

Workshop Structure

The workshop began with an introductory session led by Dr. Heather Smith. The aims of the workshop - to encourage grass roots activism and capacity build in northern British Columbia, build links between the community and UNBC, provide a forum for the diffusion of knowledge between disparate groups, foster networks between local nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and build on local initiatives - were introduced. In this session, key ideas such as democratization and capacity building were explored. We then broke into three working groups and the rest of the morning was dedicated to questions relating to "Northern identity." In the afternoon, the working groups focused on questions specific to capacity building at the local level. The day concluded with all participants engaging in a wrap up discussion led by Dr. Lawrence T. Woods and a closing dinner. A luncheon earlier in the day was addressed by UNBC President, Dr. Charles Jago.

Working Group Discussions: Morning

Discussion Questions: When you think of Canadian foreign policy, what do you think of? Do you have a sense of efficacy? Do you feel isolated? Do you think that there is a unique Northern identity? If so, can you describe it?

Responses to the first question regarding attitudes towards Canadian foreign policy (CFP) were wide-ranging, although a degree of consensus did emerge. Participants expressed frustration when discussing CFP. Issue areas such as foreign aid, trade, monetary policy, human rights were all identified as CFP issues, but the general CFP process was described as elitist, hierarchical, ineffective, inaccessible and dominated by the United States. Some argued that more democratization was necessary while others questioned the value of further democratization, raising the question, "If there are many voices involved in the process, how do we determine which voices matter?" A related question is, "Who makes this determination?"

Not surprisingly then, many of the participants expressed limited sense of efficacy. But a very important distinction was made between efficacy as related to the foreign policy process and efficacy at the community level. There was a recognition that international issues are also local issues and thus it was argued that local activism does make a difference even if we are not or do not see ourselves as directly affecting the development of Canadian foreign policy.