

Audio file

[Arctic Youth & SciQ - Ikaarvik.mp3](#)

Transcript

Martine Lizotte (ML): Welcome to Arctic Minded, a podcast where we discuss life, work and research in the Arctic. Arctic Minded is produced by ArcticNet, a Network of Centers of Excellence of Canada that brings together scientists, engineers, and other professionals in the human health, natural and social sciences with partners from Inuit organizations, northern communities, federal and provincial agencies, as well as the private sector, to study the impacts of climate and socio-economic change in the Canadian North. From coast to coast to coast, we recognize that our work reaches across the ancestral and unceded territories of all the Inuit, Métis and First Nations people that call these lands home and who have been protectors of, and share connections with these lands since time immemorial.

ML: My name is Martine Lizotte. I'm the Training and Knowledge Mobilization Coordinator at ArcticNet and your host for today's episode, Arctic Youth and SciQ. If you don't know what SciQ is, trust me, it has nothing to do with sci-fi. Sci-IQ is real, it's authentic, and more and more it is used as a tool for better collaborative research between academia and Indigenous communities living in the Arctic. And so we open this series of podcasts with what I find a fascinating subject, Indigenous youth living in the Arctic and their role in addressing issues, challenges and also opportunities related to climate and socio-economic change. So we'll be talking about the importance of respecting and integrating other ways of knowing. When conducting research to find solutions and also broaden the basis of evidence on which our decision makers and our policymakers here in Canada can rely on to really generate change that is just and fair to everyone, especially for those who actually live in the Arctic. To talk about this subject today we have two very special guests, Justin Milton and Michael Milton. Hello to you both.

Michael Milton (MM): Hello!

Justin Milton (JM): Hi! How are you?

ML: We're good. How are you guys?

JM: Excited!

MM: I'm very excited as well. Not gonna lie - I'm a little nervous but also, I'm more excited than nervous.

ML: Well, I won't lie. I'm nervous too, Michael. So no worries. We'll do this together. Before we start the questions, I want to give our listeners a bit of background on you both. I'm going to read your bios, so please forgive me and don't hesitate to correct me if I mispronounce any words. OK, so Justin Sigluk Milton is an Inuk from Mittimatalik, a hamlet that is also known as Pond Inlet in Nunavut. Justin currently works at Ikaarvik, an incorporated non-profit, Inuit-driven organization based in Nunavut. Justin currently lives in Ottawa and he is super passionate about Inuit and the world of science and research. His career background includes working in the federal government as an Indigenous outreach worker, and he also has experience working in other Indigenous not-for-profit organizations. Currently Justin's role among, many others of course, is to identify the gaps in Arctic research in the context of Inuit living in the North. Today, Justin will be telling us why building meaningful connections with Inuit and addressing community priorities is key to better research and Inuit engagement in the Arctic. Our

second guest, Michael Milton is also an Inuk from Pond Inlet. He's 27 years old and he is the community coordinator for Ikaarvik in Pond Inlet. His passions include reading, working in the tourism industry and learning about the land and environment in the Arctic. Graduated at Nunavut Sivuniksavut in 2014 and since then he has been involved in working with cruise ships visiting the Arctic. Before the pandemic, Michael lived in Ottawa, working at Tungasuvvingat Inuit for four years, I hope I pronounced that correctly, and he was also a marine facility security officer for the hamlet of Pond Inlet when he returned home post-COVID pandemic. So before we start the interview and on a more, I would say personal note, I just wanna say that I first met Justin and Michael at an ArcticNet Annual Scientific Meeting in Toronto in 2022, and honestly, I was a bit starstruck by these two and really in awe of their talents and the important work they're leading. And I thought to myself at that moment, these two would make wonderful guests for the Arctic Minded podcast. And I feel really fortunate and grateful to be able to welcome both of you to Arctic minded today. So Justin and Michael, thank you for accepting our invitation. It really, really is an honor.

MM: The honors all ours. Honestly, this is really exciting. Really cool stuff.

JM: Excited to talk about what we do and our connections.

ML: So let's dive into it. Justin and Michael, you're both from Nunavut, and as I mentioned earlier, Justin now lives in Ottawa. And for those of you listening in who don't know much of about Nunavut, here are a few facts to start us off. Nunavut means "Our land" in Inuktitut, and geographically speaking, it is the largest, but the least populated territory of Canada. Inuit make up about 85% of the population living in Nunavut and 70% of the population declares speaking Inuktitut as their mother tongue. And for those of you tuning in from the South in highly populated cities, try to picture this. So, outside of the communities, Nunavut has no paved roads that connect the hamlets and villages together. Most long distance travel is done by air. Michael and Justin, can you tell our listeners what it's like to be an Indigenous youth living in the Arctic and maybe you can address this in both a general viewpoint but also on a more personal level. Justin, do you want to start us off?

JM: Yep! So growing up as an Indigenous Inuk in Nunavut, I feel like there are a lot of privileges that I never knew I had, for example, because the communities in Nunavut are so small and so isolated, that gave us a lot of freedom to, you know, run around, go to, you know, friends at 3:00 in the morning during the summer, and just overall being more connected to the land. So I just want to talk about the positive aspects of this one. So, living day-to-day would be, like, you wake up and you have 10 or so cousins who are already awake, and you go do your thing. You go to work, you go to school and then at the end it's sort of a free for all you. You can either, you know, visit your friend, you could work on something that you're passionate about like a hobby, for example. Or you can, you know, do what small town people do, which is try and create ways to have fun. And that's, for me, that's what really struck out to me from living and growing up in the North is that personal freedom to just do anything, work on stuff that you're passionate about, because you have all the time in the world, and that's one of the beauties I think of living in the Arctic.

ML: Wow, so freedom, family and connection to the land. And Michael, you currently live in Mitimatallik, or Pond Inlet. Can you tell me about a typical day of living in your community?

MM: Ohh my goodness, where should I start? So yeah, right now we're just going through the graduations. So, we have two schools: Ulaajuk, the elementary school, and Nasivvik, the high school. So,

Ulaajuk school goes from kindergarten to grade 6, while high school is grade 7 to grade 12. And right now, they're going through graduations and stuff, and transitioning into summer. As well as, well, the the current sunlight, the daylight is, about 24 hours now, so it never gets dark anymore. It gets orangey throughout the middle of the night. But other than that, it does not get dark. So people's... what do you call it? Like, sleeping patterns are going through, like, up and down, especially with the kids. It's usually very safe and you see a bunch of kids just being outside. We don't have paved roads at all, yeah, we have gravel roads and a lot of the snow is melting. So, you have a bunch of kids just like playing by on the roads, by the roads and just like, there's big old puddles and potholes just with water, and you just see kids with basically, no toys or anything, just playing with the snow, jumping in the puddles and just walking around with other kids, and just having a whole grand time. And you see, right now, a lot of hunters, since it is spring, preparing. I know a few friends that are making their qamutiik right now. And for those that don't know, a qamutiik is a homemade sled. It's an Inuit invention.

JM: It's basically a wooden sled that you attach to the back of your, either dog, team or snowmobile. And it's used for everything from transportation, cargo, everything in between.

MM: So you have to first make the qamutiik, the sled itself, and then you build, like, this little iglutaq. How do you describe that? It's a little cabin thing that you put on top of your sled, so that you can put all your stuff in and you can carry people inside so that the wind won't be in your face. So a lot of people are making those right now, because it's like the perfect time to do so. Because it's June, a lot of people are going to be going out. So it's more people getting ready with buying gas, oil, ski-doo parts and food, to prepare to go out... lots of bullets and stuff too. Lots of preparation, so a lot of people that do work in, like, government offices and stuff, they still do their 9:00 to 5:00, but afterwards it's all about, like preparing for where you want to go out hunting. A lot of people right now, the floe edge is open, and so a lot of people have been going there. You can do like a day trip or a couple of nights, depending on like if you catch some or not or if it's a time crunch, if you don't have a job to get back to. Maybe just go in there and then coming back several hours later. It's only about maybe like five, six, seven, hour trip, like both ways. It takes about an hour or two to get there, and it takes about an hour or two to get back, depending on the snow and ice conditions. My little brother actually just went two days ago and he came back yesterday morning. Sadly, he didn't catch anything, so at the floe edge, they mostly catch either seals or narwhals.

ML: For listeners, can you tell us what the floe edge is?

MM: So, it's where the ice meets the rest of the ocean.

ML: So it's really interesting about the qamutiik because a lot of researchers actually when they go and co-develop their research with the local communities, this is often a very precious, I would say tool, to have because you can carry the instruments you can carry, the tents, you can carry all sorts of things in the qamutiik, so that's wonderful that the community is currently building these sleds. A lot of people have misconceptions about the Arctic and one of which is that it's a sort of like a desolate, barren land, it's inhospitable weather. Can you describe how you see the Arctic, how you experience the Arctic?

JM: So for me, the Arctic is - I take it for granted because I grew up in the Arctic - but there is a lot of misconception around the Arctic being a barren, desolate, wasteland with nothing to grow, and it's nothing but horrible experiences. I cannot tell you how wrong that is, because in the Arctic, there is an abundance of life. You just have to know where to look for it. And because of the, well, the conditions

that we have, like for example, we have basically eight months of winter and then the very short span of summer, you could find everything from blueberries - yes, we have blueberries, they're just not as big as the ones in southern Canada. We have everything from Arctic Willow to lemmings to ermines.

MM: Mountain sorrel! Mountain sorrel! That's basically like a tinier Arctic version of... what's that big, sour...

JM: Rhubarb!

MM: Rhubarb, yeah!

JM: Yeah, there's lots of different plants that Inuit have used to feed themselves, and mountain sorrel is one good example. So it's basically a red stemmed plant with green leaves at the bottom. And yes, it tastes exactly like rhubarb. It's so cool.

ML: Mountain sorrel tart or pie? That'd be amazing with berries.

MM: Our grandpa used to make tea out of it. It was like this delicious treat that we'd get only during the summer. It was wonderful. I remember being a little kid and, just like, my grandpa just made it. And he liked his, just like, without sugar. So, I would put a little spoonful of sugar into mine, just stir it and just like, it was, like the greatest juice I've ever had.

ML: Ohh that's awesome memories. And you, Michael, do you feel like people have misconceptions about the Arctic? What's your vision on that?

MM: I believe so. Because, like, you see in old documentaries and stuff right? Before... wait, sorry. Hold on for a minute.

ML: No worries.

JM: And I'll just say right now that this is one of the realities of working in the North, is you have more often than not overcrowded housing and it's almost unavoidable that you have other responsibilities when you're doing your work during the day.

ML: Yeah, absolutely.

MM: Yeah, I'm back. My little cousin just needed help with something. But yeah, we have, like, 9 people living in here.

ML: No worries, Michael, and please feel if you need to pop out. No worries at all.

MM: So right. Before, in old documentaries, you have the narrator looking at the ice, and it's just, like this inhospitable land, this snow and ice, and just nothing to grow. And then you have the Inuit, just show up, and just living and thriving, like you could see the struggles and stuff. But honestly, I find that a lot more people are now, you know, understanding. A lot of the people I see are like, this desolate, barren land, this inhospitable place, is just a place of adventure. Like, honestly, if you didn't know anything, and you came up here with a jacket and a backpack and some food and stuff to last you about to a couple of days - if you don't know what you're doing with how to use the land and stuff, you will die. As long as you are aware of what is available to you and it's like, it's knowing the science behind everything that is the the land is, like, just the land. As long as you know as much as you possibly can about how to use the land that's in front of you... with the snow, you can make igloos, if you go out on

the ice, you can look for little seal holes where you can wait for couple minutes, several hours, and get something. And also you can look at each individual seal holes to see if that's being used, or if the seal's gone. And there's many, many different ways of doing this. So as long as you have the tools necessary and you know your way around the land, this is, just like, it's incredible.

ML: Like a lot of hidden treasures, I feel eh? And it's so... I mean it's overwhelmingly beautiful and for me, it's also about the people and the connection of the people between each other, but with the land. It's a beautiful connection to see. Many of us living in the South take a lot of things for granted. Like our access to food, access to clean water, technology, infrastructure, space in houses, things like that. Can you describe to us some of the obstacles that are inherent to the North, that some of our listeners may not be familiar with? We evoked this a little earlier when Michael needed to leave and go see his cousin, about infrastructure. Can you tell us a bit more about those obstacles?

MM: The main issue is, like, first and foremost the price, the cost. The cost of building up here is crazy, crazy expensive, mostly due to proper, stable housing - just to create it on top of permafrost, they need to bury those really, long, thick, metal rods down. You build the buildings on top of that so that it'll stay secure for forever maybe. With that cost alone, it makes it very hard to build many buildings and also houses. And with the Nunavut Legislative Assembly, the government, the GN, they get to decide which communities should get housing and stuff. And in Pond Inlet, since the population is growing, there's been a few buildings being built every year. So it's all like 5-plexes and stuff, so it's like 5 units in one building. You can't build high because, like, unstable permafrost and all that, and the cost of it. So you'll rarely ever see buildings with 2-3 storeys, because it's just really expensive. And not a lot of infrastructure, there's not a lot of office space allowed, unless you can make a shack or a shed and work out of there. That'll also like reveal some other obstacles in the way. There's only two stores... the amount of housing being built, and the amount of people that are being born and growing up here... there's more people being born, and so there's more families needing housing than there are houses being built.

ML: Right.

MM: Am I saying that right?

ML: Yeah, absolutely, absolutely, Michael. Justin, are there things that you see as challenges of the Arctic?

JM: So I'm just going to echo off of the infrastructure bit a little bit more. So yes, there is a shortage of housing and that creates even more problems such as not having enough office space for, for example, nonprofits to have office space in the North. And another thing that I will say is Internet. And Internet has always been lagging behind with the rest of Canada in Nunavut and when Starlink was introduced to rural places in Canada, that was a few months ago and it wasn't until a few months ago that the entire territory caught up to the rest of the world when it comes to acceptable Internet connection. And so that's one example I like to use a lot because as much as people say Internet is a luxury, I don't think it's a luxury anymore. I think it's a necessity, especially for workplaces. And yeah, some of the obstacles that I see are more social and less so infrastructure-wise. We've all heard in the news that there's, you know, high suicide rates in the north, there's high, you know, unemployment, there's food insecurity and I'm not gonna talk about it because I think we all know what those things are by now. Infrastructure and technology is something that needs to be caught up with the rest of the world.

ML: Yeah, I absolutely agree that Internet is essential, and if we learn something from COVID is That we need Internet to be working and networking. And just today, we are recording this podcast on Zoom. So we're not all in Pond Inlet or we're not all in Ottawa, or Quebec City. So, we need Internet to connect to each other. So those are some global challenges. Do you feel like there are particular challenges as youth in the Arctic, or is it kind of just the same... you know, Internet, and social, or is there something specific about, you know, challenging for the youth?

JM: Yeah, I have two answers to this. So, the first answer is youth don't have a lot of extracurricular activities in the North. And so, what I mean by that is there's no after school club, there's no after-hours club, there's no... I mean, there are sports tournaments, but I think that goes to our extent in Nunavut. So, what ends up happening is when you have youth in Nunavut who have all the time in the world, who live in small communities, it's very hard to keep them busy when it comes to, you know, engaging their brain, engaging their bodies with, you know, exercise or, you know, some other like activity or club. And I think that's a problem because when you're a youth, you're a sponge when you're a youth and in order to absorb as much things as possible, to have a successful adulthood, exposing yourself to, you know, some hobby that you never tried or some club that you're interested in going, like these little things really do add up a lot when it comes to life experience, for lack of a better term. And the more "real answer" I would say about challenges as a youth is when things like overcrowded housing are a thing, you tend to have to be the older sibling or the babysitter for the rest of the children in the household. And so, I don't want to put Michael on the spot, but him leaving to help his cousin is a very prime example, and that uses up a lot of time, that uses up a lot of energy. And so if we have systems or if we have infrastructure in place for extracurricular activities and appropriate housing, then I think that'll be an amazing foundation for youth going forward.

ML: Thanks Justin. Michael, do you want to jump in here?

MM: Yea. So, to go more on what Sigluk was saying, when it comes to sports and instruments, musical instruments, there are usually a few that get into those. And like, sports is basically the biggest safe haven for a lot of people, for a lot of youth. Thankfully, Pond Inlet has pretty decent basketball, volleyball and, recently, badminton has been going on. It's been pretty popular with the youth. As well as the most biggest thing is hockey, ice hockey. I want to say that one of the best investments the town has made so far was the hockey rink connected to the community hall, or the community centre where the hamlet of Pond Inlet holds activities and events, and the hockey rink is this big thing. Lots of kids go there, lots of adults go there. There's a hockey night two nights a week. As a youth and not knowing what to do with the rest of your life, developing these hobbies, like playing fiddle, guitar, drums and playing these sports, becomes, like, this amazing hobby, and for a very few artistic minds, drawing. But there's no usual, like... there's not really a place to do proper drawing unless you make it yourself, and then again it goes back to infrastructure. What if you don't have your own room? Like I'm fortunate enough that I have my own privacy in my room because I'm one of the oldest grandkids living with my grandma among other cousins, but that also means I have to help out around the house as much as I can with cooking, cleaning, paying bills. When it comes to a lot of youth trying to find their way and stuff, it's... Yeah, they need that space, and they need opportunities to figure out what they want to do. For me personally, my mom when I was younger gave me books to read for young kids that are learning English and learning their emotions and stuff. So, I got to learn a lot from those books and I fell in love with reading and I read a lot. So, I always need my own space to be able to read comfortably. We really do need that space and opportunity, like various opportunities, to go from there.

ML: Yeah. Thank you both, Justin and Michael. So, definitely a lack of opportunity, of diverse opportunities. And I'm glad we're talking about youth because an interesting fact about Nunavut is that the median age is about 25 years old. So, this is very young compared to the median age in the rest of Canada, which is about 40 years old. So, in essence, youth in Nunavut are the largest contributors to the demographic. And when we talk about youth, who are we describing here? You know, the definition is vast. It includes people up to, I would say, 30- or 35-year-olds. This means that many youth... they could be young parents, they could be active hunters, they may be in school, but not necessarily. And so, for youth living in the Arctic, climate change, and we can start on this topic, it's not a distant threat. It's the driving force in many of the environmental, economic, and societal transitions affecting the region today. I want to hear you both on if you have, you know, personal experiences or stories to share on how climate change has directly impacted your lives.

MM: When we talk about climate change affecting our lives up here, a lot of people ask first, like right away, "Do you have proof? Is there proof?". And it's like "Ohh you want proof?". Look in front of Pond Inlet, there's an island right there, Bylot Island. And there's a bunch of fjords, glaciers. And before I was born, a lot of the glaciers, they were hitting the ocean. Like they were right down to the ground, like to the ocean hitting the water. Nowadays it's probably about... I don't know, like, half a mile or about a mile... like a kilometer or something, up inland and you could see this little river that the glacier has made. And so, this is like fresh land that's never seen the light of day in hundreds, if not thousands of years, but it's finally being exposed right now. And we've been seeing it, we've been seeing the glacier move away from the ocean more and more into land as we've been growing up. And it's like if that's not proof, then I don't know what is. Like our parents, my grandparents, they've never seen that glacier go up. It's their first time seeing what's under that glacier and being able to get water from there. We have, I believe, like, a lot of changes. It's not just snow melting sooner, it's also snow and ice melting later on. Another example is... every year my birthdays in July 11, the ice breaking up and stuff was always around my birthday. Sometimes in the beginning of July, usually around my birthday, like couple days after, a couple days before, but last year, I came back home finally, and I got to see the ice breaking. But the ice finally broke out around the beginning and middle of August, which was very, very strange for me. Like, people were still going out in the middle of July and that was just like... Wow. The ice was good enough for people to still go out that was just crazy to me. But we do keep in mind like, everyone talks about it on the CB radio like, it's local, everyone can go on. All the hunters are telling facts, like giving updates all the time. So, we know if it's safe or not. We know when it's about to start melting and if the ice is not good enough to be on, that's when people start putting all their snowmobiles and qamutiiks back on land, to shore, and bring it home for the summer. It's very unpredictable, I want to say, because it's getting really, really cold, but it's also getting really, really hot. Just last week it was basically like... it felt like the dead of winter for a couple of days, and then now, the sun is so hot. Yesterday there were little snow... there was big piles of snow that slid into the middle of the road just blocking the road, these huge piles of snow because the snow was melting so fast. And it's just like this unexpected real quick, real high heat just hitting us right now. So that's, like, climate change. It's not always like that. Before it was always... like consistent, not always exactly the same, but the differences were not as obvious as it is now. And it causes a lot of people to be cautious, I want to say. Like you have to be more careful of the ice, you have to be more careful of the snow. You have to be more aware. You have to be more cautious. That's the impact on our lives being up here.

ML: So very obvious changes in the cryosphere, so you mentioned glacial retreat, you mentioned these changes in sea ice dynamics. And what I really like about what you said is it's not necessarily climate

warming. It's really about climate change and it can go both ways. Justin, do you want to add something to this?

JM: Yeah, you two took the words right out of my mouth. Yeah, I was just gonna say... yeah, climate change isn't always about warming. It's about the climate changing. And so going back to the point of unpredictable weather, it also creates a lot of stress for the hunters because usually what hunters do traditionally is first thing when they wake up they would go outside, they would observe and observe the weather... see where the wind's going, just observing the environment in general. And I know Elders in Pond who said to me that when they were my age, like early 20s, they were able to accurately predict weather patterns because it was consistent. The times of year where the sea ice melts, the time of year where certain Arctic animal species migrate, the time of year to go to the certain spot because it's amazing for fishing... Those things are all impacted now because the hunters are, well, a lot of hunters that I know, are saying "I can't understand the weather anymore. I can't make accurate predictions. I'm scared to... like what if the weather changes and I'm not able to go back to the community?" And so, it is affecting a lot of people's personal lives as well.

ML: And so, in this context of unpredictability that you mentioned, Justin, and in both your minds, what is the importance of youth in advocating the narrative surrounding sustainability, conservation, and the different ways of knowing the knowledge systems in the Arctic, in this context of climate change, of unpredictability?

JM: I have quite a simple answer to that. So, why is it important that youth care about, you know, sustainability, conservation and knowledge systems in the Arctic? simply because it is gonna be our homes. We're gonna grow up in this land. We already are, and we're gonna continue to live in these lands. So whatever change is going to affect the land, is going to affect us. And so, with things like sustainability and conservation, I think it's really important that the youth, or every... all Inuit youth in Nunavut, at least understand the path we're going towards in the context of climate change. Because we can take some action. I mean, people can argue about "ohh climate change is inevitable". Yes, that's true, but you can also slow it down and possibly reverse the effects of some sources of greenhouse gases, for instance. And so yeah, it's gonna be our homes. And it is our home, and it is gonna continue to be our home. So that's why we care about it.

MM: And with Inuit lives, we're all about adapting to the land. If animals can adapt, so can we. So, if the land and the environment is changing too rapidly, not everyone's gonna survive that. So, if we can slow it down, we can adapt and, like, be able to predict other changes and go from there... just adapting.

ML: Thanks, Justin and Michael for your insights here. I want to come back to youth and I want to talk specifically about mentorship for a moment. We have this sort of classical view of mentorship in which it's often an older, more, you know, experienced person who offers help or guidance to a younger person. What do you think about the potential to flip this paradigm around? What could be the importance of mentorship by youth? In other words, what can everyone learn from you guys from youth?

MM: People, people getting older and stuff right? Like modern technology? You have a lot of jokes going around saying like you have the older generation being taught how to use modern technology from their children, you know?

ML: Yeah, right!

MM: And so like it's basically sort of like that, but the youth in the Arctic have this very special spot. We're in a very special position because we grew up going out hunting a lot and stuff. And going out camping and learning about the environment, as well as like getting to know the technology, as well as learning English and being able to understand and speak a bit of jargon. So, we're in a special position to be able to teach both Elders and scientists, researchers and other older people.

ML: Basically, it's like you're a bridge. You're a conduit between generations. You're a conduit between, you know, academic researchers that come to the community and the community members. So, you said it very well. For me, when you talk, I see the image of a bridge. But maybe Justin, you want to add as well, your vision, into this?

JM: So for me, I would argue that everyone all around the world should be mentored by at least one youth, or at least someone that's younger than them. And it's simply because young people, as inexperienced as people may call them, they have experiences of their own that are unique, that are not found in older, more previous generations. And so, when we're talking about bridging, in this case, the world of research with the world of Inuit youth, then it is a gem to see to see the youth be that bridge of having to speak scientific jargon with one end and being able to speak holistic, cultural, values on the other. It's beautiful.

ML: I love that, and it really segues perfectly into my next question, Justin, because, well, we said it at the beginning, you both work at Ikaarvik, an independent, Indigenous-led nonprofit organization. Could you tell us a bit more about the goals of Ikaarvik and what the organization does, and what your different roles are in Ikaarvik?

JM: Yes. OK, So, Ikaarvik is a new non for profit that was just incorporated in January 2022. So, we're just over a year and a half that it's incorporated. And it's an Indigenous-led, nonprofit organization that's Inuit youth driven, meaning whatever projects that we do, whatever opportunities that might come up, it is up to the youth to drive and prioritize what Ikaarvik should do. And Ikaarvik is fairly small. We have about three full time and two part time staff, along with some, like, contracted HR people for HR things. But yeah, the goals of Ikaarvik is really to empower Inuit youth in Nunavut and, I guess to an extent, all Indigenous youth in the Arctic, and really about bridging the world of research through Inuit youth in order to create better systemic and cultural change within Nunavut. So, I know that was a high-level answer, but we'll get into more Ikaarvik-y stuff in a second. And my role in Ikaarvik has actually changed, believe it or not. So, I was the manager for Ikaarvik from June 2021, when I started, to two weeks ago, and my new title is actually the Community Engagement Facilitator. In a nutshell, I do community engagement with northern communities, I help facilitate workshops and write proposals and lots of good stuff.

ML: And not just in Pond Inlet, across Nunavut, is that right, Justin?

JM: Yes. So, even though Ikaarvik is based in Pond Inlet, Nunavut, we have cohorts in other northern communities. Just to name them there's Gjoa Haven, Nunavut, Cambridge Bay, Kugluktuk, Nunavut, and then there's two First Nations groups in the Yukon that we actually engage with, the Champagne and Aishihik and the Kluane First Nations. So, it's getting pretty big.

ML: And Michael, do you want to tell us a bit more about what you do at Ikaarvik?

MM: I'm the Community Coordinator for Pond Inlet, so I help Justin with preparing basically all the workshops and stuff. I do community communication, as well as if we have any more things, like, if we need to do something with the schools, I would go up to the District Education Authority, the board there with the schools. I reach out to the youth and special guests, Elders and stuff, and hunters, and other organizations here in town to get them involved or to see if they're interested in what we are doing, like, the projects that we are doing or we are part of facilitating. So, I do a lot of that, the reaching out.

ML: So, I'm curious, are you both founders of the Ikaarvik, and if so, what inspired the creation of Ikaarvik?

JM: Short answer, no, we're not the founders of Ikaarvik, and I wouldn't want to take away the credit from the actual founders. And, so, just for a quick storytime, back in... I want to say.... This sounds so weird - The early 2010s, or the late 2000s, there was a group of students in Pond Inlet who are attending the Environmental Technology Program that's part of the Nunavut Arctic College. And Shelly Elverum, one of our colleagues, was actually the teacher for one of the classes at environmental tech. And so, she was teaching a lot of bright, young, capable Inuit youth who are in school. And at the end of the year, I don't know exactly what happened, but they organized because they were fed up with how research was being conducted in the North. They were fed up with the unequal, or lack of treatment, towards Inuit when it came to research work. And so, they organized and created what is a tiny little baby Ikaarvik, and I think it consisted of around 8 to 10 Inuit youth who attended the Environmental Technology Program. And fast-forward to, you know, going through the years, we won the Arctic Inspiration Prize, we won several awards, we've gotten a lot of amazing connections with Canadian universities, bureaucracies and other nonprofit organizations. And so, they were really the ones who were the driving force of we need to have something in place for research and Inuit in the North to have better relationships and better connections and a lot of the founders are actually in really awesome job positions now. So, for one example, there's this man named Andrew Arreak and he runs the Smart Ice operation in Pond Inlet. And for those of you who don't know, Smart Ice is a small, social enterprise that focuses on tracking and observing and recording the sea ice conditions so that hunters will have, you know, readily available info for example, if they want to go to a certain fjord, or a certain Bay, they'll know using Smart Ice's technology to navigate the sea ice.

MM: Don't forget the SIKU app, SIKU app!

JM: And the SIKU app. And so, Andrew was one of the founders in that Environmental Tech program. And he has done tremendous work in mapping the environmental landscape, and the weather landscape, and the sea ice landscape around Pond Inlet. So, it's just one cool example of a successful person from the founders.

ML: I love that story, Justin. Thank you for sharing that with us. You know from baby Ikaarvik to all growing up Ikaarvik today, definitely Ikaarvik creates opportunities that allow northern Indigenous youth to empower themselves for self-determination in Arctic research and decision making. Can you give us some examples of recent initiatives you've been involved in?

JM: Oh yes, we have done a lot of workshopping the past two years since I got employed here. I'm just going to list some examples and then Abu, if you wanna jump in, you could do so. So, one example is literally two weeks ago, I was in Pond Inlet facilitating a workshop and it was about how research is

evaluated in Nunavut. So, we were looking at the Nunavut Research Institute's research application. It's an application for researchers who want to conduct research, social research in the Arctic, in Nunavut. And we were looking at the systems in place that allow researchers to come up and we hit a lot of gaps and uncertainties within that process. And so, we built a framework around how communities can evaluate researchers who come up. So, in other words, if a researcher comes up to do X, the community can say did he, she or they do good business with the community. Did they have good connections? Did they work with the Inuit in a meaningful way? So, it's just those meaningful, valuable connections of how research can and should be done in the North. So that was two weeks ago, and at the end of February of this year, we also went up to Pond to help facilitate a DFO workshop, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, a federal department here in Canada. And we were helping them guide what things should be put in the National Marine Conservation Area that's already put up. It's called the Tallurutiup Imanga National Marine Conservation Area, and basically Ikaarvik youth and staff were there to be part of that conversation of what is it that could be best used in this type of work, or what types of things should we think about when managing the marine conservation area? So, it's a lot of really cool, not just environmental, but social projects that economic Ikaarvik has conducted. Do you want to add more?

MM: Yea. So, in terms of more social ones, there is the whaler's project. It was funded by the Trebek Initiative. Our friend Matthew Ayre, he had a bunch of old pictures of people around Pond Inlet area from the old whaling days, and they were just in a museum, stuck somewhere. And it turns out a few of the photos he brought were already at the Nattinnak Visitor Center/Library here in town, but they were all archives and stuff, but he brought in a bunch of new photos that were never seen by people up here before, and so we brought in a few Elders, where they actually knew the land in the background of the pictures, and the some of the people were recognized in the pictures as well.

JM: Yeah, they were literally Elders going "Ohh, that's my great grandma! That's my grandpa!" from 1880 something, it was mind blowing.

ML: Oh wow!

MM: But, good thing there were some pictures of them beforehand, and like, also the facial features are very similar, and they've heard many stories, so there was just like this incredible storytelling of what was back then and now. And we had the youth do the workshop with us, and who we wanted to reach out to. So, we had at the end, we had a community event where the community ate... oh, and the best part - there is a traditional dance like square dancing that we do here. It's not very traditional in terms of, like, we didn't have square dancing a couple thousand years ago, it was basically given to us just maybe a few 100 years ago, by Scottish whalers. And so, we were looking at the differences of, like, the Scottish square dancing and Nunavut square dancing and how it evolved, and how we turned it into our own thing. And we also looked at the other types of square dancing from northern Quebec or Labrador, and we got to do some square dancing, we got to watch the music being played, the square dance music. It's very similar, and yet a little different. I guess we've changed it to suit our way of doing it, but it's just a very popular thing, to square dance.

ML: Obviously, Ikaarvik has an important role in infusing the storytelling, the local knowledge, the cultural identity in different spheres of research, and we know that for many years research in the Arctic was extractive, right? It was conducted under colonial lens and it only ever considered western or Eurocentric views of science. And as you both know ArcticNet, we're an organization that funds research

in the Arctic and one of our fundamental beliefs is that all ways of knowing, including local, traditional and Indigenous knowledge, need to be recognized and valued. I would love it if you could give us, our listeners a glimpse into local Indigenous knowledge. What does it mean to you? How do you apply it in your everyday life? And I know this has many... we could talk about Indigenous knowledge for a long time, but what does it mean to you specifically?

JM: For me it's about connecting with your humanity and let me explain in a second. So, when we look at the two ways of knowing, in this case it's science or academic/Western versus Indigenous knowledge, Western is very, like for the research world anyway, it's very evidence based. It's very compartmentalized and it does have its strengths, and it does have its place. But we also believe in Ikaarvik, that ways of knowing should not be limited to just science. It shouldn't just be proven with, quote unquote, facts or evidence. And so, with Indigenous knowledge, it's a very all-encompassing, holistic worldview, where everything and every single thing, every emotion you have, is connected to something, every action and every repercussions, they're all connected. And so, when I think about myself, it's really just how am I being myself? Am I connecting with my emotional side today? Am I suppressing? Or am I connecting in a community? So, it's those types of things that resonate with me, and I know not everyone will have that answer, but Indigenous knowledge isn't just knowledge. I think it has the unfortunate circumstance of being named that way. And it's really about connecting with yourself on a very personal core values level. And it's also about connecting with the environment around you. And when I say environment, it doesn't just mean, you know, the land and the sea and the water and the sky. It's also about community and about having your part in the community, whether it's, you know, if you're doing a specific job or if you're, I don't know if you're the Comic Relief, it could be anything. My way of interpreting Indigenous knowledge is big. It's very messy.

ML: I would say it's almost like sensitivity to your connectivity and not just to, as you mentioned, the environment, but also to the people and to the energy. Would you say that? You know, sensitivity to that connectivity?

JM: Yeah, I think that hits the nail on the head, and I could see this with other Indigenous populations around the world. We all have something in common with this, quote unquote, Indigenous knowledge. It's about using humanity and taking care of your environment. And environment meaning both the land and your people in emotional and mental and psychological state. And I just wanted to mention that because I think it's overlooked quite a lot.

ML: It is. I really love that definition. Thank you for sharing that, Justin. Michael, do you want to chime in here?

MM: How the heck am I supposed to top that? He basically just said everything I was gonna say. Yeah, you just have to be aware of who you are in your surroundings, and that doesn't always completely mean that you are a master of your person. Everyone is different. Everyone has their own point of views and being able to understand that and being able to be aware of that, as well. So, if you see something and you know that person and they are having a difficult situation, you are gonna go there, and see what you can do to help, if that person does need help you. You assess the situation first and go from there. It takes a village to raise a child, but once that child grows up, you are part of the village and so it is like up to you to be able to help that village and the next child that needs raising from that village. So, it's all about helping the people that helped you and helping the community that's going to help the further generations as it progresses. And traditional knowledge is when you just take into consideration

your environment and that's with the people and the land. You take that into consideration and you go from there.

ML: So, I feel like there's a lot of empathy in Indigenous knowledge, like, it's more than knowledge as you're both saying. It's a way of living, right?

MM: Yeah.

ML: Yeah. So, in your work with Ikaarvik, you really explore the strengths of, you know, combining this local Indigenous knowledge that's, you know, it encompasses more than just knowledge per say and Western science, and you help southern based Arctic researchers work with, you know, both ways of knowing, and you show that this meshing, this bridging of knowledge systems, makes for better, more relevant and more robust results. And this meshing, it actually has a name, as we mentioned in our title today, it's SciIQ, spelled SCIQ. Could you tell us in your words what SciIQ is and maybe tell us more about the IQ part and what it stands for, and maybe slowly pronounce IQ so we can all practice saying it?

MM: Alright, so IQ stands for Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit. Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit, Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit. ee-noo-eet khow-yee-mah-yah-too-kha-neet. So the Inuit language is all about the ee oo aa. So, at the end, it's ngit, Ng, like King - ngit. But so, IQ is a mix of science and IQ. Stands for two things, which we learned very recently from our evaluation in speaking with Elders. So, the IQ principles are the eight traditional values. That's what IQ stands for. But another way of saying it is what we've talked about earlier, Inuit traditional knowledge, Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit - the eight values, the eight core values that we live by and Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit, it's exactly the same thing, but it's our traditional Inuit knowledge, what we know and how we live.

JM: So just to get into that a bit more, one of them is core principles. It's like being nice to others, being open and welcoming, stewardship of the land and environment, like that's the eight principles. But the but the other Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit is like literal Indigenous knowledge, like, say you have to go fishing at this time of year because it's the best, or you have to go to this spot in the fall because you'll get X&Y. So it it's both practical knowledge and a holistic value, core values.

MM: And SciIQ became a thing when we had our very first Ikaarvik workshop, or the gathering of the very first youth cohort after the founding happened. Ikaarvik started making a little bit of a name for themselves and Sigluk and I, Justin and I, were a part of that first group of youth. Sigluk was known, was brought in because he was known to be this really smart, nerdy kid in school, and I was brought in because I was an assistant for the water quality research project with a local here that was leading the project. When we were doing this workshop, one of our colleagues, we have to give a shout out to him, Jonathan Pitseolak. When we were talking about the pros and cons of science and the pros and cons of IQ, we saw that they weren't very different. It's just how you go about one is very logical and heartless, I wanna say, while another is very like lively. I don't know how to say it, sorry.

ML: No, I think it's very eloquent the way you said that. What I really appreciate, all our listeners appreciate, you sharing these insight into IQ because I don't think that too many people know that there are other ways of knowing. There are a lot of people who believe that, you know, Western based or Eurocentric science, is *the* knowledge system. And so, I think that by sharing your insight into IQ, it's very important. So, we're getting close to the end of our conversation here today. But before we go, I'd like to ask a final question. How can we, like, the rest of Canada, how can we encourage bold environmental cultural action in the Arctic? How can we help center Indigenous youth voices to help create important

change, and maybe this is - I mean, there's no right answer. It's just a conversation. But I'd like to hear your thoughts on that. How can we help? What can we do, as you know, Southerners coming up to the North? What can we do to help integrate other ways of knowing? How can we be, you know, allies? How can we put forth allyship in our relationships together between academia and Indigenous communities?

JM: So for me, centering Indigenous youth voices to help create important change, there are some ways you can help with some of it, like for example giving them a platform with a podcast for example, or you can - what's the word? - integrate Inuit youth into the research project that you're doing. And I won't be getting into the nitty gritty cause there are semantics that people might bring up. But yeah, trying to engage youth in not only research, but anything. Because from my point of view, youth have all the time in the world, and they have amazing bright intellectual, like fantastic brains that people do not get to... that they don't get to utilize because of the aforementioned barriers that we have.

MM: I think, to put simply, would be to keep an open mind. So, from my point of view, there are way too many that get into many very useless arguments about things that could be easily talked over with agree to disagree, but because you have to keep in mind, you, yourself have your story and your struggles, and the person in front of you has theirs and their struggles. And in many ways our worlds are very different and how we see the world is very different. And to create change, where we can both have a platform, where you guys can learn to understand each other, I think that platform, a space where everyone can learn to understand and accept each other. It's very big, it's very broad, it's vague. But honestly, I think that is always like what we need, is a platform for like-minded individuals, and even people that are just open to learn new things, to understand new things about a world that's not yours, to go there and to meet with youth, Elders, old people, young people, from the South, the North, East or West. It don't matter, as long as the understanding is there. And there are ways where you can fix my issues and I can fix yours. Indigenous youth can learn to... can open up about their voice and their concerns, as well as get to know more about other points of views of the world, as well as other people from all around the world giving their points and learning more about us, and creating relationships and building a global community where I am here and I go out hunting, and camping in a frozen, desolate land. But I have someone that I can relate to and talk to, that lives in a community that's right next to... that's neighbors to a jungle, a rainforest or an actual sandy desert. We have Facebook, Instagram and all these other social medias, but to have a platform for growth and change I think would be super cool.

ML: Well, I don't think that's vague at all. I think that's very relevant and beautiful. And I think one of the things that I get out of this conversation is empathy. It's infusing empathy into our relationships and dialogues. Justin, did you want to add something to this?

JM: Yes. So yeah, that got my mind thinking. So, yeah, I 100%, 1000%, you have to use empathy, you have to use humanity, because, at the end of at the end of the day, it's a win-win for everyone. So, when you engage Inuit youth in your work, if it's research or what have you, it opens up their minds to a whole world of possibilities that they've never thought about before, but also if you engage Inuit youth in your work, then I promise you there'll be more qualitative, quantitative data and output from your research. Because part of what Ikaarvik does a lot is to guide researchers in the community. So, for example, if they want to have consultations with the local Hunters and Trappers Organizations, then we would help them get the contacts, we would help them get connected with the right people, and also help them with what kinds of attitudes they should have and what contexts they should think about. And just for a

brief history lesson, there hasn't been a lot of nice researchers up until a few decades ago. And I won't get into the details, but there were a lot of unethical, unequal treatment of Indigenous peoples when it came to research. And so, you're going to have that baggage when you go into the community. And part of what Ikaarvik also does is to help the community understand the researcher, because there is, you know that history, that baggage, that people in small communities like Pond, have first-hand experience of those unethical practices. And so Ikaarvik's role is not just to bridge the Inuit youth, but to bridge the two worlds of, I want to say, Southern Canada with research and science, with the Indigenous worldviews, the Indigenous culture that we have. and we love to say this at Ikaarvik a lot, I think it's becoming our unofficial motto, but we love telling people to be a human first. Don't come in introducing yourself with your PhD., or what work you do. Because frankly, everyone has a job and frankly some... a lot of community members are getting fatigued by that. And so, if you come in with, like Michael said, an open mind and open heart. And really trying to get a grasp of not just our world in the North, but how we perceive the southern world, then that, to me, is guaranteed success, if you find the time to put your ego aside and talk human to human.

ML: Very well done, very well said Justin. Be a human first, a human being first. And I just want to add that science... like, research shows that diversity actually increases the excellence of research. We absolutely need to include all ways of knowing, all voices, all visions, into research. So, before we say goodbye, this is the end of the podcast, I want to invite our listeners to read an important paper published in Arctic Science in September 2020. It's called *SciQ: an invitation and recommendations to combine science and IQ for meaningful engagement of Inuit communities in research*. And this paper was co-authored by Candice Peterson and 16 other co-authors, including Justin and Michael, our guests today. And by the way, apologies for my pronunciation throughout the podcast. I promise I will practice saying IQ at home. If you're interested in learning about SciQ, you can type S C I Q ethical research in a search engine and you'll see a lot of things popping up. Justin and Michael, thank you for your kindness and your generosity in joining us today, and sharing your knowledge, but also thank you for the community leadership you show every day, which is really a crucial pathway to Indigenous self-determination in Nunavut Canada. Thank you for joining us.

JM: Awesome and always happy to talk to you, Martine.

MM: Yeah, that was awesome. Thank you so much. And also, don't worry about the pronunciations too much.

ML: Michael, thank you for your empathy with my learning process and my learning curve. Your knowledge and expertise here in this conversation was so appreciated. Thank you so much. And to all our listeners, if you like this episode of Arctic Minded, please stay tuned for other episodes in our series. You can find all the details including the show notes, and we'll do some links to SIKU and to Smart Ice and to the SciQ paper I mentioned just earlier. So, the show notes will from this episode will be there as well on our ArcticNet website. Take care everyone.