

ARCTIC CIRCLE ASSEMBLY

REYKJAVÍK, ICELAND
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I

HAD THE PRIVILEGE OF REPRESENTING THE COAST GUARD ACADEMY, THE U.S. COAST GUARD, AND THE UNITED STATES AT THE ARCTIC CIRCLE

ASSEMBLY CONFERENCE IN REYKJAVÍK, ICELAND. AS A 1/C CADET MAJORING IN MARINE ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE, MY TIME AT THE ACADEMY HAS BEEN INTERTWINED WITH THE ARCTIC SINCE MY 4/C YEAR. THIS YEAR, FOR MY

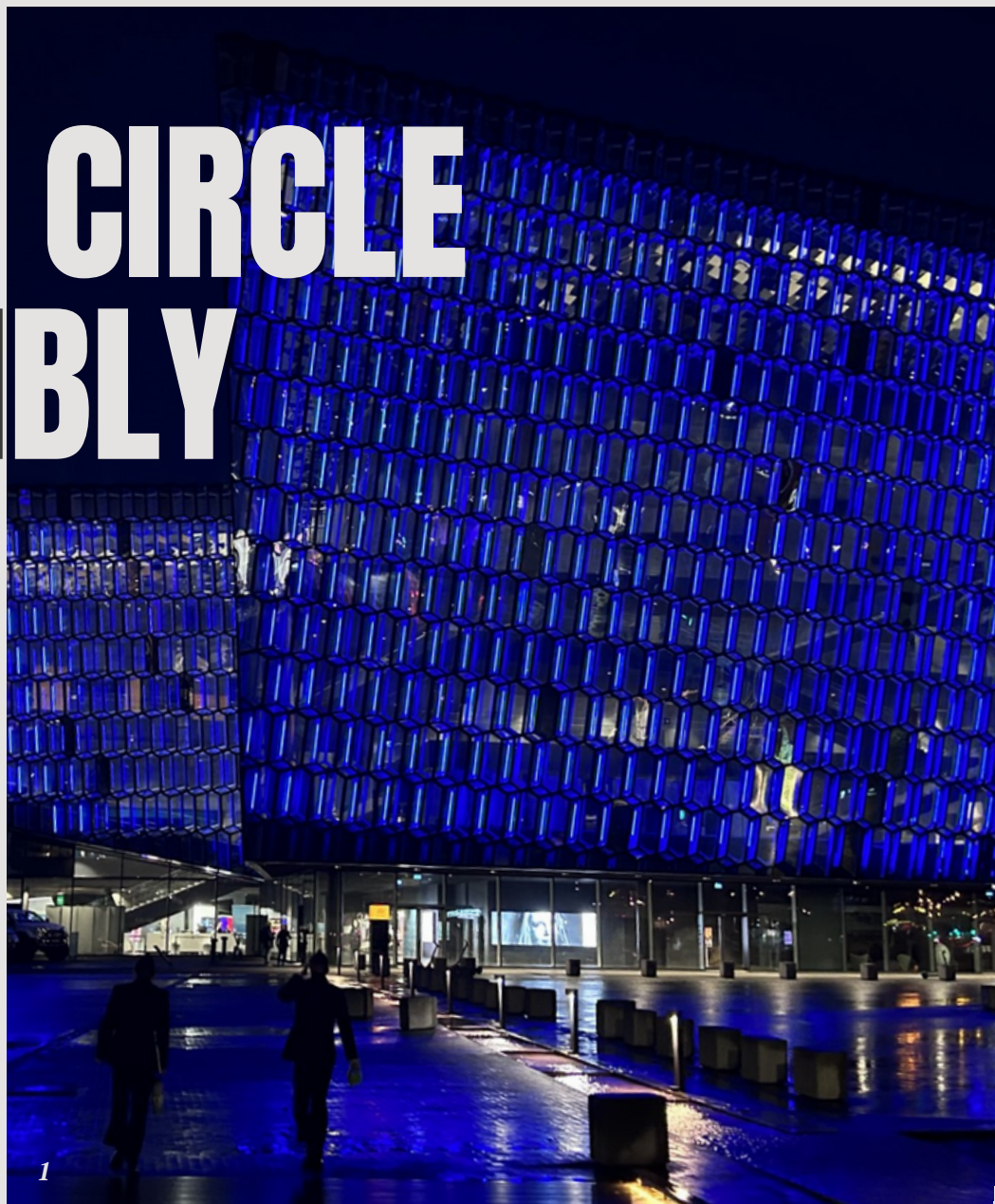


Figure 1
*Harpa Concert Hall and
Conference Center -
Location of Arctic Circle
Assembly*

Figure 2
*Arriving to Arctic Circle
Assembly on Day 1*

CAPSTONE RESEARCH PROJECT, I FOUND MYSELF IN COLLABORATION WITH THE COAST GUARD'S CENTER FOR ARCTIC STUDY AND POLICY (CASP), IDENTIFYING THE PROJECTED IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE FACTORS, LIKE SEA LEVEL RISE, ON KEY INFRASTRUCTURE AT FOUR ARCTIC PORTS.

THE ARCTIC CIRCLE ASSEMBLY WAS EYE-OPENING AND PROVIDED A PLATFORM FOR GLOBAL DISCUSSIONS CONCERNING THE ARCTIC. IT WAS AN AMAZING OPPORTUNITY TO GAIN INSIGHTS INTO THE CURRENT STATE OF THE ARCTIC, BROADENING MY PERSPECTIVE ON ARCTIC-RELATED ISSUES AND FORGING CONNECTIONS WITH ARCTIC LEADERS FROM AROUND THE WORLD - FURTHER FUELING MY PASSION FOR THIS REGION.

WALKING INTO THE CONFERENCE, I WAS UNSURE OF WHAT TO EXPECT, BUT I WAS AMAZED BY THE ENTHUSIASM AND ENGAGEMENT OF ALL THE PARTICIPANTS. THE SPEAKERS DIDN'T JUST DISCUSS SCIENTIFIC FACTS, POLITICS, OR THE HARSH REALITIES OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND

ARCTIC AMPLIFICATION. THEY WOVE EMOTIONAL NARRATIVES, CONNECTING THESE ISSUES TO SOCIAL JUSTICE AND THE CURRENT STATE OF INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES. THEY SHARED UNIQUE PERSPECTIVES FROM VARIOUS COUNTRIES, TRIBES, AND ORGANIZATIONS, SHEDDING LIGHT ON ASPECTS I HAD NEVER CONSIDERED BEFORE. ONE PARTICULAR SESSION THAT LEFT AN IMPRESSIONABLE MARK ON ME EMPHASIZED THE SIGNIFICANCE OF INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE IN ENHANCING SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH AND INFORMING POLICY DECISIONS. IT URGED US TO INDIGENIZE OUR WAY OF THINKING. AS THE PRESIDENT OF THE TRIBAL COUNCIL, THE NATIVE AMERICAN AND ALASKA NATIVE AFFINITY COUNCIL AT THE COAST GUARD ACADEMY, I WAS FORTUNATE TO ENGAGE IN SUCH MEANINGFUL CONVERSATIONS WITH THESE INFLUENTIAL SPEAKERS, AN EXPERIENCE I WILL REMEMBER FOR A LIFETIME.

BEFORE THE CONFERENCE OFFICIALLY KICKED OFF, WE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO ATTEND AN EVENT WITH AMBASSADOR PATMAN, THE U.S. AMBASSADOR TO ICELAND. THIS GAVE US A UNIQUE CHANCE TO ENGAGE WITH THE U.S. DELEGATION ATTENDING THE CONFERENCE. THE ROOM WAS FILLED WITH IMPORTANT FIGURES IN THE FIELD, AND THE EXPERIENCE WAS VERY INSPIRING. AT THE CONFERENCE, I HAD A MEANINGFUL DISCUSSION WITH SENATOR LISA MURKOWSKI OF ALASKA, WHERE I HAD THE CHANCE TO TALK ABOUT MY CAPSTONE RESEARCH PROJECT, WHICH INCLUDES THE PORT OF NOME IN ALASKA. I ALSO GOT TO PRESENT HER WITH A TRIBAL COUNCIL CHALLENGE COIN, WHICH MEANT A LOT TO ME. ADDITIONALLY, I HAD THE HONOR OF MEETING ICELAND'S DIRECTOR GENERAL OF EXTERNAL TRADE AT THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND OTHER U.S. COAST GUARD REPRESENTATIVES, SUCH AS RADM MOORE AND CAPT SCHALLIP, MEMBERS OF THE TED STEVENS CENTER FOR ARCTIC SECURITY STUDIES, AMONG MANY OTHER AMAZING PEOPLE.



Figure 3
Attending the Young Arctic Leaders social event and meeting students from Norway and Germany



Figure 4
1/c Jake Thoenen after touring the USCGC Healy in Iceland

THE ARCTIC CIRCLE ASSEMBLY WAS AN INCREDIBLE EXPERIENCE THAT DEEPENED MY PASSION FOR THE ARCTIC AND ITS INTRICATE CHALLENGES. IT PROVIDED A PLATFORM FOR FORMING MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS WITH INFLUENTIAL FIGURES IN THE FIELD, EXPANDING MY PERSPECTIVES. THIS CONFERENCE WAS TRULY EYE-OPENING, BROADENING MY KNOWLEDGE OF THE ARCTIC AND REINFORCING MY DEDICATION TO MAKING A POSITIVE IMPACT IN THIS CRUCIAL REGION. THE INSIGHTS, CONNECTIONS, AND EXPERIENCES I GAINED WILL LEAVE A LASTING IMPACT ON MY PERSONAL AND ACADEMIC JOURNEY, AND I'M EXCITED TO CONTINUE CONTRIBUTING TO THE BETTERMENT OF THE ARCTIC AND ITS COMMUNITIES.

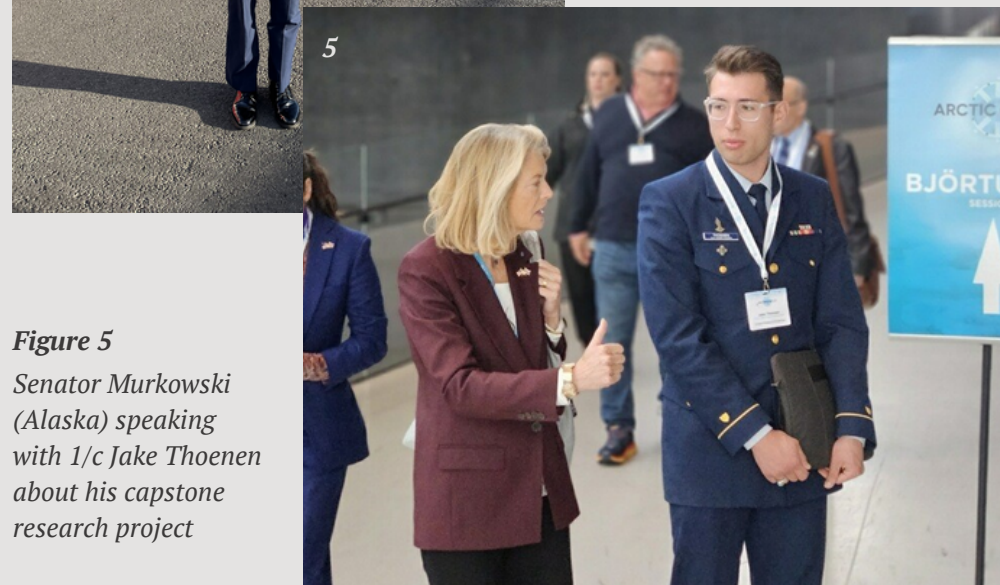


Figure 5
Senator Murkowski (Alaska) speaking with 1/c Jake Thoenen about his capstone research project

