

Trans-Svalbard Expedition of the Frozen Five: An alternative way of education & outreach during the International Polar Year

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Principal objective:

Through traversing the Arctic archipelago of Svalbard, we, a group of young multi-disciplinary students of the geosciences, wish to fulfill two major aims:

1. Educate high school students about the role of the Arctic in the global climate system and its global implications
2. Demonstrate the exciting aspects of science, thus promoting high school students to pursue a scientific career and help understand the complex Arctic environment

Primarily, we are working on providing basic information about the Arctic environment through our website and pre-expedition talks. By providing a web-based framework of information, interested students will not only be able to follow our movement across Svalbard in near real-time, but also learn about the Arctic environment at the same time. The post-expedition lecture tour of high schools aims to highlight the same issues in person, coupled with that extra spice of a group of passionate young scientists returning from the trip of their lives.

Project summary

On the 29th of March 2007, a group of international students of the geosciences will embark on a two month expedition across the wilderness of Svalbard. The journey will involve traversing up to 1000 km of high Arctic glaciers between 76 and 80°N, reaching both the southernmost and northernmost capes of Spitsbergen, Svalbard's largest island. We expect to be frequently camping at -30°C, as well as having a high probability of encountering polar bears, crevasses and arctic storms during the expedition.

Through this expedition, we wish to promote the multi-disciplinary approach required in successful Arctic science.

Our team, young and energetic, has already demonstrated a strong research interest in the Arctic and is ready to share their passion with the general public. Presentations by the various team members, primarily during a month-long tour of Norwegian high schools following the expedition, focus on the enhanced climate change and related processes witnessed at high latitudes. During the actual expedition, real-time tracking of the expedition's progress and regular updates will generate interest among the target audience (11-18 year old high school students), the website further allowing them to find out further information about the Arctic and its challenges.

In essence, the project will raise awareness of polar issues among the target audience in Norway and elsewhere.

Active participation of students, such as through our co-operation with the New Zealand Youth Steering Committee, will be given priority. Our second major aim is synchronous to point 7 raised in the "Policy document for Norway's efforts during the International Polar Year 2007-2008" (dated 14th of December 2005), namely the "boosting academic recruitment" in the geosciences.