



June 2nd, 2021 Webinar: Research from Alaska and Greenland

Homelessness in Greenland & Social Policy, Steven Arnfjord
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This presentation focused on work done in Greenland to understand and address homelessness. Greenland is a welfare society with social safety nets and universal services for its citizens. However, homelessness has become a significant social issue with few legislative/policy strategies to address it. In the 1960s and 70s Greenland experienced increasing centralization of its services and industries into the largest communities, and the population of Nuuk has continued to increase while the population of Greenland has not seen the same increase. The supply of houses in Nuuk has not kept up with the growing population. Nuuk has limited services for people experiencing homelessness - The city has one emergency shelter, but no services after 16:00. Individuals can receive a biweekly allowance, but it is not an adequate amount to fully support someone. Lastly, there are no specialized services for different demographics (men, women, youth, elders, etc.).

Steven's work strives to engage in policy discussions about housing and homelessness. Over 6 years, he has been involved in weekly field activities including engaging with politicians, on-the-street talks, interviews with nurses, social workers, and case workers, participatory observation, public engagement, and Photo Voice studies. A quantitative Point-In-Time count is also being planned for 2022. His work also involves lobbying government to secure an economic foundation for organizations working on these issues. Since this work began 6 years ago, there has been positive changes in the ability for people and politicians to speak opening about poverty and homelessness, which is an essential step towards finding solutions.

More information about Steven's work can be found in the following recent publications:

Steven Arnfjord. (2020). Greenland's emerging social conscience – Voluntary food delivery to people experiencing homelessness in Nuuk. *Qualitative Social Work*, 20(1-2), 433-438. Doi: 10.1177/1473325020973209

Upcoming: Julia Christensen, Sally Carraher, Travis Hedwig and Steven Arnfjord. (Forthcoming). *Housing, homelessness and social policy in the urban North: Perspectives from Alaska, the Canadian North, and Greenland*. Toronto University Press.

Housing Prototype for Homeless Individuals in Mountain Village, Alaska, Aaron Cooke
Cold Climate Housing Research Centre, Fairbanks, Alaska

The Cold Climate Housing Research Centre (CCHRC) is a nonprofit research centre that aims to facilitate the development and use of energy-efficient, cost-effective, and appropriate technologies for northern housing. Rural Alaska is experiencing a shortage of housing, especially affordable housing for very low-income families. Building and expanding homes in Alaska is challenging due to changing permafrost and advanced erosion and subsidence. In the current context of climate change in the North, it is impossible to predict exactly how the ground will move. Building foundations in this environment is expensive, which makes building low-income and affordable housing difficult. The CCHRC's Sustainable Northern Communities



program seeks design and build homes with rural Alaskan communities that are affordable and regionally appropriate based on the unique environment and cultures of those communities.

These houses must: (1) start small but have the capacity to be added on to as a families economic situation changes; (2) be built on a single foundation which is adjustable by the occupant; and (3) must cost less than \$90 000 (USD) for materials. The housing design developed by the CCHRC includes an oversized deck to allow for expansion and also the addition on an “Arctic entry” or cold storage. To reduce the cost of the foundation, the CCHRC have been testing simple jacked foundations that will allow a house to move with the ground and is much cheaper than traditional foundations. It is also adjustable by the occupant without the need for heavy machinery. Construction has just begun, and 6 homes will be built in summer 2021.

More information about the CCHRC can be found at their website: <http://cchrc.org/>