

## BRIEFING NOTE #17

### A SUMMER IN GREENLAND



#### **Sarah Mackie, Visiting Researcher, Arctic Oil and Gas Research Centre, Ilisimatusarfik**

I spent the summer of 2017 working as a visiting researcher at the Arctic Oil and Gas Research Centre at Ilisimatusarfik as part of my PhD studies.



I am a PhD student from the United Kingdom, studying at Newcastle Law School. Before I began my PhD I qualified as a lawyer and worked for a large law firm and the courts in England. I fell in love with the Arctic when I worked for a law firm in Alaska in 2013/14 and it was this which encouraged me to continue my studies in the form of a PhD. I am studying comparative environmental law in the Arctic. While lots of people have studied the international legal arrangements which apply in the Arctic or compared the position of the Arctic with that of the Antarctic, fewer people have carried out research comparing the environmental laws which exist in the national legal systems of the Arctic nations. I am attempting to fill this research gap.

As part of the project I am looking at the environmental protection systems in the Arctic regions of the USA, Canada, Greenland, Norway, Sweden and Finland, with particular reference to their court systems. I am attempting to put together a database of all of the environmental cases that have come before the courts in these countries in the last twenty years and to use this to compare and contrast the different systems with the aim of reaching some best practice guidelines which could be implemented across the Arctic.



I came to Greenland to conduct research into the legal and political systems of Greenland as it is one of the countries which I am studying. There is a theory of comparative law which says that you cannot understand a country's legal system unless you also know something about the culture of that country. While I recognise that it is not possible fully to understand a country's culture (or indeed its legal system) in such a short visit, my time in Greenland gave me some very useful insights.

The majority of the work which I undertook involved using the library at Ilisimatusarfik to read about the history, culture, politics and legal system in Greenland. In particular, I wanted to make sure that I understood the role of Self Government and the current system of administration of justice for Greenland. There has been very little written about this in English so I am hopeful that my research will help others who do not speak Greenlandic or Danish to be able understand the Greenlandic legal system. I also had the opportunity to meet with a local lawyer to discuss the legal system and to tour the Inatsisartut to learn more about the political system in Greenland.



As well as spending time in Nuuk, I accompanied Professor Hansen and Professor Johnstone on a research trip to Tasiilaq in East Greenland to interview people about their thoughts, opinions, hopes and fears regarding natural resource exploitation in Greenland.

During my stay in Greenland I was invited to take part in the EIT (European Institute of Innovation and Technology) Raw Materials Arctic conference which was held in Nuuk in early August. The conference had a theme of 'Social Licence to Operate' and involved two days of presentations and discussions with participants involved in all aspects of mining and natural resources. We also had a field trip in Godthåbsfjord to look at the geology, whales and icebergs and a thoroughly enjoyable conference dinner at Hotel Hans Egede.

My final weekend in Greenland was spent participating in the Model Arctic Council hosted by the Danish Folketinget and Ilisimatusarfik. The Model Arctic Council is an immersive simulation of the Arctic Council's Ministerial Meeting with each of the delegations represented by students playing the role of that nation. The event gave students the opportunity to practise skills of negotiation and diplomacy and further developed our knowledge of how the Arctic Council operates. As part of the US delegation, we were awarded the prize for 'Most Outstanding Speaker'.



Following my trip to Greenland I am continuing to conduct my research. I expect to finish and defend my thesis in summer 2019.

My trip to Greenland and the time spent at Ilisimatusarfik was extremely valuable. I am grateful to Ilisimatusarfik for making me so welcome and for giving me this opportunity.

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