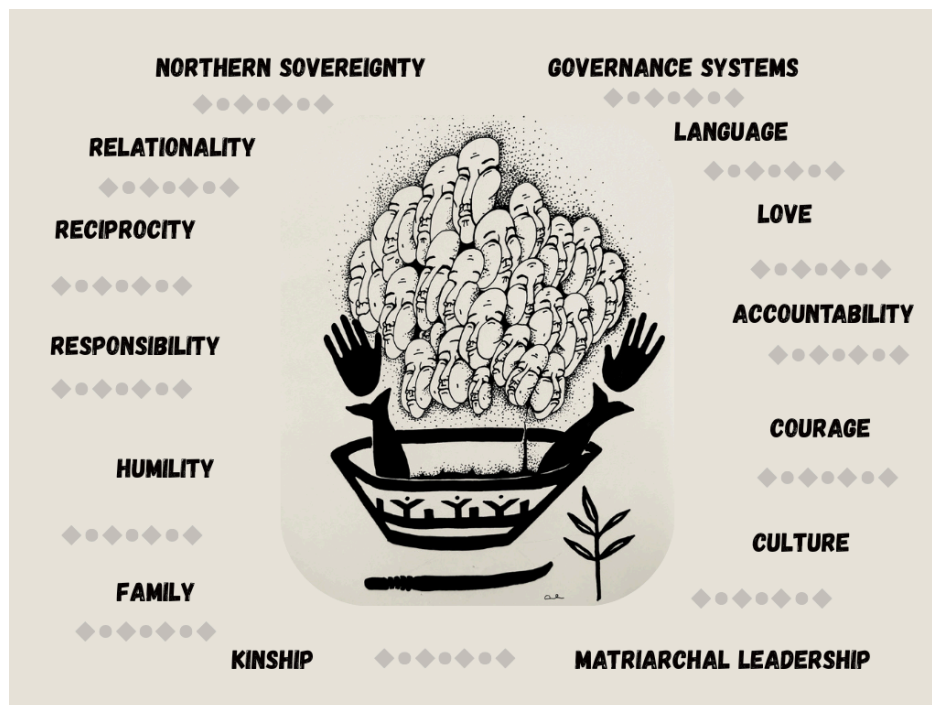


INVITATION TO JOIN THE ARCTIC INDIGENOUS AUNTIES MENTORSHIP CIRCLE

Guidelines and Framework

“As Aunties, we carry the stories, wisdom, and laughter of our ancestors. Through this program, we aim to pass these gifts to the next generations, knowing they will carry them in the most beautiful and meaningful ways”.

This mentorship program is aimed at providing support to early-career Indigenous scholars born and raised by the Arctic landscapes as outlined by the Arctic Indigenous Languages program of the Arctic Council (<https://www.arcticpeoples.com/arctic-languages#sagastallamin>). Through the creation of an inclusive space within IASSA, we bring forth distinct experiences and knowledge in a gathering space that centers our Northern Indigenous ways of knowing. As we gather, we understand that we are kin within the Arctic regions—aunties, uncles, cousins, Elders, Wisdom keepers—that are guided by this deep-rooted responsibility to guide and support future generations.



The values of this program are rooted in Arctic Indigenous ways of being and are inspired by the artwork of Amber Webb, *Believe Our Ancestors*, 2024

Aunties as Research Mentors

Aunties have special roles in our communities, including providing support, guidance, and advice. Indigenous Aunties represent a long-standing and vital tradition within Indigenous communities across

the Arctic, serving as intergenerational guides who uphold and transmit knowledge. Their roles have been foundational in shaping and sustaining Indigenous research practices across multiple generations of knowledge holders. Auntie relationship is rooted in trust and is informed by community responsibilities. The notion of '*Auntie*' ties us together in relation as kin gathering in spaces of unfamiliarity, where the presence of having Aunties makes it feel familiar again. As Aunties, we want to carry this notion forward to early career researchers and community members who join us as a place to celebrate and honour our journeys together with wisdom, fierceness, and joy.

Elders and Knowledge Holders

Elders hold a guiding role within the Aunties Mentorship Program, grounding our work in teachings, relationships and accountability to Land and communities we belong to. In this space, we highly value Elders' advice and direction. We rely on their presence, upholding their lived experiences and listen carefully to their stories and teachings.

As knowledge holders and mentors, they model ways of being, allowing learning to emerge through listening and intergenerational connection. They provide insight into the program's direction, informing the guidebook and ensuring alignment with our cultural values. Their role is honoured through respect, reciprocity, and recognition of the depth of knowledge and responsibility they carry.

Core mission

Aunties as an institution are becoming more recognized in scholarly practice. For example, critical auntie studies explore the educational tradition of the aunties across Indigenous societies and the multiple capacities the aunty figure represents and carries while creating a unique niche for alternative intellectual engagements in scholarly spaces (Khubchandani, 2022). As an institution, Indigenous aunty practice continues to hold "a powerful role in educational pedagogies and knowledge dissemination" where aunty voices are aimed to "protect, care, and support those who need them most" - students and early career researchers (Altamirano-Jimenez and Johnson 2025, p. 131).

Having this understanding of the Aunty mentorship program, the core mission is to ignite and support early career researchers (ECRs), community members and the next generations through culturally grounded mentoring that will:

- Uplift and carry forward Indigenous ways of knowing, learning, and sharing;
- Strengthen personal growth and professional development rooted in Indigenous identity, values, and community;
- Assist in navigating the IASSA space and other conferences;
- Create a welcoming space that centers care, meaning, and brings joy as a way forward in the academic journey.

Indigenous early-career researchers (ECRs) are the future change makers and leaders of community scholarship.

Scholars raised by and within communities have deep knowledge of the challenges and problems that need immediate and careful attention. They have a clearer understanding of how those could be addressed in meaningful and effective ways. They carry a deeper appreciation and knowledge of the research ethics and methodologies that are relevant for their communities. Therefore, Indigenous ECRs bring unique perspectives into the academy, contributing to defining the pathways to sustainable Arctic futures.

The world of the Arctic academy is a space where science, community well-being and policy-making converge in search to address the critical questions around socio-economic, environmental, and cultural pillars of sustainability. High-level academic events such as ASSW, ICASS, and IPY might feel intimidating and overwhelming to those who are at the start of their scholarly journey. It might feel even more intimidating for those who come into the academy from small, remote communities where the practices of conversation and knowledge sharing often differ from the general standards of academic knowledge dissemination. Such spaces have complex structures that are not always clear to new scholars. The key question is: how do we navigate academic spaces that are unfamiliar and might be intimidating and overwhelming? While thinking through this question, we want to expand on our responsibility as Indigenous aunties to offer guidance and support to Indigenous ECRs in navigating complex, high-level scholarly events. By doing this, we hope to create spaces within the Arctic academy that welcome Indigenous ways of knowledge sharing and therefore open more opportunities to diverse knowledges and experiences to contribute to the discussions and planning of the Arctic present and futures.

Invitation

If you are an Arctic early-career Indigenous scholar interested in joining our circle in preparation for ICASS, fill out a brief form of interest and we will contact you with further details. <https://forms.gle/bXbUBzTCXXTmCpPx6>

