



Photo: 2025 Cohort of Emerging Leaders

2025 Arctic Frontiers Emerging Leaders After Action Report

LT Daniel Piscoya and LTJG Samantha Farquhar

Overview

From 23 to 30 January 2025, LT Daniel Piscoya and LTJG Samantha Farquhar participated in the Arctic Frontiers Emerging Leaders Program in northern Norway. This program brought together early career professionals from various sectors, including indigenous, business, policy, and research representatives, for leadership and cultural development in issues relevant to the Arctic region. LT Piscoya and LTJG Farquhar joined 28 other international participants in a blend of technical, social, and cultural events accompanied by mentors from business, politics, research, and academia to expand the participants' professional competence on topics of Arctic security, economic development, and environmental protection. The experience concluded with participation in the Arctic Frontiers Conference, where participants engaged with various stakeholders to share their views and expertise.

Background Information

I learned about the Arctic Frontiers Emerging Leaders Program from one of my superiors - a previous applicant. He encouraged me to apply by sending me an email with the ALCOAST solicitation (ALCOAST 292/24) and one line: "Get it done." My current assignment in the D17 Command Center - the Coast Guard's only command center that prosecutes Arctic SAR cases - as well as my background as a lifelong Alaskan and Alaska Native gave me a strong application. My application dealt with both equally, and I speculate this helped with my being selected by CASP. However, when I was accepted, the program coordinators at AFELP were most interested in having me present on trends in Arctic SAR, rather than my experience as an Alaska Native or on my knowledge of tribal affairs.

-LT Piscoya

I first learned about the Emerging Leaders Arctic Frontiers Program in October, through a solicitation posted by the Coast Guard Academy. At the time, I was juggling my responsibilities as a Reservist and working on a PhD focused on Arctic fisheries issues. Despite the busy schedule—and some uncertainty about my chances of being selected—I felt compelled to apply. The Arctic has always fascinated me, and my PhD work on Arctic Fisheries gave me an even deeper appreciation for the complexity of its ecosystems and communities. I was fortunate to have a command that fully backed my application, offering valuable input on how best to showcase my experiences and research interests. When I learned I was accepted into the program, I felt both excited and a bit nervous, knowing I was about to step into a global forum of experts and peers from diverse fields.

-LTJG Farquhar

Participants

The Arctic Frontiers Emerging Leaders Program consisted of 30 participants from 10 different countries.

40% of the participants were from or currently working in Norway. There were five from the U.S., five from Canada, two from France, and then a participant each from Sweden, Netherlands, Finland, Greenland, Ireland, and India.

About half of the participants were from Academia, and the other half were split between commercial or government organizations.

About half of the participants were involved in environmental or ecological research. About a quarter were involved in economics or were entrepreneurs. And the last quarter were involved with some form of public safety.

Mentors

The program was led by four “mentors” selected by the Arctic Frontiers organizers, who represented slices of science and private industry. They proctored the daily itinerary, arranged and constantly responded to changing logistics, and led discussion sessions and lectures.

Itinerary

Bodø (23-24 JAN)

Our first stop was in Bodø, Norway, where the Arctic Frontiers Emerging Leaders Program convened. The itinerary included presentations by Arctic Security, and Search and Rescue (SAR), Healthcare, and Economic development professionals as well as a tour of the local museum for a presentation on Indigenous Scandinavian peoples.

One of the highlights in Bodø was visiting the Joint Rescue Coordination Centre (JRCC). There, the group learned how Arctic SAR operations are coordinated among nations that, at times, have complex geopolitical relationships. LT Piscoya had the honor of presenting on SAR trends, challenges, and case examples in the U.S. Arctic.

Andenes (24-25 JAN)

Leaving Bodø, the group flew to Andenes, a city on Andøya—a starkly beautiful island.

The group visited a local salmon farm to learn about how the presence of the Gulf Stream delivers nutrient-rich waters that support large-scale aquaculture projects. Additionally, the group visited Andøya Space, one of Norway's civilian space agencies and the host of Norway's premier spaceport. Andøya's weather and latitude create conditions ideal for launching satellites and conducting space research.

Tromsø (25-26 JAN)

The group's next destination was Tromsø, a vibrant city known as the “Gateway to the Arctic.” There, the Emerging Leaders joined the final sessions of the Arctic Youth Conference—a gathering that highlights the voices and perspectives of young people from across the circumpolar north.

Sommarøy (26-27 JAN)

Next, the group traveled by bus to Sommarøy, a small island Northwest of Tromsø. This portion of the program was more hands-on: the group split into teams to create short videos to be screened at the opening of the Arctic Frontiers Conference. One group tackled the economic and social implications of “going green” in the Arctic, while the other explored strategies for maintaining collaboration in a politically tense and increasingly traveled environment.

Arctic Frontiers Conference (27-30 JAN)

Finally, the group returned to Tromsø for the Arctic Frontiers conference itself. Arctic leaders, researchers, students, and policymakers all converged to share knowledge and debate the future of the Arctic.

LTJG Farquhar presented a poster on her PhD research, titled “The Impacts of Industrial Shrimp Fishing on an Arctic Ecosystem,” which generated some thoughtful discussions about sustainable fishing practices and marine conservation. She also had the honor of participating in a panel called “Re-Examining Arctic Marine Use and Associated Information Needs in a Changing Environment,” sharing the stage with colleagues from the Coast Guard Academy, the Norwegian Polar Institute, UiT – The Arctic University of Norway, and the WWF Arctic Program.

Benefits

The primary benefit of the Emerging Leaders Program, as advertised, was definitely professional development. The program was a great opportunity for exposure to diverse fields of work, cultures, and national interests. The common experience of being a young adult professional, up and coming in our fields, formed the bridge across the barriers. Additionally, the program offered me the opportunity to visit JRCC Northern Norway, one of my unit's counterparts in the Arctic. During that visit, I learned about their chain of command, sources of authority, and search planning process— all of which were very different from my unit. However, we also have a lot in common – some of which we were able to commiserate over, like EPIRB false alerts. The program leant me perspective on the Arctic State of Affairs I could not have gotten otherwise, because it was gleaned as much from conference seminars given by subject matter experts as it was from countless small conversations on a bus.

-LT Piscoya

Looking back on the Emerging Leaders Arctic Frontiers Program, I realize it was much more than a professional seminar—it was an immersive experience that showcased the dynamic, interconnected world of the Arctic. One day, I'd be deep in conversation about space technology; the next, I'd be learning about reindeer herders and the cultural significance of land use in Sami communities. Beyond the formal sessions, the relationships I built were perhaps the most valuable aspect of the program. We bonded over early-morning saunas, late-night northern lights excursions, and even karaoke. Those informal moments allowed us to learn from one another on a personal level, fostering a sense of camaraderie that transcends job titles and nationalities. Finally, I came away with a renewed passion for my own PhD research. Seeing how decisions about fisheries management intersect with broader conversations about climate, space, and energy showed me that my work is part of a larger puzzle. Integrating that puzzle piece effectively could help guide more sustainable practices and policy decisions.

-LTJG Farquhar

Challenges

In hindsight, the major challenge that faced the USCG delegation during the Arctic Frontiers Conference was easy to identify and should have been easy to anticipate: the political atmosphere surrounding the recent Inauguration of President Donald Trump and the comments made surrounding Greenland. LTJG Farquhar and I were not given pre-briefs on the USCG's stance on the Arctic, nor on if there were any topics to avoid. Although I doubt the next participant(s) will experience the same heightened political tensions, the challenge of maintaining poise around that many high-ranking foreign nationals will remain the same. The Emerging Leaders program, however, did not suffer the same level of political tension. The participants were selected from young, up-and-coming professionals mostly from the private, scientific, or academic sector. I did not find that politics were a challenging topic to discuss,

as few of my fellows had a major stake in government or policy. Instead, the major challenge presented to me was finding information and perspectives that were applicable to my job. The AFELP was highly scientific and economic in focus.

-LT Piscoya

Professionally, this experience underscored the importance of collaboration. The Arctic is undergoing rapid change—environmentally, geopolitically, and socially—and no single country or organization can tackle these challenges alone. As a Coast Guard member, I see clear opportunities for expanded partnerships in search and rescue, scientific research, environmental protection, and support for Indigenous communities. However, with such opportunities come challenges of how to seize and implement such collaboration—especially with changing political landscapes and such decisions for high level collaboration or much above my paygrade.

-LTJG Farquhar

Recommendations

On top of the standard international travel recommendations (plan travel early, speak to the CSO about international travel requirements, etc.), I highly recommend any future selectees speak with their command, CASP, and the nearest CG Arctic office on the following:

- Anticipated questions*
- Anticipated political tensions*
- Recommended answers*
- Recommended topics to avoid*

Any future selectees should be familiar with and rely on the Coast Guard's Arctic Strategic Outlook and Arctic Strategic Outlook Implementation Plan.

-LT Piscoya

The Arctic Frontiers Emerging Leaders Program (AFELP) is a highly dynamic and intense experience that offers participants exposure to a wide array of topics. Given the fast pace and range of subjects covered, I recommend that future participants approach the program with an open mind and a willingness to absorb as much information as possible. While you may not be an expert in every field, the program offers invaluable insights from a variety of disciplines, and being in “listening mode” will allow you to gain the most from these discussions. In addition, due to the multifaceted nature of the program—spanning scientific, environmental, economic, and geopolitical issues—I encourage future selectees to go into the experience with a flexible and adaptable mindset. Don’t feel pressured to have all the answers. Instead, focus on learning from the diverse perspectives of other participants and mentors. This is an opportunity to expand your understanding and build a network of professionals from various sectors.

-LTJG Farquhar



Photo: 2025 USCGA CASP Delegation: 1/c Elise Beauchemin, Mr. Anthony Russell, LTJG Samantha Farquhar, LT Daniel Piscoya, 1/c Emelia Campbell

Enclosures:

- (1) 2025 Emerging Leaders Practical Information
- (2) 2025 Emerging Leaders Biographies