee and snacks ready for us, one of his sons had just returned home with his friend.

After, we walked across this bridge that connects his home to the rest of Aasiaat. We weren't ready for it all to end, so we asked Mr. Jakobsen to say goodbye to us on camera.

We didn't know if we would use the footage in our final documentary then, but this process of bidding farewell seemed important as a memory. It's not every day you get to go to Greenland.

Rarely do you get to spend time with such phenomenal people.

Mr. Jakobsen waved and walked away.



NORDIC-CANADIAN FELLOWSHIP
IN ENVIRONMENTAL JOURNAL

BIOGRAPHIES

NORDIC BRIDGES



Lauren Beauchamp is a writer, journalist and communicator who has a passion for storytelling through digital media. She holds a bachelor's in Media Production from Toronto Metropolitan University's Radio Television Arts program. Lauren has worked in newsrooms, entertainment and sports, but discovered her passion while working in the investigative unit at CBC's 'The Fifth Estate.' This opportunity led her to further her interest with a master's in Investigative Reporting at University of London. During the pandemic, Lauren moved to Copenhagen, Denmark where she currently lives and works at a leading marketing agency specializing in automation, personalization and CRM. She simultaneously continues to pursue human rights and climate-related stories.



Ólöf Rún Erlendsdóttir is from Reykjavík, Iceland. She has a BA in Social Work and is pursuing an MA in journalism at the University of Iceland. She started her journalism career in August 2021 when she was offered a job at RÚV, the Icelandic National Broadcaster. She now works as a broadcast, radio, and web reporter at RÚV North, in Akureyri, a town by the north shore of the island. She's passionate about environmental issues and social justice. She loves to cook, read, and spend time outdoors with her partner and their two dogs.



Thomas Kellermann Hansen comes from a small town outside Copenhagen in Denmark but studied in Aarhus and completed his bachelor's in journalism from The Danish School of Media and Journalism in January. As a part of his education, he completed an internship at a big, Danish newspaper and is right now working at a regional paper near Copenhagen. He loves to give people a voice and to write about what matters to people. He currently lives in Copenhagen.



Lex Harvey is a transportation reporter for the Toronto Star, Canada's biggest newspaper, where she covers public transit, infrastructure, road safety, the green transition, the politics of transportation, and other related issues. Before that, she covered politics, fact-checking politicians during federal and provincial election campaigns. Lex first joined the Star in 2020 to help develop First Up, the paper's daily newsletter, which she wrote for two years. Lex has also reported on how the climate crisis is affecting Svalbard, a Norwegian archipelago close to the North Pole, and once investigated a group of Canadian doctors prescribing a false COVID-19 cure for profit. She has a Master of Global Affairs degree from the University of Toronto.



Teaghan Haysom is originally from Edmonton, Alberta. She moved to Ottawa to study at Carleton University. She is now in her third year pursuing a BA in Journalism and Humanities. She enjoys reporting on political issues and learning how to tell stories in creative ways. Teaghan also works at the House of Commons as a supervisor for the Page Program. She loves the first hand experience with the legislative system, and thinks her knowledge of procedure strengthens her reporting. Teaghan believes in the responsibility and potential journalists have in addressing the climate crisis. This fellowship has helped foster connections with other like minded young people. She is excited about the stories the fellows will create to talk about sustainability in new and interesting ways.



Meral Jamal is a journalist in Nunavut via Ottawa. Originally from the United Arab Emirates, she is currently a reporter with Nunatsiaq News in Iqaluit, where she writes news and feature stories from Inuit communities across Inuit Nunangat. Along with the 2022 Nordic-Canadian Fellowship in Environmental Journalism, Meral is a recipient of the 2021 Ottawa Climate Storyteller Fellowship, the 2021 OCUFA Fellowship in Higher Education Journalism and the 2021 inaugural Equity, Diversity and Inclusion research award through Carleton University. She owes her start in journalism to her family and mentor Kanina Holmes, both of whom have emphasized how storytelling can help people and communities least seen but most impacted by the most pressing issues of our time.



Norah Lång comes from the archipelago of the autonomous Åland Islands, located in the Baltic Sea between Finland and Sweden, but is now living in Malmö in southern Sweden. She is a peace and conflict student at Lund University, a freelance journalist and writer, as well as one of the editors of the Swedish literary magazine Ordkonst. She is engaged in various other culture and media projects, and one of her previous works is the short documentary film "KÄNN INGEN SKAM FÖR MIG MHAMN", which follows the lives of young Ålanders in the small harbor town Mariehamn. Her heart beats for global, political issues in a wide sense; she holds the interplay between local and international matters close at heart, and is passionate about exploring the intersection between issues such as sustainability, human rights and democracy.



Fern Marmont was born and raised in Victoria, BC, Canada. She moved to Montreal where she is completing a major in Journalism and a double minor in Political Science and First Nations Studies. Fern is part Anishinaabe and English, her parents raised her surrounded by activism. Since she was a kid, she has always been involved and interested in environmental and Indigenous issues, and now in her journalism, Fern always tries to focus on Indigenous perspectives. The fellowship has positively impacted Fern in ways she could have never imagined when she applied, but the most cherished aspect of the fellowship for Fern was getting to know all the other fellows.



Diellza Murtezaj is a Danish-Albanian woman from Copenhagen, Denmark. She studies Journalism at Roskilde University and works at the Danish Parliament as a student assistant in the press department for the green political party Alternativet. She has experience in political communication, press management and social media. Diellza is passionate about documentary storytelling and visual communication.



Joël Ndongmi is a fourth-year student at the University of Toronto. He is currently studying political science, English, and diaspora studies. He is interested in political media, photography, and global conceptions of citizenship. During his time at the University of Toronto, Joël got involved as an Arts & Culture columnist at The Varsity (U of T's student newspaper from 1880). While he does not come from a journalistic background, he applied for this opportunity to learn more about environmental reporting. So far, he's learned much during this process and is eager to apply these newfound skills in his future journalistic endeavours.



Erica Ngao is a Chinese-Canadian journalist and fact-checker based in Toronto. She completed a Bachelor of Journalism and a Minor in Curatorial Studies at Toronto Metropolitan University. Currently, she's the associate editor at Reader's Digest Canada. In 2021, she was among the third class of cohorts in the Solutions Journalism Network mentorship program where she focused on covering social challenges in ways that build a more equitable and sustainable world. She's inspired by the power of storytelling, cross-border collaboration and everyone she's met through the Nordic-Canadian Fellowship in Environmental Journalism. Her work has been featured in ELLE Canada, The Walrus, This Magazine and the Nieman Journalism Lab.



Andrea Kunz Skrede is from Lillehammer, Norway, but lives in Oslo. She holds a bachelor's degree in Culture and Communication and a master's degree in International Environmental Studies. She has previously been a web editor and content creator for the environmental organization Nordic Ocean Watch, and has also written for the student newspaper in Oslo. Andrea is passionate about social and environmental issues and the role communication can play in building awareness and provoking change. She believes that collaboration, the exchange of perspectives and creative expressions all play an important part in shaping a sustainable future.



Sara Tingström grew up in southern Sweden and currently lives in Stockholm. She has a bachelor's degree in environmental journalism and previously worked at the local newspaper in her hometown. Her thesis was about whether journalism uses a global outlook when reporting on natural disasters caused by climate changes. In her paper, she finds that journalists should prioritise transnational perspectives instead of only using a national media logic in their work. To build comprehensive and dynamic understandings of how climate change is a global issue, not a national one. The transnational nature of her thesis is reflected in this work as urban farming, in the context of the articles, is explored from a transnational context. In January 2020, she was accepted to WWF Sweden Youth, a non-profit leadership program that runs until the end of 2022.



Laurie Trottier is a French-Canadian from Quebec currently living in Yukon, where she works as a reporter for the French newspaper in Whitehorse. Her studies in journalism, her bachelor's degree in International Law and International Relations, and her travels have all quenched her thirst for knowledge and allowed her to meet people with different opinions and realities. To her, that's what journalism is all about: cultivating empathy and inspiring change. She hopes to start a Master's degree in September 2022, focusing on the Arctic.

About this publication

Dispatches: Stories of Hope, Resilience and Change from the Nordic-Canadian Fellows in Environmental Journalism

This book was originally published in December 2022 on the occasion of the exhibition Dispatches: Stories of Hope, Resilience and Change from the Nordic-Canadian Fellowship in Environmental Journalism. The exhibition at Harbourfront Centre was curated by Marlee Choo, Luigi Discenza, Alexandra Harvey and Laura McLeod. The Fellowship and the exhibition were part of Nordic Bridges 2022 - a year-long exchange of art, culture and ideas between Nordic and Canadian artists initiated by the Nordic Council of Ministers for Culture and led by Harbourfront Centre.

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