

## **Breakout session**

Group 2, Thursday, September 25, 2008

Rapporteur: Lotta Numminen

Group 2 started discussion with mental health issues and suicide rates in the Arctic local communities.

It seems that a central reason beyond the high suicide rates is people's feeling of not being useful in the society and the fact that the context of identification is missing. Therefore, it is important to support traditional activities.

The season or the time of the year matters in terms of mental health and suicide rates. Darkness, as an example, can have great effect on psychological well-being. But it is also possible that climate change and weather conditions can have effects on suicide rates.

Suicides are a common way of dying in the North. For example, in the North Sweden suicides are the most common reason for older men to die. They end their lives themselves after they have lived lives, often alone, and after their lives are "over". In Greenland, suicides are also seen as acceptable solution amongst the youth, which may increase the rates, too.

The group also discussed drowning rates in the North. For example, in Finland, fishermen did not learn to swim, which can be seen an expression of fatalistic worldview. Fishermen would not learn to swim, their job was to fish.

There was also a discussion about a clear need to incorporate indigenous knowledge and scientific knowledge. In addition, new ideas should be adjusted in local communities. For example, social work has been conducted through hip hop workshops in Canadian Arctic communities.

It was also debated, if there exists plurality in the present economy, and how we could integrate capitalistic economy and subsistence economy. There came up some examples. In some Alaskan communities, some men earn money from salary work, and other men are hunters, who are helped by those who are wage laborers.

Moreover, in some households women get education and bring money home, while men supply households by hunting food.

The question of how to reconcile is very important for the Arctic communities. It is vital to consider, how we combine traditional knowledge and scientific knowledge, and how we interpret between the two knowledge systems. Useful information exists in both of the systems, but there should be created a “give and take” situation for both.

In connection with adaptation to climate change, we should not create institutions that limit people’s adaptation. Institutions should be flexible.