



# **ILISIMATUSAAT**

**RESEARCH PROJECTS AT ILISIMATUSARFIK AND  
GREENLAND INSTITUTE OF NATURAL RESOURCES  
2021-22**





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# New discovery: The first Greenlandic book

283 years ago, the first book written in Greenlandic was printed. It happened in 1739, and the book was a spelling book. The book has been lost for many years, but surprisingly it was recently located in Denmark, among the Royal Library's enormous collections.

## Traces of Greenland's first book

After his return to Copenhagen in 1736, Hans Egede continued to manage the Greenland mission, receiving continual reports which included updates about literacy among school children. In the 1740s, there were only three colonies (towns) in Greenland: Christianshåb (today's Qasigiannguit), Godthåb (Nuuk) and

Frederikshåb (Paamiut). In 1743, Egede received reports from Christianshåb and Godthåb and on the basis of them, he drew up a complete list of school children in both locations. Some of the children were able to recognise letters, others could read syllables, and the most proficient ones could read words.

It appears from the list that a reading primer existed and that it was being used for reading instruction.

*The back of Hans Egede's reading primer.  
The binding is typical for the 1740s.*



Photo: FAJN



Hans Egede published his list of school children in 1744, and in the following years, all traces of this first Greenlandic book faded. Most of the descriptions of the Greenlandic literary history identify Hans Egede's catechism (textbook on Christianity) from 1743 as the first book printed in Greenlandic. For many years, there was no mention of Hans Egede's reading primer from 1739.

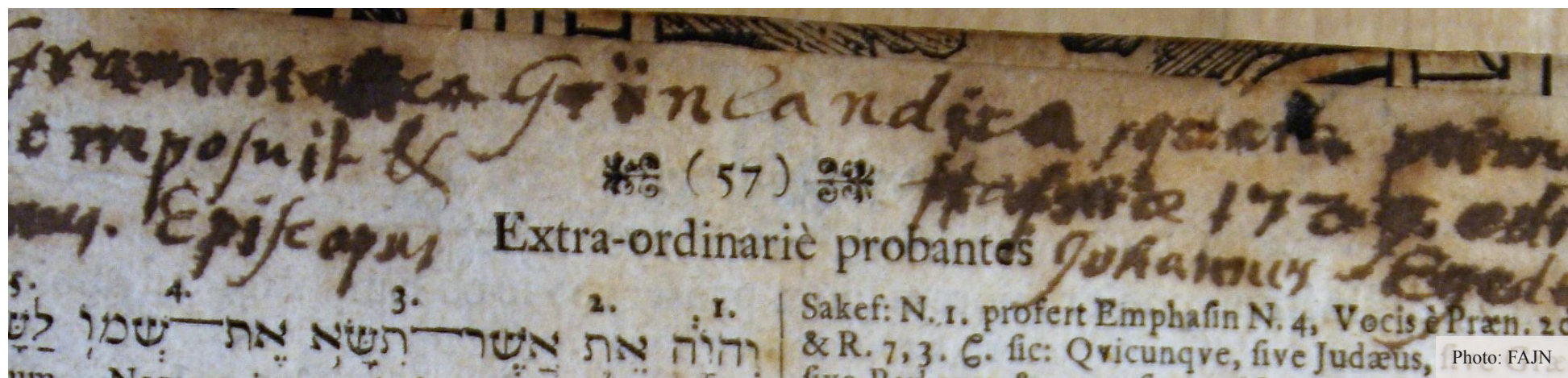
The only passing mention of the primer appeared on Christian Pfaff's comprehensive list of Greenlandic books in 1890. The district

medical officer in Jakobshavn (Ilulissat) 1854-1876, Pfaff's bibliography notes a Greenlandic primer of 40 pages "possibly published by Hans Egede, Copenhagen 1739". Unfortunately, Pfaff did not include the source for this information.

Many years later, in 1932, William Thalbitzer, professor at the University of Copenhagen, published a review of the earliest research about Greenland, and, drawing on Pfaff's bibliography, he knew about the possible existence of a Greenlandic reading primer printed in 1739. However, Thalbitzer was not able to

locate it, which is why most researchers since 1932 have assumed that the book was lost.

*Handwritten note in latin on the inside of the cover of Hans Egede's reading primer: "Grammatica Grönländica, quam primo composuit & Hafniæ 1739 edidit Dom[inus] Episcopus Johannes Egede". For the inside binding, wastepaper from a textbook of Biblical Hebrew was used.*



### The book is rediscovered

While involved in a pan-European research project concerning the history of European reading primers, I was examining the collections of The Royal Library in Copenhagen and discovered that Hans Egede's primer from 1739 is in fact well-preserved and that the library owns two copies.

According to The Royal Library's catalogue, they were published in 1757, but an examination of the language of the books proves that they must have been printed before the 1740s. This is confirmed by a note written in Latin on the inside of the binding of one of the copies. The translation into English reads: "A primer in Greenlandic which Bishop Hans Egede has first assembled and published in 1739 in Copenhagen".

The primer consists of 20 pages with letters and syllables followed by the main parts of Martin Luther's Small Catechism which had been the basis of reading instruction in Denmark and Norway since the reformation in 1536. In addition, there are a number of prayers to be read before and after meals and at other occasions. A collection of 8 psalms concludes the book. Some of them are still in use in the Greenlandic church.

### Why is Greenland's first book an important book?

This small book of 40 pages is a milestone in Greenland's modern cultural history. Until its publication, handwritten texts in Greenland were standard. With printed books, texts became easier to get hold of. The success was great. Less than 100 years after Hans Egede's arrival at the Island of Hope outside Greenland's present-day capital Nuuk in 1721, almost the whole population in West Greenland could read texts in their mother tongue.

When Greenland's first newspaper *Atuagagdliutit* was established in 1861, it was written and edited by Greenlanders in their own language, eagerly discussing their own affairs. As a result of the discussions, scattered groups of individuals throughout the enormous but thinly populated island coalesced into a nation.

*A page from Hans Egede's reading primer: The end of the section with prayers.*

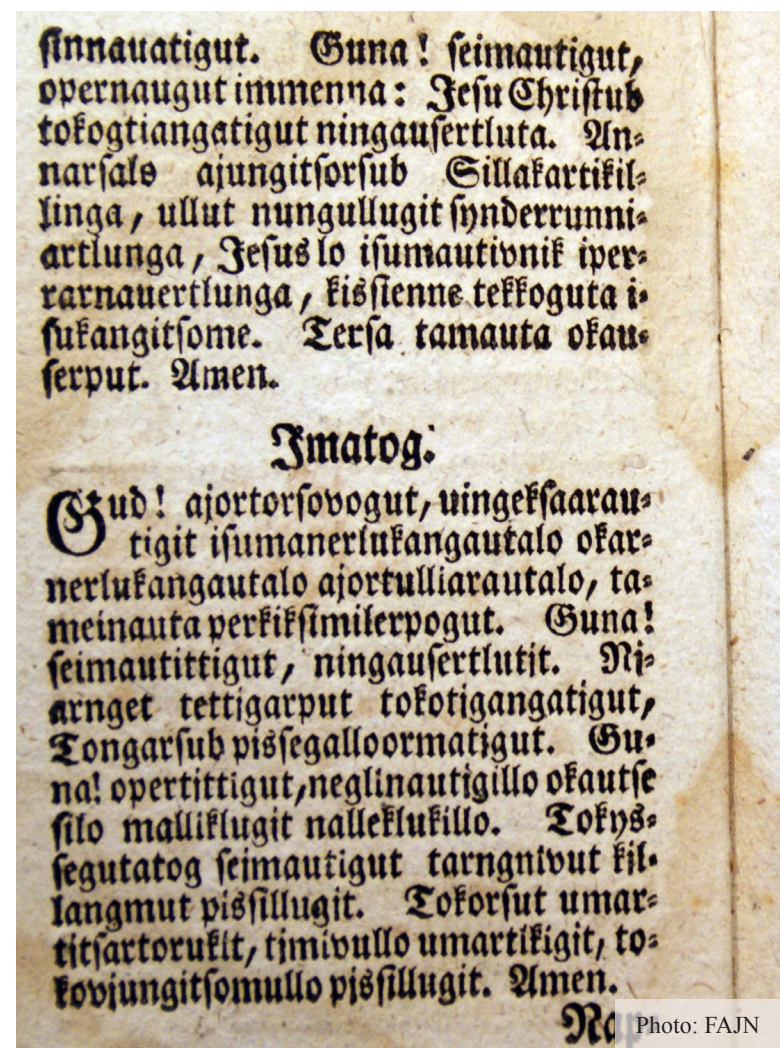


Photo: FAJN



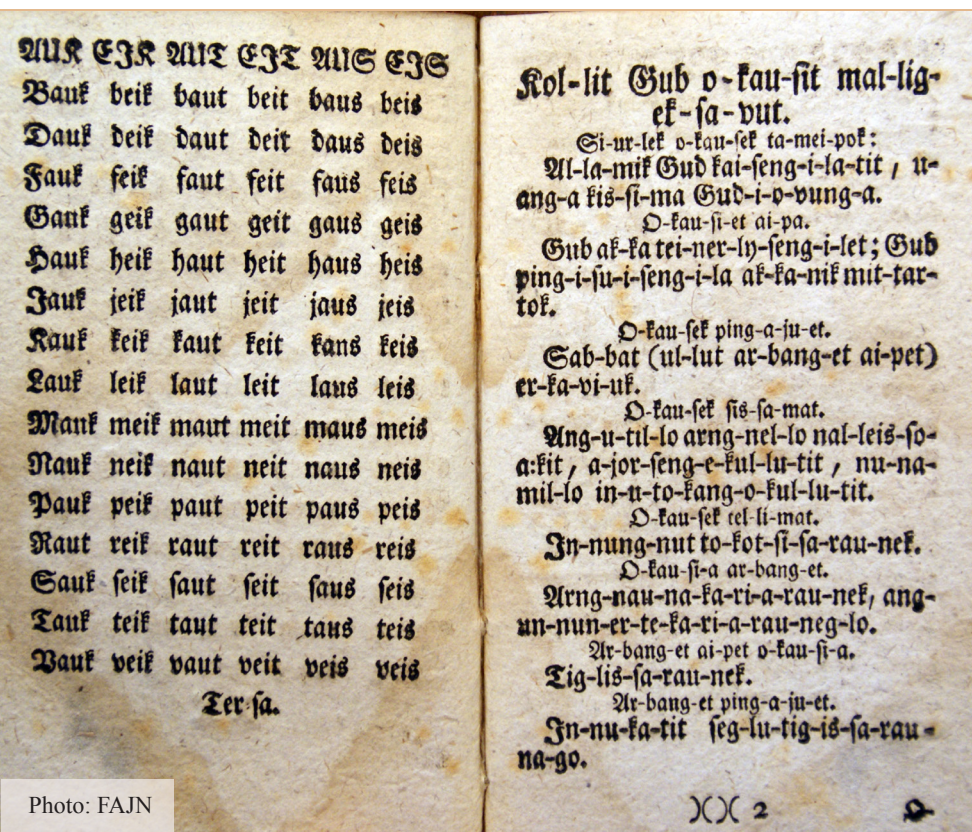


Photo: FAJN

Two pages from Hans Egede's reading primer. On the left page, the section of syllabic exercises concludes with the word "Ter-sa" (the end). The right-hand page has the beginning of the Ten Commandments and a headline, the translation of which reads "God's ten words which we have to follow". The book is the only Greenlandic book ever that has been printed in Fraktur (black-letter).

The first page of Hans Egede's reading primer. The sequence of numbers ends at 21, which was the highest number that could be easily expressed in Old Greenlandic.



Photo: FAJN

#### Read more:

Flemming A. J. Nielsen and Thorkild Kjærgaard: Catechism Primers in Greenland. In: B. Juska-Bacher, W. Sroka, T. Laine & M. Grenby (eds.): *Learning to Read, Learning Religion. Catechism Primers in Europe from the 16th to the 19th Centuries*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, forthcoming.



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# *Under the snow* and Arctic Noir

On my shelf, there is an old worn paperback that is being kept together by a slowly disintegrating rubber band. The book is a crime novel that I should have read again because of its renewed topicality. The novel is *De tre små mästarna* by the Swedish author Kerstin Ekman, released in 1961. The book was published in English in 1997 under the title *Under the snow*. It may be one of the first psychological thriller books in Nordic fiction, but Ekman's novel also came much in advance of a new genre in Nordic crime fiction, Arctic Noir, appearing in the 2010s. As a literary genre, Arctic Noir, usually refers to stories taking place in Greenland.

The genre designation Arctic Noir contains two references: The Arctic as a geographical location and the hard-boiled crime novel that unfolded in the US from the inter-war period to the 1950s with writers such as Raymond Chandler and Dashiell Hammett as the genre's most important representatives. As a literary genre, Arctic Noir complies with the prevalent pattern of detective stories that, according to the literary researcher Willy Dahl, revolve around a crime and its solution. Everything else in the novel – environment, psychology, social criticism, maybe also poetry and parody – must be subordinated to the crime plot.

“The other” in Arctic Noir is the Arctic and conflicts connected with the Arctic. The scene of the crime plot and the conflicts creating the plot are in other words rooted in the climate, the scenery, and the cultures of the Arctic. The story of the novel takes place in Nuuk, Reykjavik, Kiruna, or similar locations, and the plot typically involves climate issues or social problems with connection to the Arctic. Well-known examples from Greenland are Mads Peder Nordbo's *Kvinden uden hud* (The woman without skin, 2017) and Steffen Jacobsen's *Et bjerg af løgne* (A mountain of lies, 2015).



The location of Kerstin Ekman's novel is the fictitious mountain station Rakisjokk northward of the Arctic Circle in Sweden. This little place is characterized by its Arctic scenery and its wild-life, and the temperature and the polar darkness are central to the plot. The imagined world in *Under the snow* may seem unusual for the crime novel genre that is typically set in urban environments or closed and well-defined locations such as libraries, steamboats, or trains, but during the entire winter Rakisjokk is a closed and remote area at the edge of the world. However, the mountain station also offers a contrast to this representation of remoteness, depicted as central to a complex of abandoned Saami cult places and settlements.

The cast of characters – a trio consisting of a detective, a victim, and a criminal – also follow the conventions of other detective stories. Just like in Conan Doyle's books, there is a detective and his helper. In Ekman's story, they appear as two of modernity's central figures: The police officer and the artist. The criminal and his accomplice, both members of the local traditional society, are a reindeer herder and the head of the small Saami society, whereas the victims are a young Saami woman and an artist.

The plot itself is rooted and structured by a conflict that is often connected with the Arctic: The clash between modern and traditional society. The first story, the one about the solving of the crime(s), is a conventional detective story where the detective remain a spectator of the events. The second story is, on the other hand, based on the clash between modern and traditional culture. Overall, the conflict is a modern one – a man has impregnated his mistress, and he is afraid that his wealthy wife will come to know of it. However, the crime can only be committed because the Saami that could prevent it refuses to do so out of respect for tradition. The woman is forced to commit suicide. She could have been saved by the family's elder who is leading a life according to tradition without modern technology such as watches, transistor radios, and refrigerators, but he approves of the crime in order to save the honour of the family.

The clash between modern culture and traditional society in Kerstin Ekman's Arctic crime novel reflects a conflict present everywhere in the Arctic. Therefore, *Under the snow* remains timely, a prescient predecessor of Arctic Noir.

However, nature and the climate are not described as vulnerable or as being in need of care. They are just there. As such, *Under the snow* echoes its own age, but in a later crime novel, *Händelser vid vatten* (1993; English translation: *Blackwater*, 1996), Kerstin Ekman emphasizes modern society's destruction of nature.

### Literature

Lisa Nørnberg Andersen et al.: Grønlands noir – Arctic noir. *Dansknoter* 1/2019, 46-48

Willy Dahl: Om litterariteten i kriminallitteraturen. In: *Den sidste gode genre*. Århus: Klim & NSU, 1995.

Kerstin Ekman: *Under the snow*. Doubleday, 1997.

Kerstin Ekman: *Blackwater*. Picador, 1996.

Steffen Jacobsen. *Et bjerg af logne*. Copenhagen: People's Press, 2015.

Mads Peder Nordbo. *Kvinden uden hud*. Copenhagen: Politiken, 2017.



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## ***Kakaliit / Kakalêwt*** **– a play by Hans Lynge about a cultural encounter that went wrong**

*It is not a coincidence that Hans Lynge has been chosen to pick up the mantle of his great predecessors Knud Rasmussen and dr. honoris causa William Thalbitzer. Hans Lynge possesses the gift of intuition that leads the folklorist and the linguist towards the essence of things. Just like Knud Rasmussen, he masters the Greenlandic language and its diverse nuances, and he can make the elderly talk about the important things of the past (Bent Rosenkilde Nielsen, Atuagagdliutit/Grønlandsposten, 1956).*

Charismatic writer, multitalented artist, collector of folklore, and politician Hans Lynge (1906-1988) is also known in Greenland for his many original plays written in Greenlandic and dealing with Greenlandic culture and societal relations. At their many theatrical performances, he himself was often responsible for the script, setting, costumes, and direction. Many of his plays have a political message that may be either obvious or hidden.

One of these plays is *Kakaliit* from 1956 which was inspired by a story from the Kullorsuaq settlement (appr. 300 km northward of

Upernavik) written down by Hans Lynge in 1952. Hans Lynge's informant was Êvartêraq (Edvardt) Frederiksen (1884-?), who was known as one of the best storytellers of the region. The title of his story is *Angákuarsârd-lune qavdlunânik ajortumêriniarneq* (Sorcery exercised against the Danes).

The story is about a married couple in Upernavik who have named their newborn baby after the colonial manager's deceased wife. The baby is dressed nicely and brought to the colonial manager by a babysitter for the child to visit her "husband". When the colonial manager throws

out the guests, the baby's father feels deeply humiliated. He is a great shaman, and he has named his daughter out of respect for the colonial manager. As revenge, he dispatches his helping spirit, Kakaliit, to the colonial manager. Kakaliit has the appearance of a fascinating woman that the colonial manager cannot resist. He starts a romantic relationship with her and showers her with the finest gifts available in the local shop. When at long last he realizes that he is in love with a spirit of the dead, he goes insane and finally dies. The revenge on the colonial manager is accomplished.



The play *Kakaliit* was first performed February 11, 1956, at the hostel for Greenlandic students in Hellerup (near Copenhagen) and was performed twice by young Greenlanders in Copenhagen. The play was reviewed in the Greenlandic newspaper *Atuagagdliutit/Grønlandsposten* by Bent Rosenkilde Nielsen:

*In spite of short preparation time, actors Knud Egede, Jens John Høegh, and the two miss Chemnitzes did surprisingly well through their long dialogues that often gave voice to irony against the Danes and made the Greenlandic members of the audience burst out laughing. "Kakalit" should be performed for a broader audience in Copenhagen where it has not been possible to attend a real Greenlandic theatrical play since the years of occupation. Hans Lynges drama would also be a worthwhile play to be performed by talented young actors in Greenland, because its plot connects the past and the presence and represents a Greenlandic writer's views on the issues of the Greenlandic population and the Danish colonization.*

**Did you know?**

Kakalêwt:

"Probably a deceased girl of that name that the man has acquired as his helping spirit. Such deceased persons are buried in a sitting position" (Hans Lynges).

Read more about the hostels for Greenlandic students in Denmark:

[www.tidsskriftetgronland.dk/archive/1980-4-Artikel02.pdf](http://www.tidsskriftetgronland.dk/archive/1980-4-Artikel02.pdf)

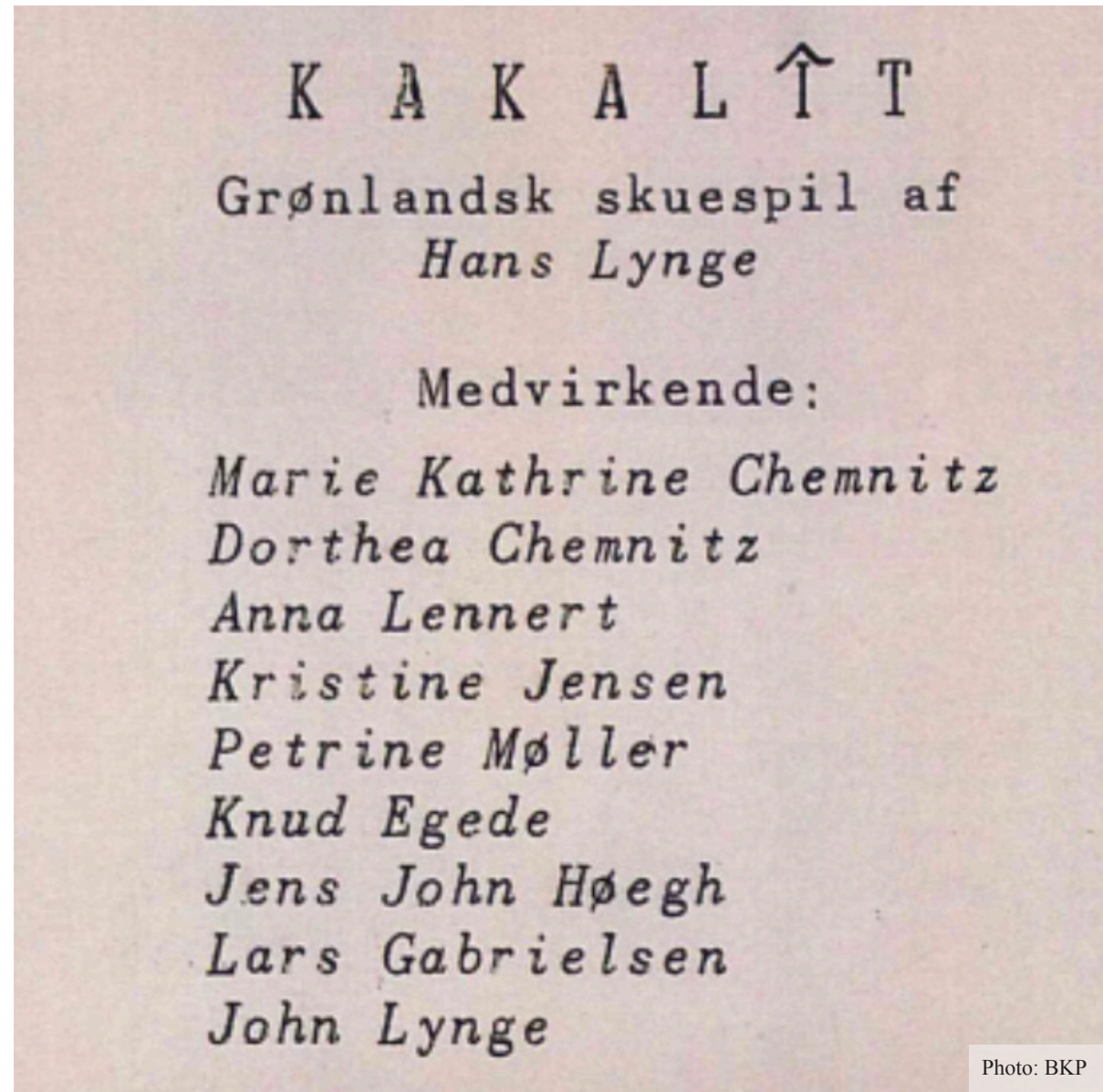


Photo: BKP

*The play was performed for the second time in Copenhagen during the Easter party of the Greenland Club, Peqatigiit Kalaallit, April 2nd, 1956.*



Photo: Jacob Maarbjerg/Ritzau Scanpix

Artist Hans Lyngé working, 1953.

The review focuses on the play's message: If you cannot make yourself heard by the people in power, the dramatic arts are available for communicating critiques by focusing on everyday situations highlighting the disparity between the two populations. Hans Lyngé wrote several plays of this kind.

### What is implied – the cultural ellipses

When Hans Lyngé's transcript of Êvartêraq's story is compared to Hans Lyngé's manuscript of the play, consisting of 11 scenes, it is clear that a number of details and explanations are added to the play. By such manifestations of his creative liberty, Hans Lyngé supplements esoteric passages in the story, the so-called cultural ellipses. He explains everything in the original story that outsiders are not able to understand.

### Cultural ellipses

Cultural ellipses are esoteric parlance that can only be understood by a group of people sharing a cultural fellowship. They know what is meant even if it remains unspoken.

However, he also uses his creative liberty to make the story highlight the disparity between Greenlanders and Danes experienced after the change of the Danish constitution in 1953 that made Greenland into a Danish county.

### Read more:

Hans Lyngé: *Inegpait eller fornemme mennesker, som Melville Bugtens eskimoer kalder sig selv: Upernavik norddistrikts ældre historie* (Meddelelser om Grønland, 90). København: Reitzel, 1955.

Birgit Kleist Pedersen: Hans Lyngé – en passioneret amatør i tilblivelsen af den grønlandske teaterscene. *Peripeti. Tidsskrift for dramaturgiske studier*. Særunummer 2019, s. 1-24.

[www.peripeti.dk/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Peripeti\\_GrønlandsTeaterhistorie\\_PåVej.pdf](http://www.peripeti.dk/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Peripeti_GrønlandsTeaterhistorie_PåVej.pdf)

Birgit Kleist Pedersen: *Fra Homer til Aron*. Master's thesis, Ilisimatusarfik, 1995.

Bent Rosenkilde Nielsen: Hans Lyngé i Upernavik norddistrikt. *Atuagagdliutit/Grønlandsposten* 19. april 1956, s. 12. [timarit.is/page/3778507?iabr=on#page/n9/mode/2up/search/inegpait](http://timarit.is/page/3778507?iabr=on#page/n9/mode/2up/search/inegpait)





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# Our language is not being respected!

This sentence is well-known among Greenlanders. Recently, there was a heated discussion about language on social media. The man who started the discussion had experimented at his workplace by speaking Greenlandic only. It had been challenging to carry through, even though the experiment was only for a short period. His post had many comments, almost a hundred, and no one disagreed with him. However, some of the comments seemed somewhat hysterical, and many indicated hatred toward Danes.

This debate is a typical example of many discussions about language in Greenland. When

the language is debated, society often gets divided into two parties: Greenlanders and Danes. Or, to be more precise, those who speak Greenlandic only and those who cannot speak Greenlandic. There are many reasons for that, one of them being the repercussions of colonial time.

## **Greenlandicness and language**

In Greenland, the Greenlandic language is very much connected with identity. Sometimes, the language is used as a benchmark against which the degree of the speaker's Greenlandicness can be assessed.

When we look at Greenlandic history, it is not unusual to judge the degree of Greenlandicness by the ability to speak Greenlandic. During the time of modernisation in the 1950s and 1960s, also called the time of Danification, many Greenlanders began to speak Danish only. Therefore, their compatriots no longer considered them to be Greenlanders, even though they were born and lived in Greenland and had Greenlandic relations.

As I wrote my graduate thesis, I researched the most dominant feelings expressed in the language debates in online news, trying to

understand the reasons for these feelings. The most dominant feelings were anger and also hate, shame, and love (of the language).

### **Greenlandic or not**

As mentioned earlier, two groups are up against each other in the debate: Those who speak Greenlandic, and those who do not.

It is often mentioned as a problem that those who speak only Greenlandic have difficulties being admitted to education institutions where the language of instruction is mainly Danish. Likewise, many Greenlandic-speaking people have difficulty in approaching public administration offices with only Danish-speaking staff. On the other hand, those who do not speak Greenlandic have fewer opportunities to participate in public debates. Many people think that the only language allowed at the rostrum of Inatsisartut, the parliament of Greenland, should be Greenlandic.

### **Colonization**

Why are these debates so frequent? It is essential to understand the impact of colonization. In history, in the debates, and according to tradition, the Greenlanders have been defined as inferior to the colonial power. This has been the case for generations. During the colonial period, new habits, new ways of thinking, and new ideas arose, and these

views of the colonial power were absorbed into the broader society.

When lack of confidence is mixed with megalomania, it gets dangerous. Dialogue and mutual appreciation turn into conflicts and struggle for power.

### **Inequality**

Suppose we want to avoid that the language debate only divides our society. In that case we

need to talk about the fact that the background of the debate as well as our feelings are rooted in history. Most importantly, we have to understand our opponents' points of view. Otherwise, the language debate will only be about equality or inequality as we do not treat our opponents as equals.



Full thesis here: <https://uni.gl/media/5987234/slm-speciale-plastikblomster-og-tungeloese-groenlaendere.pdf>





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# The history of the Greenlandic newscast Qanorooq

The Greenlandic TV station Kalaallit Nunaata Radioa-TV (KNR-TV) aired for the first time in 18 towns and settlements on November 1st, 1982. At the beginning, the new TV station did not produce many programmes, but was sustained by a sparse supply of productions provided by local TV organisations along the coast, most made by volunteers. Every evening (except Saturday) from 8:02 p.m., the local TV organisations were responsible for 13 minutes of broadcasting time. From 1983, KNR-TV began to pay for the productions, initially at 60 DKK per minute. The production budget for the first year amounted to 65,000 DKK, but already in 1984, the budget had increased to 185,000 DKK.

Seven years had to pass before Greenland had its own newscast. It happened when Maliinanguaq Markussen (today Marcussen-Mølgaard) was hired as a journalist in 1989. Already during the job interview with TV manager H.P. Møller Andersen she mentioned that she had a dream of producing news in Greenlandic. Until then, the new TV station had only broadcast Danish newscasts from VHS videotapes. The tapes were sent from Denmark by airmail and were broadcast with a delay of approximately one week. The dream of replacing these out-of-date Danish newscasts with topical Greenlandic productions came true, though only as a test programme in the

beginning. For a month, starting on September 1st, 1989, KNR-TV broadcast five-minute news segments every evening at 8 p.m. The name of the newscast, Qanorooq (Did you hear it?), was suggested by the well-known radio host Uvdloriánguak' Kristiansen.



*Kalaallit  
Nunaata  
Radioa, The  
Greenlandic  
Broadcasting  
Corporation.*



Photo: Eldamurkovic

During September 1989, KNR-TV exhausted its entire budget on Qanorooq alone. When the newscasts began, there was no broadcasting studio available. The set was instead the manager's office with a KNR logo painted on the wall. Erna Lynge and Niels Hendrik Lynge from KNR-TV's Child and Youth Department became involved in the production of news; they had some experience from making programmes about nature and culture. Employees from the Danish public-service broadcasting company Danmarks Radio gave Maliinanguaq Markussen and a trainee journalist, Noah

*Since its inception KNR has had to work creatively to reach its editorial standards as Greenland's only televised news channel.*

Mølgaard, a crash course on how to be TV hosts and taught them not to wear black, white, or red clothes during the broadcasts. The first newscast was introduced by a weather forecast in Greenlandic and in Danish and had news reports about a fish factory, a change of managers, and a language seminar in Nuuk. At the end of the newscast, the viewers were encouraged to contact KNR-TV if they had news tips or anything else they wanted to share.

The productions took time, and all news reports had to be edited and transferred to one tape. That is the reason why the news was broadcasted as late as at 8 p.m. According to the recollection of Noah Mølgaard, one of the unforgettable stories from this first month's newscasts was an interview with a person from Qaanaaq who had been severely injured when assisting with the clean-up of the 1968 American bomber crash in Greenland.

According to the then chief production officer, Niels-Pavia Lynge, Greenland's Prime Minister at the time, Jonathan Motzfeldt, asked him how much it would cost to continue the newscasts. The Parliament of Greenland then decided to fund only half of the budget, but KNR-TV was determined to start broadcasting Qanorooq

again. Since April 24th, 1990, Greenland has had its own TV news. In the beginning the programme was only broadcast twice a week but on October 1, 1991 started airing every weekday, except for the summer break period. Today, Qanorooq is 20 minutes in length and is broadcast every weekday, also in the summer.

Qanorooq's first editor until 1993 was Maliinanguaq Marcussen-Mølgaard. One of her ambitions with the news was to bring positive stories balancing all the bad news about Greenland that was in the media already.

KNR has started a digitization process transferring old programs to KNR's YouTube channel as soon as the programs have been rebroadcast. Unfortunately, the first Qanorooq newscast is still not accessible to the public as the quality of the tape is too poor.

#### Read more:

Ulla Hjorth Nielsen and Birna Marianne Kleivan: *KNR-TV's første år*. Nuuk: Pilersuiffik, 1984.





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## Nasiffik: Ilisimatusarfik strengthens its focus on foreign and security policy

*Nasiffik (observation post) is a new research centre at Ilisimatusarfik aimed at keeping an attentive eye on the outside world that is increasingly interested in Greenland and the Arctic. The purpose of establishing a local research centre for Arctic foreign and security policy is to collect and develop knowledge of diplomacy and relaxation of tensions in the Arctic against the backdrop of growing animosities between superpowers and climate change.*

In late summer 2019, Greenland came under the spotlight of the world press when former US president Donald Trump wanted to buy the world's largest island. A few days later, the lead article in the Greenlandic newspaper *Atuagagdliutit (AG)* argued that the politicians in Nuuk should consider Trump's announcement as a "wake-up call" in terms of foreign and security issues.

The incident was generally regarded as absurd, but it should be seen in the context of major discussions of Greenland's role as an international player, Greenland's development of foreign policy within the last five decades, and the cur-

rent security situation in the Arctic. As I and my colleague, PhD student Sara Olsvig, later wrote in the journal *Udenrigs*, it is no longer possible just to note that defense and security policy is within Danish jurisdiction according to the Constitution of the Kingdom of Denmark, because Greenland occupies a geographic position of increasing importance when decisions are made, diplomats meet, and Arctic security policies change.

There is a growing need for research to be done in Greenland in order to analyse the development that the Greenlandic society faces.



Photo: Enrique Shore

*Greenland's geography and rich subsoil plays a large strategic role in international politics. Most recently, this became apparent when then president Donald Trump offered to buy Greenland.*

As Greenland is increasingly becoming an active international player among the Arctic (and near-Arctic) superpowers, the need of knowledge obtained in the Greenlandic geopolitical context is growing. All this and much more will be addressed by the new research centre.

### Nasiffik – centre of Arctic foreign and security policy

In 2021, Ilisimatusarfik launched a new centre of foreign and security policy coined Nasiffik. The centre will gather and develop new knowledge about urgent issues regarding Greenland's role in Arctic geopolitics and disseminate the knowledge in ways relevant to the Greenlandic public, the Arctic, the Danish realm, and the globe.

It is important to the centre to recruit staff with international research profiles and also Greenlandic-speaking PhD students in order for local anchorage to be developed and maintained in the future. We want to build an independent research environment in Nuuk, producing and sharing knowledge of foreign and security policy in the Arctic.

### What does Nasiffik do?

Preparations and the development of ideas have been ongoing for several years, and the first grants to Nasiffik were received in 2020. Funding is obtained from Naalakkersuisut (the Government of Greenland), The Danish Parliament, and Greenland's Research Council. The Royal Danish Defence College in Denmark has also agreed to post a researcher at Nasiffik.

The researchers of the centre have written several scientific articles, book chapters, short features, and popular science articles about Greenland's foreign policy. Nasiffik's researchers are the most quoted expert sources from Ilisimatusarfik in the Greenlandic, Danish, and international media. We and our collaborators are planning a series of conferences and lectures aimed at both strengthening the international research profile and benefitting the local community.

The interest in the Arctic is growing worldwide, but the distances from Tasiilaq, Narsaq and Uummannaq to Washington, Brussels and Beijing are vast. At the end of 2020, the centre launched its first poll concerning Greenlanders' opinions on a series of issues pertaining to foreign and security policy. One of the findings of the poll was that the Greenlandic population think that Greenland's preferred international partners should be its Arctic neighbours, particularly Canada and Iceland as well as the Arctic Council (fig. 1). In addition, more research on Greenlanders' views of superpowers is needed (fig. 2).

So far, there has not been much interest in the Arctic populations and their views on the new geopolitical reality they are facing. Nasiffik will rectify this.

*American soldiers at the Thule base in northwestern Greenland.*

### Read more:

Rasmus Leander Nielsen & Maria Ackrén: Grønlandernes holdninger til udenrigs- og sikkerhedspolitiske spørgsmål: Indsigter fra en survey. *Økonomi & Politik* 2 (2021), s. 84-98.

Rasmus Leander Nielsen: Global Greenlanders: Evolutionen af en grønlandsk udenrigspolitik i et foranderligt Arktis. I: Aa. Rydstrøm-Poulsen, G. A. Reimer & A. N. Lauritsen (red.): *Tro og samfund i 300-året for Hans Egedes ankomst til Grønland*. Aarhus Universitetsforlag, 2021.

Sara Olsvig & Rasmus Leander Nielsen: Da Trump ville købe Grønland. *Udenrigs* 3 (2019), s. 74-83.



Photo: LOU Collection





## ABOUT THE CENTRE

**Nasiffik:** Nunanut Allanut Sillimaniarnermullu Ilisimasaqarfik

### **The centre has three essential tasks:**

To strengthen the knowledge of foreign and security policy in Greenland by promoting local research talents, strengthening research-based teaching, and publishing in internationally recognised research journals.

To advice decision-makers and officials and to disseminate new knowledge to the public based on solid research.

To connect Greenlandic researchers and practitioners to international research environments and connect international networks with Greenlandic knowledge.

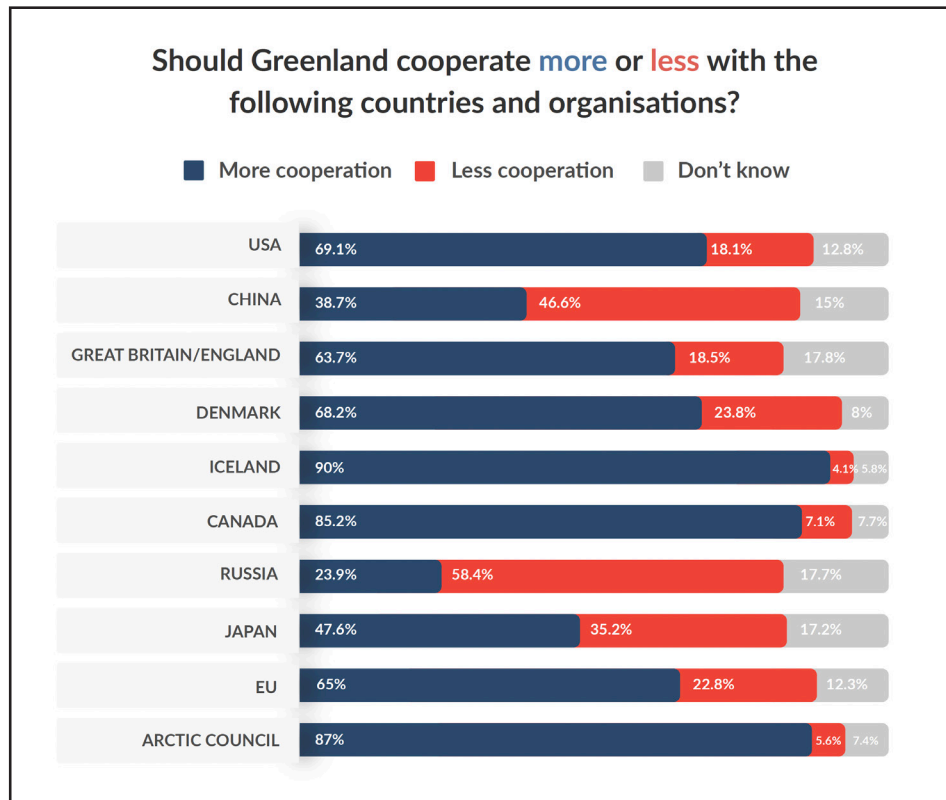


Figure 1: International partners.  
Source: Nielsen & Ackrén 2021

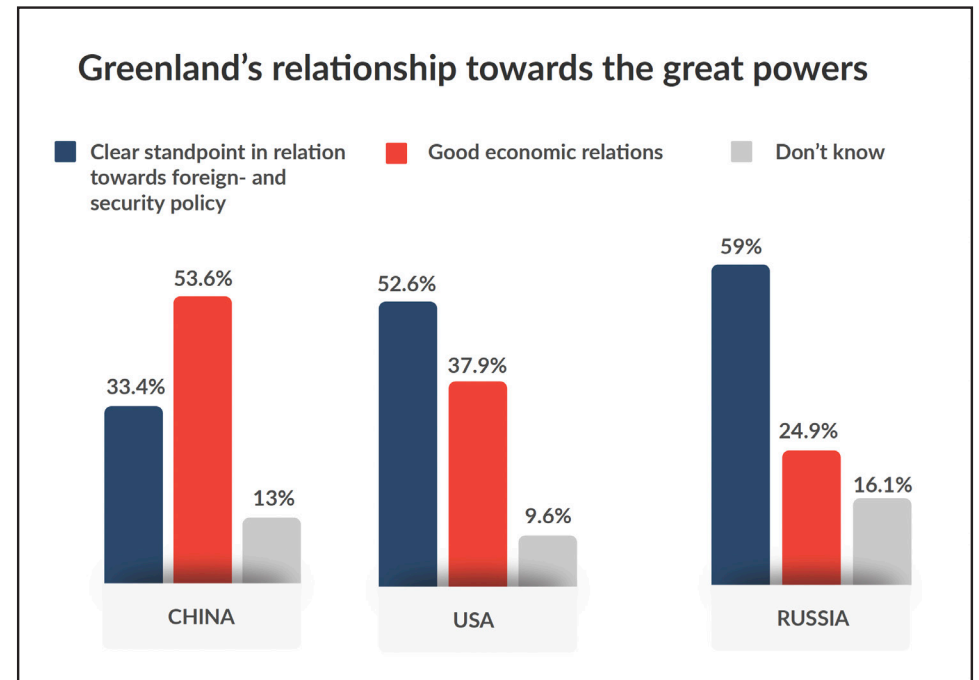


Figure 2: Views on the great powers.  
Source: Nielsen & Ackrén 2021





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# From words to action

## – young people's contribution towards creating local sustainability

*I have taken part in many youth-related political activities where we have come up with many good ideas, but at the end of the day, the adults always make the decision as they wish, deciding what should happen next. These are the words spoken by a youngster in Qeqertarsuaq as we discussed how the youth could gain greater influence in the local community.*

It is frustrating and discouraging for young people to lack influence. Most of the people around the world have noticed Sweden's Gretha Thunberg's fight for the environment.



*Young people in Greenland are increasingly demanding action on tackling the carbon footprint left to them by previous generations.*

In her own way, she has made it clear that young people should have as much influence as possible on environmental questions – they and the coming generations must live with the consequences of the choices we make now.

The research project Sustainable Entrepreneurship in Greenland investigates how entrepreneurs in Greenland experience being entrepreneurs, in particular regarding sustainability. The project also focuses on the definition of sustainability in Greenland, and especially what it means for those who have to live with the future consequences of today's choices. It is important to get young people to talk and to take their opinions seriously so they can be both influential and responsible for their futures. That is why the first part of the project is the "GYS project": Greenlandic Youth for Sustainability.

The GYS project brings together young people and entrepreneurs in various local communities in order to put sustainability on the local agenda, define how locals understand the term sustainability, and move from words to deeds. The goal is to contribute to creating local sustainable changes that make sense in the local community in order for the changes to become permanent.

*What role does Greenland play in the fight against climate change?*

So far, three issues have been addressed in Qeqertarsuaq. They have been selected by the children and the young people, and the school, local entrepreneurs, established businesses, and the municipal administration have been involved. The three issues are food waste, environmental litter, and systems for recovery and collection of packaging. Some changes are initiated and processes are established for finding solutions to the rest of the problems. The results of the partnership with the young people are immediately visible in the local community and give motivation to continue the work.

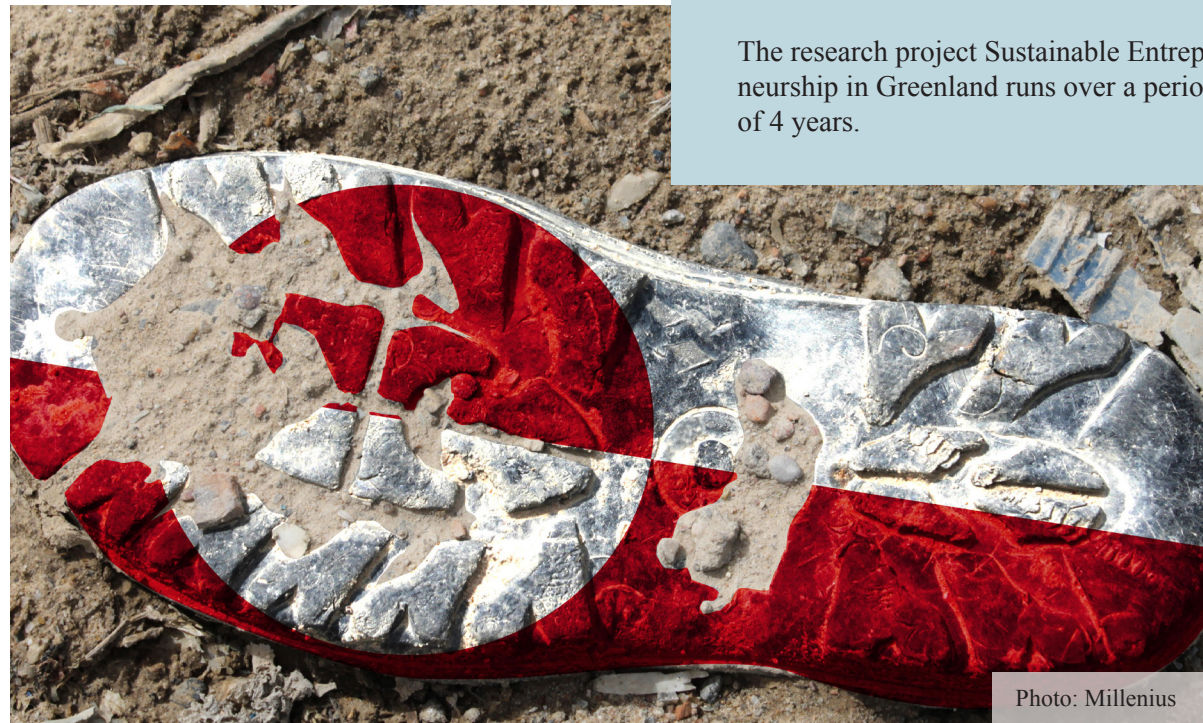


Photo: Millenius

In the beginning, the research group behind the GYS project (Greenlandic Youth for Sustainability) consisted of a PhD student, a professor, a graduate student, and a school child in Nuuk, but in May 2021 three graduate students and one more school child were added to the group. Besides, a local action group has been established in Qeqertarsuaq, and there have been meetings between young locals and entrepreneurs in two more towns and one settlement in autumn 2021. The local action groups will then decide what shall be done in the future.

The research project Sustainable Entrepreneurship in Greenland runs over a period of 4 years.





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# Leadership and organizational development in Greenland

Leadership activities contribute to organizational development by focusing on future activities in Greenlandic organizations. Leadership plays a central role in the larger organizational picture and contributes to the organizing and organizational development by focusing on what is about to happen based on interactions with other leaders and employees.

But how is leadership practised in Greenland? Which dilemmas and challenges do leaders in Greenland face in their daily worklife? These are some of the questions the research project Leadership in Greenland addresses.

Leadership activities in Greenlandic organizations are diverse, encompassing many kinds of activities, events, and relations. During interviews and conversations with leaders in Greenland, we heard that the organizations and the daily leadership practice are closely related to what is happening in the surrounding and close community. The close and local community influences and creates dilemmas for the organizational context.

*Developing leaders and shaping Greenlandic business opportunities will help ensure a prosperous future for all.*



Photo: Z\_wei

### Three things in particular stand out in our research:

1. The leaders point out that the general development in Greenlandic society has had an impact on leadership roles and political shifts and changing agendas create challenges for the organizations and stakeholders. We hear leaders argue that political discussions usually focus on easy questions such as airports and city planning, whereas difficult discussions relating to education and social issues are not given sufficient attention.
2. Leadership in Greenland is dependent on the leaders' networking skills. Leadership may be said to be exercised in territories of interaction. Most leaders emphasize that their networks offer opportunities to keep them informed about future activities and enable them to influence decisions. However, the networks are also restraining since mutual understandings are developed, and situations, perspectives, and answers are often taken for granted. Breaking with the common understanding can be a challenge and calls for a decisive leader.
3. The leaders are aware that control and systems are not sufficient to understand and become involved in the leadership activity. Formalized systems and principles are a part of the organizations, but leadership should not be perceived as a closed system, because organizations emerge both in interaction with the environment and by forming new business connections.

Overall, the leaders argue that there is a need for developing leadership as a practice and a profession to meet the daily challenges.

*People tend to move fast, once they get the idea right.*



Photo: Phototechno



### Other research issues

The results of the research on leadership in Greenland point toward other relevant issues which needs to be discussed:

Generally, the discussion of inequality in organizations calls for attention. We hear female leaders experience challenges when having to act and navigate in the often male-dominated organizations, and they argue that there is a need for “broad shoulders” (interview).

Another question that caught our attention is how leaders interact with their close relations. How do they qualify new understandings, how do they move on from a conflict, and how do they avoid conflicts of interests?

A final issue is about middle management activities. They play a major role in most organizations, and a better understanding of these activities might expand our understanding of how collaborations and organizational developments emerge.

The research project Management in Greenland is a collaboration between Ilisimatusarfik and Roskilde University. Read more here: <https://uk.uni.gl/research/management-in-greenland.aspx>

*Women often find themselves having to compete in a male-dominated work environment.*

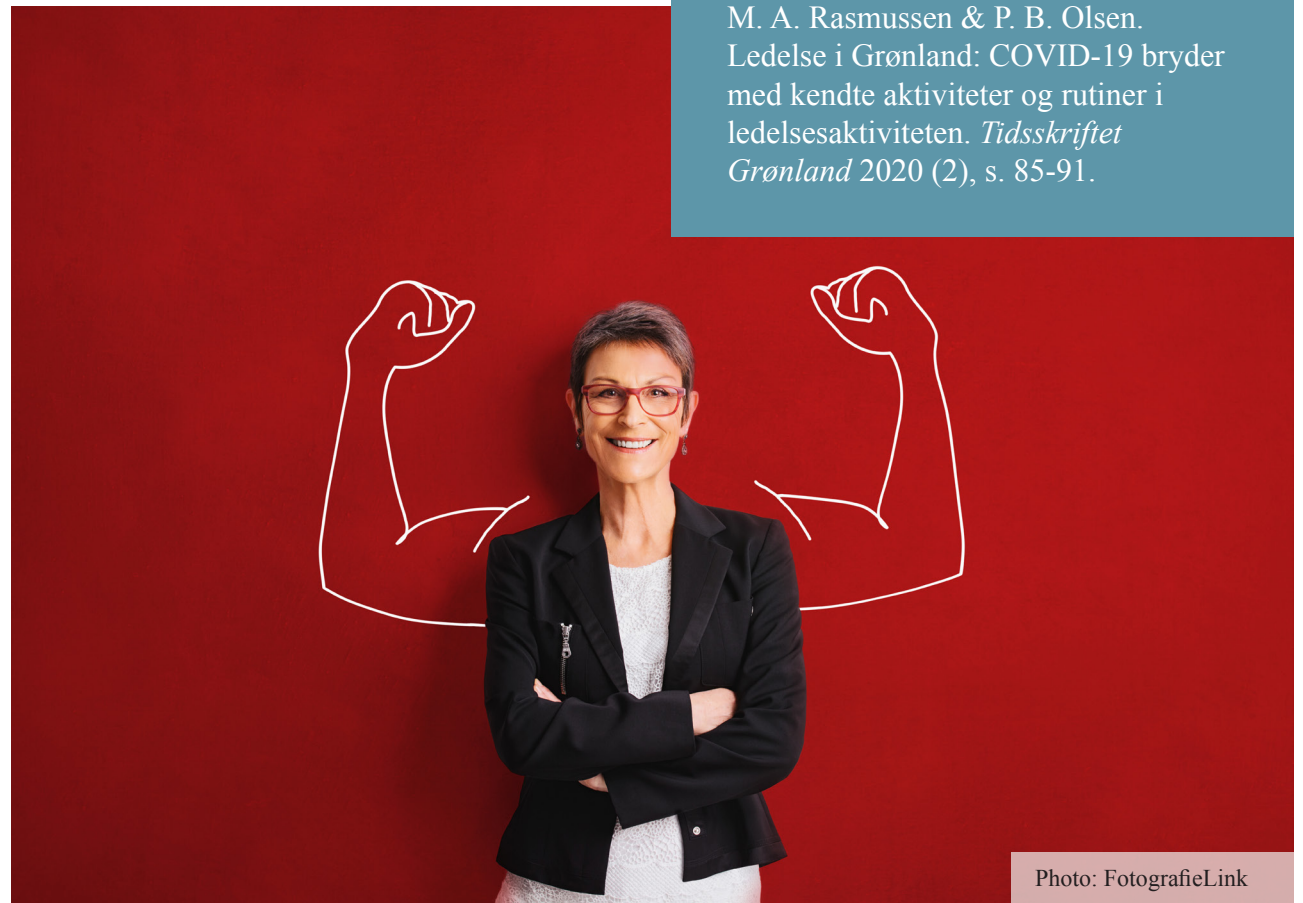


Photo: FotografieLink

### Read more:

M. A. Rasmussen. Practicing Legitimate Leadership in Territories of Interactions in Greenland. In J. D. Rendtorff (ed.), *Handbook of Business Legitimacy*. Cham: Springer, 2020, pp. 1479-1494.

M. A. Rasmussen & P. B. Olsen. *Ledelse i Grønland*. Nuuk, Ilisimatusarfik, 2021 (working paper).

M. A. Rasmussen & P. B. Olsen. Ledelse i Grønland: COVID-19 bryder med kendte aktiviteter og rutiner i ledelsesaktiviteten. *Tidsskriftet Grønland* 2020 (2), s. 85-91.





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*Human beings spend on average more than 10 years in total waking hours in their workplace. Having a healthy culture, environment, and work-ethics will make a big difference in the long run.*

# Integration of work environment and day-to-day operation





The work environment is too often given low priority in the day-to-day operation. Naturally, the leaders and the employees focus their attention on solving the tasks of the day – be it filleting fish, building a house, or caring for the elderly at a residential home. Both the private sector and the public sector are there to solve certain problems in the community – not to create a good work environment for the employees. At the same time, it is totally unacceptable for people to get ill or languish at their workplaces. Giving low priority to the work environment is a worldwide problem existing in both Greenland and Denmark.

All countries have legislation that is meant to protect the employees and to create a safe and healthy work environment. Such legislation is necessary because all experience indicates that the companies cannot create a sufficient level of safety without legal regulation and, not least, enforcement through an efficient labour inspectorate.

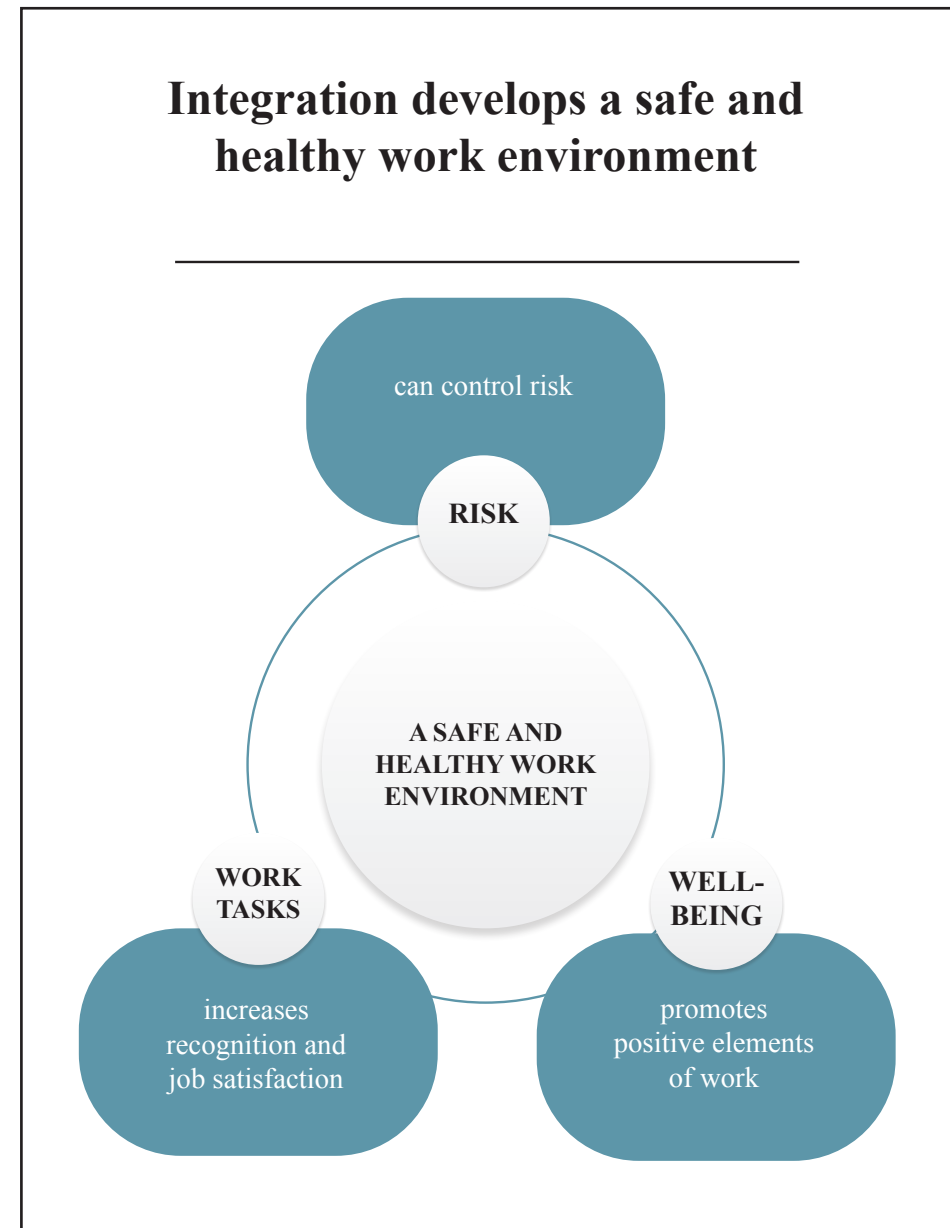
This type of legislation has both specific requirements, such as guardrails on scaffolding and the prevention of bullying, and requirements for work environment management, such as the establishment of safety organisations with employee representation and implementation of workplace assessments. These requirements provide the basis for the companies' efforts to take care of the work environment, but they may also be the

reason why the work environment is still given low priority. The management and the employees may think that it is the job for the safety organisation to take care of the work environment and that the labour inspectorate will call attention to any problems that may arise. Therefore, the operation can continue more or less unchanged.

Danish and international research recommend several measures that can contribute to moving beyond this issue. Overall, the work environment must be integrated with strategy and day-to-day operations. It also creates well-being among the employees as we all want to contribute something that other people need, and the appreciation that a job has been done well provides the foundation of a good work environment. The interaction is illustrated in the model below.

The implementation of a good work environment requires two fundamental elements: Management focus and the involvement of the employees.

## Integration develops a safe and healthy work environment



### Management focus

It is the responsibility of the management that both private and public companies get their tasks done and achieve the goals set by the owners. A good work environment is also a fundamental responsibility of the management who should lay down stringent requirements in that regard in the same way as they do when it comes to finances or quality. Goals for the work environment must be set, and the work environment should be on the agenda of management meetings in the same way as any other question. If this is neglected, the middle management and the employees will think that the work environment is less important than other questions.

### Involvement of the employees

The management cannot do it alone. The employees know where problems regarding the work environment lie, and they also know about barriers against efficiency and quality. The employees can be involved in many ways: by electing a safety representative, at staff meetings, at short production meetings, and by having joint management and employee safety committees. What is important is that the employees are listened to and are involved in finding the right solutions. If the company is successful in that regard, it can achieve greater commitment, both to the work environment and to the day-to-day operations.

### The work environment efforts in Greenlandic companies (AMIG)

The above is a short summary of international knowledge about efficient work environment efforts, but is it relevant to Greenland? That is what we are examining in the new research project AMIG. Even though these issues, in general, also exist in Greenland, there are specific conditions for the business sector to take into consideration, and there is a special culture and geography influencing the way that the work environment efforts are best organised in Greenland. This research project is a collaboration between Ilisimatusarfik (University of Greenland) and University of Southern Denmark.

So far, there has been no research on the work environment in Greenland. Therefore, we have an important new opportunity to learn how the companies are proceeding with their efforts to take care of the work environment, and to find out whether the legislation – which is more or less copied from Danish legislation – is suited for the reality in Greenland and the needs of the local companies.

The project Work environment efforts in Greenlandic companies (AMIG) is carried out in collaboration with four big companies: Royal Greenland, Royal Arctic Line, Permagreen, and Pisiffik. Besides, the social partners and the authorities take part in a follow-up group: Greenland Business Association, the Greenlandic trade union SIK, the Danish/Greenlandic Working Environment Service Authorities and the relevant Greenlandic government department. The project is funded by The Working Environment Research Fund in Denmark and will run for 2.5 years.

Contact: Peter Hasle, project leader  
(hasle@iti.sdu.dk).

*During the last couple of years, Nuuk has experienced an increase in building and infrastructure projects.*



Photo: Giedre Madsen



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## “I feel like a ghost, like being invisible” – to be placed in a children’s home in Greenland

*I feel like a ghost, like being invisible ... if only there was a contact I could talk to once a week, maybe just for 5 minutes or longer. I have no one to talk to here. I feel lonely. Jakobine, 19 years old.*

I cried as I walked home after interviewing Jakobine. Through the years, I have been accustomed to hearing heartbreaking stories, but Jakobine’s story got under my skin. It was not the story itself – it is sad, yes. But so many young people have sad stories to tell. It was more the way she told her story. It is difficult to see a 19-year-old without any twinkle in her eyes or hope in her voice.

The beginning of Jakobine’s story is similar to that of many children. Her mother was drinking too much alcohol, and her father was not a big part of her life, but she had a big family that

wanted to spend time with her. It was not until her mother committed suicide when Jakobine was 10 years old that her life became really difficult. Jakobine and her siblings had to stay with family members in different towns which is why the sibling group disintegrated. Jakobine had to stay with a family member whom she disliked. She lived there until she became a teenager and was placed in a children’s home against her will. She would rather have lived with other family members but was told that this was not possible. In the following years, she stayed at a number of children’s homes even though she disliked them.

She had no close friends, nor close relations to either adults or other children.

When I met Jakobine, she was staying at a children’s home. She was lonely and had no one to help her, and she had no contact with the employees at the institution. She was shy, and when she was silent, the adults were silent, too. She had told the adults that she wanted to talk to them and that they had to make the first move, but they just left her alone. As the other children were much younger than her, she did not feel that she had anything in common with them.



In the past, she used to attend different kinds of activities and music, and she wanted to start again, but did not know how. She also wanted to find a job as her whole day was spent doing nothing, which was boring. Yet, it was difficult to find work in the town. Even though she was lonely and had no job, education, or hobbies at the place she was staying, she still felt frightened by the thought of leaving. She did not know how to manage all by herself or what it takes to live alone. Jakobine wanted somebody to help her, as she put it: "I can't do it by myself".



"Alone", by Naja Abelsen.

### What happens to a child that is ignored?

The German philosopher Axel Honneth speaks of three categories of insult involving what he calls false invisibility where people act as if they do not see another person. Maybe, by mistake, we forget to greet everyone in a large group of people. The insult is worse if an individual is ignored because he or she is socially inferior, be it a housemaid or a child. But the cruelest and most humiliating form of insult is to pointedly ignore a person and act as if she or he is not present in the room. That is what Jakobine was experiencing when the social workers did not recognise her presence.

Just like any other human beings, children are dependent on being recognized in order to develop positively. If a child feels that he or she is not looked upon as a valuable person or is not seen at all, the effect can be devastating. If a child feels socially invisible, he or she may think that the employees do not have good intentions or that they may even be hostile to the child.

#### Read more:

Axel Honneth: *The Struggle for Recognition*. Polity Press, 1995.

Bonnie Jensen: *Barndomshjem eller børnehjem*. PhD-thesis, Nuuk: Ilisimatusarfik, 2021.

### Half of the children are satisfied

I spoke to 38 of the children that are placed at the 22 children's homes in Greenland. Jakobine is a unique person with her own voice and her own story, but her experience and history is also similar to that of many other children dealing with separation from family, uncertainty about their situation, and fear of the future.

The children told me that they often do not know why they were placed at a children's home, or how long they would be staying there. They also told me that they would like more good adults at the children's homes, and that they wished they could get help to establish and/or maintain contact with their families. Those three things: The uncertainty, the desire for good adults, and the absence of their families are the main reasons why these children do not thrive at the children's homes. However, 50 percent of the children are content with living at the children's home they are staying in, and they emphasize that they feel safe at a place with good adults and plenty of food.

It is a good thing that the children themselves can tell us what it takes to make their stay better. And if we know what it takes, it should be possible to improve the experiences of the other children living at children's homes.



Aviâja Egede Lynge

Spokesperson for the Rights of the Child in Greenland, leader of MIO (Meeqqat Inuusuttullu Oqaloqatigiinnittarfiat, “Children’s and young people’s place of conversation”)

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## When rights are created through dialogue – a research project about children’s rights

It is late summer. The sea is blue and absolutely calm. The passenger boat moors at a settlement. People are gathered to welcome those who disembark here, five women from MIO, the office of the Rights of the Child in Nuuk. People are waving and greeting and looking at these five, brave women who are there to talk about the rights of the children. Brave, because it is a subject that is not often talked about here, and maybe also the people living here in this settlement do not like to talk about it. Even here, in this beautiful place, there may be children who are suffering without anything being done about it.

A small group of teenage girls are keeping an eye on what is happening from a distance, and they follow the MIO representatives through the settlement, at a distance. Later in the day, MIO has organised a meeting at the school, and the same group of teenage girls show up. They are standing in the back of the room, eagerly

keeping track of what is going on and whispering together.

Late in the afternoon, after the meeting, the teenage girls knock discreetly at the door where the MIO staff are staying. The girls say that one of them has had experiences that made her feel insecure. She wants to talk about it and to have some advice, the other girls explain. The girl herself nods while listening to her friends. Little by little, she begins to talk. The other girls chime in talking about their own lives and the life they are leading together in the settlement. It is apparent that they have come because security and safety are their common concern. They need a dialogue about this with the adults from MIO.

Much later, we are sitting in an office in Nuuk listening to the beautiful story about the fellowship of the girls. It is the first research interview about MIO's methods of strengthening the rights of the children in every town and settlement in Greenland. Present are Aviâja, Peter, and employees of MIO. The genial atmosphere in the room is easily noticed. It is characterized by focus, intimacy, and deep concentration on the subject we are talking about. The conversation is grounded in deep involvement and living activism for the sake of achieving the goal.

MIO has made a difference – now everybody in our country knows that we all must take the responsibility for the rights of the children. As yet, not everybody is acting accordingly which is why MIO is continuing to develop, strengthen, and expand its efforts. The involvement, the optimism, and the energy clearly indicate that activists are sitting around the table. What is at stake is action to create the right to a good life for all children.

They are saying: *We have visited many towns and settlements and are having conversations with all those who want to talk to us. We listen, we contribute, and we build know-how together.*

*We have developed a way to create a dialogue based on respect for the many different local cultures we meet. It is a way of being, but you can say it is our method. It is deeply rooted in our small and scarcely populated local communities, both here and in the entire Arctic world. It is a method originating in our indigenous knowledge which is a*



Photo: MIO

*Change comes through dialogue and collective action.*

*knowledge that is alive and still developing. We use the local cultural and social resources for creating better access to rights for all children. That is our common knowledge.*

MIO has played a very active role in creating awareness of vulnerable children's living conditions, their resources, and suffering. MIO's open and dialogue-based methods of advancing children's rights have





Photo: MIO

*“Everyone has knowledge, everyone has insights, everyone has visions – that is why any contribution to our fellowship aimed at securing rights for all children must be taken into account.”*

*Every day, MIO is contacted regarding children who live in great insecurity, are on the alert and are not thriving – at home, in their spare time, and in school. We need to do more and act differently from what is being done now. The children’s right to get help and protection must be secured, says the spokesperson for the Rights of the Child in Greenland in a press release June 30th, 2021.*

attracted positive attention in several countries, in the United Nations, and among indigenous peoples. There is an urgent need to strengthen the rights to a secure life with good opportunities for development and education among children of indigenous peoples around the globe. MIO shows a way. This puts Greenland in a special position as a best practice example within this field.

MIO and Ilisimatusarfik (University of Greenland) have started a joint research project in order to describe and understand MIO’s method. The purpose is to

tell the story of MIO through experiences, insights, and knowledge that has been developed by MIO’s activities. This narrative research method sheds light on the experience-based knowledge created by MIO in collaboration with children and adults during meetings, teaching sessions, and workshops. It tells the story about how all children’s access to rights can be strengthened in practice.

The project is supported by the Seventh Generation Fund for Indigenous Peoples, Thriving Women.

**Read more:**  
<https://mio.gl/?lang=en>

*“The children often come to us to talk and to seek advice. They often come in groups. It is obvious that they take responsibility for each other.”*  
Quote from an interview with a staff member of MIO.



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# **'R u stupid, ha?!'**

## **– children's and young people's use of social media in Greenland**

In a world full of information, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child says that children should have access to information and material from different international sources. In addition, children should be protected from information that may harm their well-being. However, who has responsibility for caring for the children and the young people and for teaching them how to get on in the changing world of media, including social media?

“Amateur”, “Wow, you are stupid!”, “You can’t do it”, “If you get elected, Greenland’s future has no chance, realize that you can’t cope”.

These are some of the comments left on the TikTok profile of 23-year-old Jonas Kristoffersen who ran for the Greenlandic parliament, Inatsisartut, with more than 5,000 followers. Unfortunately, he is not the only one to get hateful comments on social media. Cyberbullying and bullying on social media have become an everyday experience for many children and young people in Greenland. Even though the age limit for access to social media is 13 years, many children have access to Facebook, Instagram, SnapChat or TikTok with or without permission from their parents. What can we do to reduce the problems of hateful speech?

In 2014, Greenland’s office of the Rights of the Child (MIO) surveyed 11- and 12-year-olds. Almost 72 percent of the children used the internet that year, and 65 percent of 910 respondents had Facebook as their preferred social medium. Almost 15 percent of the children had experienced being bullied on social media.

Recently, I made a small survey on children's and young people's use of social media with the help of my Facebook friends. The survey is not as reliable as MIO's survey from 2014, but still, I received 91 replies from 6 towns and 1 settlement. Among the respondents who all had access to the internet from their homes, 96.7 percent used the internet, and 86.2 percent were active on social media (fig. 1). 28.4 percent had experienced being bullied and being approached in unpleasant ways by adults.

### What platforms are used by the child?

87 answers

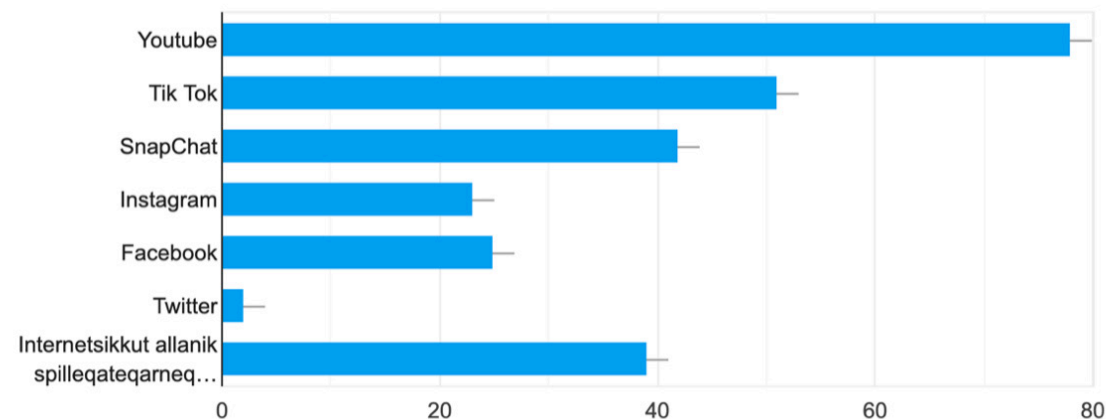


Figure 1: Children's preferred use of social media in Greenland.

The questionnaire was filled out by a parent/guardian and the child, whereas in MIO's old survey, the child alone filled out the form. One of the parents in the survey wrote:

*I follow all platforms that my child uses. There is much bullying among children; there are even some encouraging committing suicide. I have contacted the parents so they can talk to their children. Several men write to the children, and the police can't do anything. Having seen this,*

*we often talk with our children and check their social media to protect them.*

The surveys show that even though many children and young people use social media, schooling on rhetorics and ethics relating to these kinds of platforms are generally lacking in Greenland. Unfortunately, many children and adults believe that they can say and do anything and behave transgressively when hidden behind the computer screen. I think that we in our

society should take such incidents seriously and intervene and react to them to halt the negative spiral. For the time being, we need more research, and we must develop more tools for adequately using social media.





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# New technique in the Greenlandic elementary school – eye tracking in reading instruction

In order for children in elementary school to learn to read, they need teachers to support them in the best possible manner, and the teachers need to know something about beginning readers' approaches to decoding texts. With the purpose of obtaining a better understanding of the latter, I have started a research project where I use a so-called eye tracker to register the pupils' eye movements while they read aloud. Each child's readings are stored in his or her profile in the computer program connected to the eye tracker so the teacher can analyse the pupil's reading strategy. Eye tracking has never been used in the Greenlandic school before. I will therefore

investigate whether the technique can be used for obtaining an insight into what children are actually doing when they are practicing reading.

Accurate recordings of eye movements are a demanding process requiring that the children sit very still and follow instructions from the teacher or the researcher, often for long periods of time. Eye tracking is not something that the Greenlandic schoolchildren had heard of or tried before, and they were very excited and curious as the project started. Afterward, all participants were given the opportunity to see the recordings of their own readings.

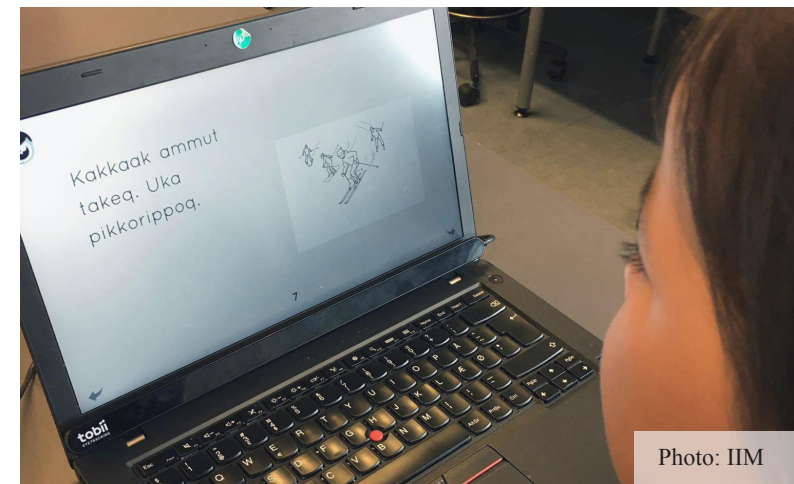


Photo: IIM

The eye movements consist of “fixations” and “saccades”. A fixation happens when the eye stops for a short moment. A saccade is the movement of the eye from one fixation to the next. The eye tracker is placed between the display and the keyboard on a computer. It registers fixations as a text is read aloud from the display. These fixations will appear as circles in the text that is being read. Footage of a child reading with an eye tracker can be seen [here](#).

Figure 1 shows eye movements while reading a text. The circles represent fixations while the red lines show saccades. Reading typically involves many short fixations on certain words interrupted by saccades when the eye moves. There are three fixations on the word *toqqortaapput* (they are playing hide-and-seek) and one fixation on the name *Uka*. The three fixations on the word *toqqortaapput* mean that the reader is working on decoding and understanding the word.

Eye tracking gives the reading instructor an opportunity to understand children’s reading strategies before the teacher makes his or her didactic choices. While using eye tracking during my research at a school, the class teacher and I learned that some of the schoolchildren had more reading problems than the teachers were aware of. These readers had difficulties in connecting letters with sounds, and their approach to decoding words was inadequate.



Figure 1: Fixations and saccades during reading.

The eye tracker can also help assessing the impact of a text’s illustrations that can be very helpful to beginning readers. I noticed that when a child is insecure about his or her reading, the child tends to look at the illustration. Some of the beginning readers simply guess the meaning of a text based on the illustrations alone. Guessing what the text says is often an indication of imprecision and defective reading that needs to be taken seriously by the instructor.

Teachers have different prerequisites for teaching Greenlandic, but when the reading instruction is systematic, concrete and clear, the children develop good reading strategies.

I hope that the results of my research on eye tracking will benefit the research on reading instruction in Greenland and help improving the teachers’ abilities to teach in ways that optimize the Greenlandic children’s reading skills.



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# New era in Greenland marine research

*Tarajoq* is Greenland's new research vessel and the Government of Greenland's largest investment in research to date. The ship opens up new opportunities for both Greenland and international research in the Arctic, and it is a leap forward in monitoring shrimp and fish stocks, as well as climate change in the marine environment. The ship is appropriately named in Greenlandic, with the word for both "salt" and "sea".

*Tarajoq* was delivered in October 2021 and replaces the trawler *Pâmiut* that since 1995 has

been Greenland's platform for offshore surveys. The state-of-the-art 61 meter long, ice-reinforced ship has been designed specifically for sailing and working in Arctic waters. With its size and equipment, *Tarajoq* can sail further north and perform far more types of research and environmental tasks than has previously been possible. Both technically and in its ambition, *Tarajoq* reflects the importance of the sea's living resources for Greenland society.

*Tarajoq* is funded by the Government of Greenland and Aage V. Jensen's Foundation

and has cost a total of DKK 235 million to build. Skipsteknisk AS in Norway designed the ship, and BALENCIAGA Shipyard in Spain was responsible for the building. *Tarajoq* is being operated by the Greenland Institute of Natural Resources on behalf of the Government of Greenland.



With its advanced navigation and communication equipment, cranes, and hoists, *Tarajoq* can handle almost any kind of scientific work in the Arctic. If a task requires it, the ship can stay in the same position within a few centimeters.

*Tarajoq* also has different types of propulsion and can, e.g., sail up to 8 knots in pure electric mode and is able to sail almost without producing noise in the water. Excess energy that is produced when the trawl is put out, generates power for the ship's electricity consumption and propulsion.

Unlike *Pâmiut*, *Tarajoq* can also fish with pelagic trawls and carry out acoustic surveys of fish and the seabed. The ship is equipped with two laboratories specially designed for handling fish and shellfish. It also contains a chemistry laboratory and laboratories for handling seabed and water samples.

A battery of water collectors makes it possible to collect water samples at different depths from surface to bottom in one operation. An advanced, multi-beam echo sounder can very accurately

map the seabed around Greenland several kilometres below the sea surface with high detailing of the nature of the seabed. This will be of great benefit to researchers, fishermen and shipping.

*Tarajoq* has accommodation for 12 crew members and 20 researchers and provides training opportunities for students, for example those on maritime programmes in Greenland.



*With Tarajoq, it will be possible for the Greenland Institute of Natural Resources to do research in offshore areas.*

*Tarajoq houses several laboratories that are specially designed for handling fish and shellfish.*

### Key figures

Gross tonnage:	2841
Net tonnage:	852
Length:	61.4 m
Width:	16.0 m
Draught:	8 m
Service speed:	14 knob
Bollard pull:	> 50 tons
Days at sea:	> 40

*Tarajoq* is the culmination of a series of research vessels in service for Greenland. In the 1980s, the side trawler *Adolf Jensen* made the first early surveys of the West Greenland shrimp population. It was replaced in the late 80s by several KGH trawlers, the sister ships *Elias Kleist*, *Sisimiut*, and *Pâmiut*, which were leased by the Greenland Fisheries Research Institute and later the Greenland Institute of Natural Resources.

In 1995, the Greenland Institute of Natural Resources bought and rebuilt *Pâmiut* which served as the institute's maritime platform and trawler until 2018 when the ship was dismantled.

In the intervening years, the Greenland Institute of Natural Resources has hired Icelandic trawlers to carry out the annual surveys in West and East Greenland.

Greenland now has its own, modern vessels, which are expected to serve the country's maritime surveillance and research for many years to come: *Tarajoq* will take care of the offshore areas, and the smaller vessel *Sanna* will continue to handle inshore studies of important fish species such as halibut and cod as well as surveys of the seabed in inshore areas along West Greenland.



Photo: Lars Demant-Poort





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# The amazing life of the narwhal

Photo: MPHJ

*Narwhals on the move.*

Along with the woolly rhinoceros and the sabre-toothed tiger, the narwhal is one of the most fabled animals. The males' up to two-metre-long, twisted tooth is the basis for the myth of the unicorn, but today we know that, using a modern expression, the tooth is a 'competitive parameter' that the females use to assess a good partner for mating. We also know that narwhals can grow old (up to 100 years), that they do not reach sexual maturity until they are over 10 years old, and that they only have one calf every three years.

The narwhal is one of the species that Greenland has a special responsibility to protect. It is only found in the Atlantic part of the Arctic, and the largest populations are found around Greenland and Canada. It is caught frequently in both Canada and Greenland, and in both places the animal is highly valued for the valuable tooth and for the mattak (whale skin), which is without comparison the most valued hunting product in the Arctic. Unfortunately, several narwhal populations are highly endangered due to large catches, and if narwhals are to survive in Greenland in the future, there is reason to curb these large catches. The Greenland Institute of

Natural Resources has long been very active in narwhal research, and for the past 10 years we have operated a field station in East Greenland where the marvellous life of narwhals has been studied in detail.

## **Locationally attached**

Satellite tracking of narwhals has shown that they migrate between their summer and winter habitats, but also that they are incredibly attached to specific locations and return to the same locality in the summer on almost the same day every year. Each narwhal population has its own area where the whales spend the summer



and winter, and they rarely visit neighbouring populations. This predictability in the narwhal migrations also makes it easier to catch them, so it is vital to take great care with the exploitation of the narwhal: Greenland does not have one large population of narwhals - each fjord can have its own small population with its own level of sensitivity to being hunted.

### Echolocation

Even though only the males have a single tooth on the left side, narwhals are still classified as toothed whales, which are also characterized by their use of echolocation for orientation and foraging. Narwhals have a powerful echolocation device, which they use diligently on larger dives, and it reveals many of the whales' secrets below the surface. Typically, the whales emit a series of rhythmical echolocation clicks with approx. one click per second for periods of up to several minutes. When something needs to be explored further, the frequency of the clicking increases to more than a hundred clicks per second during so-called 'buzzes', for example when prey is being examined and caught or sucked into the mouth of the whale.

### Noise sensitivity

For millennia, narwhals have resided in areas where there was no human activity, and noise from icebreakers and tankers is new to the whales. Hunters have long known that noise

scares narwhals, and therefore there are still places where the kayak is used for narwhal hunting. Sounds spread quickly in water, and new studies have shown that narwhals respond to noise from ships up to 20-30 km away from them. The reactions are different, but typically the whales stop echolocating and making other noises, and this in turn affects their foraging. They also stop making deep dives and instead swim towards the beach, and their slow heart-beat during the dive is stressed by the fact that they must also use energy to swim away from the source of the noise. With less ice cover in the future, it is likely that there will be more noise from shipping, and it is doubtful whether the narwhals will get used to this disturbance before it does permanent damage.

### Sea temperature

Narwhals are well insulated with a thick layer of blubber and an internal body temperature of 35 °C, meaning they have a hard time getting rid of

the heat that their muscles produce. Therefore, they also belong to the slow whales that are best at long migrations and are not adept at swimming away quickly to avoid a threat. Narwhals thrive best in cold water with temperatures around the freezing point, and they never stay in the warm Atlantic waters found on both sides of Greenland. With climate change, the oceans are also warming, and this means that narwhals are losing large parts of their natural habitats and that they will disappear from some areas. We can already identify areas in Southeast Greenland that are no longer suitable for narwhals, and projections indicate that, by the year 2100, narwhals will be forced to stay further north. As old inhabitants of the Arctic, with very rigid habits, it is doubtful whether narwhals will be able to adapt to the rapid climate change we are currently seeing unfold in the oceans around Greenland.



Photo: Carsten Egevang





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**RESEARCH PROJECTS AT ILISIMATUSARFIK AND  
GREENLAND INSTITUTE OF NATURAL RESOURCES  
2021-22**