



Connecting with peers in the Arctic:
Write pen pal letters to children in the Arctic

Objective:

Youth will learn about the life and culture of the Inuit in the Arctic and will learn about how climate change is affecting their community. Through learning about the impact of climate change on the Inuit, the children will gain more motivation to work to help stop climate change.

Overview:

Youth will exchange pen pal letters with their peers in the Arctic. This cultural exchange will help to demystify the world of the Arctic for the youth and will help to geographically situate the region where climate change is currently having the biggest impact.

Time:

1 hour

Materials:

- Globe or map to show where the Arctic is...
- PowerPoint presentation with photos of the Arctic
- Paper
- Pencils
- Computer and email
- Group photo

Instructions:

- Explain to the group that they will have the opportunity to write pen pal letters to the Arctic. Explain what a pen pal is and how pen pal exchange works.
- Explain to the youth that their pen pals live in small town called Pangnirtung, on a big island called Baffin Island, in northern Canada, near the North Pole. Show them the Arctic region of Canada on a big map or globe in the classroom. If you want, you can show them the PowerPoint photo slideshow I made of Pangnirtung – these photos will give them a visual sense of what the community looks like.
- Give paper and pencils to the group and ask the group to write pen pal letters. They have a choice to either write as one big group, in pairs, or on their own.

They can write their own letter on the piece of paper, or can dictate a letter to the teacher.

- The letter should include 3 parts:
 - 1) Introduction of student(s): Including names, ages, where they are from, what grade they are in, and any other information they would like to share i.e. number of siblings, pets, or favorite hobbies, food, movies, etc.
 - 2) Explanation of their garden project: Including information about the garden, where it is, what they planted, which plants they like the most and why, what they like best about the garden and why, and how they think the garden will help to stop climate change.
 - 3) Questions for the peers in the Arctic: Including questions about life in the Arctic, such as weather, daylight, food, culture, clothing, wildlife, language, school, etc. Further, any questions about climate change and how it is impacting their Arctic community, such as warmer summers, more sea ice and glaciers melting, etc.
- When the youth have finished their pen pal letters, tell them that in about a month's time, they will receive a reply from a new friend in the Arctic!

Note about the letter delivery:

The mail service to the Arctic is very slow and so if you send the letters there by post, I'm afraid they might not arrive in time before I leave. So it would be best to send the pen pal letters and photos via email, so that I have time to distribute them among the local children and get letters from them to bring back to your students. So, I would suggest once they have finished writing the letter, you can either scan the hand-written letters onto the computer, or type them up. If you have a digital photo, it would be great to send some photos of the group and their garden along with their letters. When I return from the Arctic the first week of August, I will bring back letters and photos from their pen pals in the Arctic.