

Important intergenerational transmission of knowledge in promotion of well-being and cultural identity in Greenland

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ABSTRACT

The “Kinguaariit Inuunerissut” (KI) camps, meaning “generations in well-being” in Greenlandic, was a pilot initiative designed to enhance cultural identity and intergenerational connections through culturally relevant activities. The outcomes of the KI-camps have informed the development of a broader KI-concept aiming at tailoring and implementing elements from KI-camps into early childhood education services, after-school programmes, and schools. In this paper we present the results from three workshop held in January 2024 in Sisimiut, Greenland where 28 older participants and 28 professionals were asked about essential knowledge and skills to be passed down to younger generations. The focus was on songs, storytelling/myths, the spiritual world, animals, plants, skills in nature/home, and handicrafts. Results shows that older people and professionals agree on the importance of passing down cultural knowledge through all the different categories and support the need to integrate these elements into educational programmes to preserve cultural heritage and strengthen community cohesion. The findings will guide the integration of intergenerational activities into municipal institutions and contribute to culturally relevant health promotion strategies in Greenland.

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Introduction

Arctic communities have in a short time undergone significant social and cultural changes. The transition from a traditional hunter lifestyle with an economic basis in hunting and fishing to a more modern international labour society has impacted the populations' health and well-being [1-3]. In Greenland, the transition to a modern society has had diverse impacts on the population. Notably, it has led to a deterioration in the mental health of young people and the suicide rate has remained high since the 1970s with its prevalence, despite regional variations, being largely unchanged to this day [4].

Studies suggest that culture can be a protective factor, providing indigenous peoples with a sense of shared identity, engagement, and purpose in life [2,3,5-7]. Research among Inuit in Alaska has shown that today's youth face many of the same challenges as older generations, but they lack the cultural connection that has been a protective factor for the older generations [8]. For the younger generation, a relationship with the older generation can be a source of support and guidance on how to handle

difficult situations in life, while also providing role models for them to look up to and emulate [2]. Older people can serve as mentors or as supporters to increase youth adaptability by expanding young people's opportunities to manoeuvre when facing challenges. A study about cultural resilience and growing up in an Alaska Native community addresses how Iñupiat youth (Alaska Native) navigate challenges in life [8]. The study showed that positioning oneself as cultural, by having a meaningful claim to Iñupiaq culture, was a way to evoke a sense of strength and capability in youth. The study emphasises how everyday opportunities for passing down shared, traditional visions, knowledge and skills have diminished over the past three generations. Historically, older people – such as parents, uncles, aunts, and grandparents – played a key role in guiding Iñupiaq youth into adulthood. Today, many older Iñupiaq feel that they are not well prepared to support young people in becoming adults [9]. Generational communication gaps have emerged where grandparents speak primarily Iñupiaq and have lived subsistence lifestyles, while parents educated from distant boarding schools speak primarily English and engage in a wage-based economy. In contrast,

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young Inupiaq are educated locally and most speak English only, leading to differences in how culture is conceptualised by different age groups, and how these understandings shape their stories about overcoming hardship [3].

In Nunavut, Canada, The Eight *Ujarait*/Rocks Model was developed for youth mental health interventions based on Inuit terminology, philosophy, and societal values [10]. The model was implemented as a camp programme in 6 pilots across 5 communities from 2011 to 2013. Eight evidence-based modules were created based on the model, focusing on self-esteem, physical activity, stress and coping, positive peer relationships, mentorship, Inuit identity, mental health and well-being, and the effects of intergenerational trauma. Emphasis on mentorship between youth and Elders has been associated with improved school attendance and attitudes, reduced levels of substance abuse, positive social attitudes and relationships, and enhanced psychological well-being [11–13]. In Nunavut, community members including Elders provide mentorship by sharing their knowledge, skills, and experiences while also learning from the youth. The reciprocal mentorship allows both youth and Elders to learn from each other [10].

Early results of the implementation of the model indicate that the activities fostered physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual wellness, supporting a holistic perspective of wellness. Overall, the camp promoted team building among peers, a sense of unity within the group, and a connection to the broader community. Campers reported feeling happier, more cheerful, and energetic, and less sad after participation in the camp [10].

In Greenland, the transmission of cultural knowledge and skills from older people to younger generations through shared activities and storytelling has also always been a central part of Greenlandic culture. In contemporary Greenland, many people move significant distances for education and work, potentially leading to a loss of knowledge, culture, and skills transfer between generations [15]. The evidence for interventions and programmes targeting youth that emphasise cultural identity, nature skills, and local attachment is nearly non-existent in a Greenlandic research context, whereas it is increasing in North American literature [6]. Despite the implementation of numerous social and political initiatives focusing on the well-being of children and youth, there is almost no documentation of these efforts [6,16]. As modern society has developed a more mobile population challenges the transmission of knowledge between generations. Additionally, many children and young people grow up in disadvantaged homes where social issues prevent the family from

providing a functional environment for passing down knowledge, culture, and skills across generations [4]. In this context, close relationships with elders represent a significant untapped resource for children and youth, as many from the older generations possess substantial cultural knowledge that they can share [15].

A report on mental health and well-being among 15–34-year-olds in Greenland presents the results of the 2018 Greenland Population Survey, focusing on the impact of childhood experiences on mental health and well-being among young people, as well as the prevalence of protective and risk factors for their health [4]. In the report, strong communities and intergenerational relationships are some of the protective factors for mental health and well-being. Participants were asked about their relationships with older generations, the opportunity to observe and participate in traditional Greenlandic activities during their upbringing, and questions about community engagement. Many young people felt strongly connected to the older generations, particularly in settlements where 52% felt strongly connected to the elders in their community. About half of the young people reported having ample opportunities to observe and learn traditional Greenlandic activities during their upbringing, with no difference between towns and settlements. However, there was a statistical difference in those who went sailing or into nature weekly: 66% of the young people in settlements compared to 24% in Nuuk and 30% in other towns. [4,17]. The report indicates that traditional activities during childhood have a positive influence on psychological vulnerability later in life. Additionally, feeling connected to older generations positively impacts several parameters. The most significant positive correlation is observed between feeling connected to older generations and well-being later in life. Furthermore, this connection also has a positive effect on self-esteem and reduces the risk of mental illness later in life [4].

A study concerning subjective well-being and the importance of nature in Greenland [18] states that for many Greenlanders, nature is a source of both physical and psychological resources. Nature is perceived as a dual force: one dimension where nature provides psychological resources such as peace, energy, and healing and another where nature provides physical resources like food, while also fostering a social network through sharing. In the study, many interviewees ranked the importance of nature with a value of 10 out of 10, thus ranking nature higher than family. Associations between nature and well-being are also emphasised in the Kalaallit health and well-being model *Peqqissuserput*, meaning “our health” [19].

Peqqissuserput embodies elements central to the understanding of Kalaallit health, developed through qualitative and quantitative research as well as dialogue with citizens, decision-makers, and health professionals in Greenland. The term *peqqinneq* often translates to health, signifying a state of being in the right place, and thus represents a concept of balance. Grounded in a holistic view of health, it encompasses values such as humility, honour, strength, respect, and the acceptance of human powerlessness in the face of greater forces like *sila* (weather and one's sense and wits) and *pinn-gortitaq* (nature) [20]. While biology, genetics, and lifestyle influence physical health, connections to family, community, nature, culture, quality of life, local values and kalaalimerngit (Greenlandic food) are also recognised as vital for personal health and well-being. This holistic approach integrates the unity of body, mind, and spirit, all of which are reflected in *Peqqissuserput* [19,21]. In other health-promoting interventions in Arctic regions, the use of social and cultural determinants of health is also evident. For example, in substance abuse treatment among indigenous populations, including Native Americans, Alaska Natives, and Australian Aboriginals, a focus on cultural identity and historical heritage has proven effective [22,23]. Key elements contributing to recovery from problematic addiction include support from Elders, the reconstruction of individual cultural identity, community-driven approaches, and cultural traditions and healing methods [22]. In some communities, former alcohol dependents are highlighted as role models responsible for the survival of their culture [24]. Additionally, spirituality is seen as an important protective factor against relapse [25].

Based on data from an ongoing project in Qeqqata Kommunia in Greenland, this paper explores what older people and professionals from schools and kindergartens consider important knowledge to preserve and pass on to children and youth and what the expected impact and benefits of this knowledge have for children and youth. We will also discuss the way in which participants are involved in the project. We did not during the workshops, develop a template for implementation of early childhood education services, after-school programmes, and schools. Rather, the workshops provided valuable insights that will inform and guide the subsequent process of the development of the KI-concept.

Background

“Kinguariit Inuunerissut” is Greenlandic and can be translated to “generations in well-being”. Kinguariit Inuunerissut-camps (KI-camps) was a pilot project

inspired by the Eight Ujarait/Rocks Model aiming to expand the concept of the youth camp by including older people as participants to foster intergenerational exchanges. Elements of the model have inspired the development of KI-camps, particularly through land-based activities, fostering community connections, and building relationships.

The primary objective was to promote cultural identity and well-being in different generations through the facilitation of culturally relevant activities and thereby strengthening relations across generations and within local communities. The concept was specifically developed and adapted to Greenlandic conditions and history. From 2021 to 2023, five camps were held in the two Greenlandic municipalities Qeqqata Kommunia and Kommuneqarfik Sermersooq. The camps were grounded in Greenlandic culture and were initially planned as a one-week summer camp followed by activities in the autumn and a two-day closing camp in the subsequent winter. KI-camps were structured around four main focal points, operationalised through various specific activities during the summer and winter camps. The four focal points were: (1) Values and cultural identity; (2) Intergenerational cooperation; (3) Health, body, and soul; (4) Overnight stays in nature [26,27].

The experiences from KI-camps are now used to develop a broader KI-concept in collaboration between researchers and staff members from Qeqqata Kommunia (ibid.). The goal with KI-concept is to build on the positive outcomes from the KI-camps and to reach a broader audience of children, youth, and older people on a more regular basis than yearly camps for a few people. In some families, intergenerational relations and cultural and nature-based activities are a natural part of the family activities and dynamics. However, this is not necessarily true for all families. This concept is open for all children and older people in the community including those who do not have the same possibilities within their own families. The aim is to tailor and implement elements from KI-camps into early childhood education services, after-school programmes, and schools. As part of the concept, we explore different stakeholder's views of important knowledge transfer between generations and map which intergenerational activities already take place in the frames of municipal institutions, schools and events in the two towns and six settlements of the municipality. The development of the KI-concept is an important initial foundation for transforming health promotion efforts based on culturally relevant ways of working to health and well-being in Greenland. The approach focuses on strengths and values of citizens and local

communities rather than on strategies and programmes developed in entirely different contexts without the same cultural grounding [27].

Methodology

The underlying approach to the development of KI-concept is community based participatory research (CPPR) [28,29]. This means that it is crucial for the project that people from the communities and from the different groups of people involved in the project are part of shaping it on equal terms with the researchers involved. A co-design project conducted in Sisimiut in 2018 where older people, researchers, and municipal staff from three different municipal departments designed an outdoor area together showed that the participatory approach was rewarding for all groups of participants [30]. Older people as well as municipal participants emphasised the importance of creating together in an environment of mutual respect and acknowledgement of the different kinds of contributions to the project. The municipal staff pointed out that the engagement of the older participants was stronger and more enthusiastic than anticipated and the older participants felt proud and happy to be part of decision-making processes in their community (*ibid.*). While initiatives and practices developed in KI-concept might not turn out as tangible as an outdoor area, we are still inspired by the approach in co-design where one designs “with” partners rather than designing “for” users or receivers [31,32]. With this approach we perceive situated and experienced expertise as just as valuable and legitimate as professional expertise [33,34] and we acknowledge different kinds of individual contributions to the collective process [35].

As a starting point we wished to find out what different stakeholders consider valuable and important knowledge to pass on from older to younger generations of Greenlanders. To map this, we needed the perspectives of both professionals and older people from the community, and we invited both groups to participate in three different workshops. The goal of the workshops is for the older participants and professionals to explore values, knowledge and skills worth focusing on and how they can collaborate as the project progresses, and to identify ways to effectively match the older participants with institutions, where they can potentially be volunteers. This involved asking the professionals how this could be implemented in practice and what the format should be, such as a theme week or a subject-specific activity. The older participants were then asked which specific activities they would like to volunteer for, which age groups

they would like to engage with, and how often they would like to volunteer. The recruitment process of the participants was done by two municipal staff members working with prevention and health promotion (also co-authors on this article). The workshops lasted approximately 3 hours in total and included coffee breaks and lunch. The workshops were facilitated by a senior researcher and a research assistant from Center for Public Health in Greenland together with the two municipal staff members. The workshops were held in a conference room at a local hotel in Sisimiut that has a tradition of organising activities for community members. Participants did not receive any compensation for attending, apart from being provided with meals and lunch throughout the day. However, the professionals participated during their workday and were therefore paid while attending. Criteria for participation in the workshop for older people was self-identification as an older person and the ability to get to the venue on their own. The average age of the older participants in the workshop was 73 years, with the youngest being 52 and the oldest 85 years old. The majority of the older participants were retired but have previously worked in the following fields: factory work, caregiving, pedagogy, office work, craftsmanship, cleaning, carpentry, teaching, unskilled labour, nursing home care, fishing, and retail. While some of the professionals were at the same age as some of the older participants, they participated as a representative from the municipality.

In this article, we present and discuss the results from three workshops held in Sisimiut in January 2024 as part of the development of the KI-concept – one workshop was with older people and two workshops were with different groups of municipal staff. A total of 28 older people and 28 professionals from daycares, schools, after school programmes and the municipal administration participated in the workshops. Besides, we wanted to start a dialogue with stakeholders on ways to implement intergenerational activities in municipal institutions for children and youth. The professional participants were invited via their workplaces as municipal employees working directly with children and youth or working more broadly with public health. The older participants were invited to the workshop via an open invitation on public information boards in housing areas and to various associations for older people. Thus, there were no chronological age limit for this category of participants, but all have self-identified as “older”. All participants, with the exception of one professional and one older individual, identified as Inuit. There were two interpreters present, taking turns to interpret. Most of the participants spoke

Greenlandic, so the primary interpretation was from Greenlandic to Danish, rather than the other way around.

During the workshop, participants were asked: "What is important to teach children about Greenlandic culture?" They filled a form structured around the following categories: song, storytelling/myth, the spiritual world, animals, plants, skills in nature, skills in the home, handicrafts/crafts, and other relevant areas. The categories were decided on with inspiration from the abovementioned health models *peqqinneq* [20] and *Peqqisusserput* [19] but participants were free to interpret the categories in their own way. In *Peqqisusserput*, the different components that influence health are presented as a circle. One of these components is nature, which serves as the inspiration for the category's plants and skills in nature. Another example is the component body, mind and spirit, which has formed the category the spiritual world. Participants were asked to identify cultural activities of particular significance to them. Some participants wrote the names of specific songs, myths, plants etc. as we initially expected, while others wrote why the categories are important in Greenlandic culture. Aligned with our approach to the project and stakeholders, we consider both kinds of responses as valuable knowledge and data for the development of KI-concept. The workshop format allowed for a balanced mix of oral presentations, time to complete the forms, and group dialogue and sharing in plenary sessions. The workshop format allowed for adjustments along the way to ensure it suited each group of participants. This flexibility enabled a certain level of improvisation, accommodating the participants' needs, preferences, and interests.

Setting

Sisimiut has around 6,000 inhabitants [14] making it the second largest town in Greenland. It is considered a modern urban community (Qeqqata Kommunia), but nowhere is far away from the ocean and the mountains. This means that nature is always near, but not always easily accessible for people depending on others. The language spoken is Kalaallisut (Greenlandic) spoken by almost all inhabitants while Danish is spoken by some people of different ages and to different degrees. The written Kalaallisut was introduced by the Danish-German Samuel Kleinschmidt in the 19th century and today, it is the main language taught in schools (www.emu.dk, [36]). In the municipality, the everyday language is Kalaallisut, but staff in the administration speak Danish in collaboration with foreign partners as for instance researchers.

The municipality has a long history of collaborating with researchers regarding the health and well-being of various target groups. Thus, one of the authors have worked with older people, nursing homes, old people's associations etc. in Qeqqata Kommunia for almost a decade [26,30,37] while the other researcher has worked on community development programmes in the municipality for three years. Hence, while being outsiders, we have strong ties to the community and the local administration as well as parts of civil society in the town [38]; [39].

Ethical considerations

The project was approved by the ethical committee for health research in Greenland and the Research & Innovation Organisation at the University of Southern Denmark. The data consists of materials produced by individuals and groups during the workshops. The participants did not write any personal information besides their age on the materials. All parts of the workshops were translated simultaneously from Danish to Greenlandic or from Greenlandic to Danish so participants could easily choose their preferred language. When doing the workshop exercises, participants could write in their preferred language and subsequently all material in Greenlandic was translated to Danish.

Analysis process

The results section of this paper is a synthesis of the answers given in the forms described above and filled by the participants during the workshops. The forms were filled out individually by each participant. The presentation of the results is organised in accordance with the categories of the form. After presenting the results, we will discuss them in relation to themes that emerged through collaborative analysis conducted by the researchers [40,41]. Collaborative analysis refers to the processes in which there is joint focus and dialogue among two or more researchers regarding a shared body of data, to produce an agreed interpretation. The first analysis steps include individual analysis, comparison of results from individual analysis and a full team analysis [41]. Identified themes related to participants' perceptions of valuable and transmittable knowledge for children and youth and to the reflections regarding benefits and educational aims and outcomes of transmitting the mentioned kinds of knowledge.

Results

In this section, we present the results from the workshop according to the themes of the "knowledge form"

and according to answers from either professionals or older participants.

Song:

Older participants (22/28)

All older participants associated singing with something positive. In eight out of 22 responses, singing was linked to joy. Many older participants associated singing with both physical and mental health. Eight respondents connected singing with health. For instance, one participant mentioned that singing can help someone open up if they have been sad or feel “heavy” inside. Additionally, it was noted that singing is associated with Greenlandic culture, provides spiritual strength, should be used in schools to help children learn the language properly, and strengthens community and solidarity. Specifically, the song “Pavunga Qaqqamut”¹ was mentioned in three out of 22 responses.

Professionals (28/28)

The professionals also associated singing with something positive. They mentioned that it helps with memory, brings happiness, fosters unity, and is important for passing on traditions to preserve old songs. In six out of 28 responses, it was mentioned that knowing the national anthem is important. One professional argued that the national anthem allows Greenlanders to feel they have something in common: “*Nunarput utoqqarsuanngoravit (the national song) because this song speaks of connection and feelings for one’s country*”. Others noted that songs have a broader significance – they are mental and spiritual inputs, and singing practices courage, confidence, and the ability to “step forward”. One mentions: “*Emotions that cannot be spoken about can be expressed through singing*”. Seven out of 28 responses indicated that singing is also important for preserving the language. Several professionals mentioned that it helps with memory and can be a way of expressing oneself physically.

Storytelling/Myths

Older participants (23/28)

Many of the older participants emphasised the importance of passing down ancestral stories to children to ensure that this knowledge is not lost between generations. One respondent explained that telling myths and stories imparts knowledge of the ancestors’ way of life to children. Another participant mentioned that although they can no longer read, they use YouTube to listen to old stories. One mentions how stories can benefit the children in a positive way: “*Old stories that recount the old days (i.e. Qooqa and Anngannguujunnguaq). These stories can be used to encourage children to open up more*”. Kaassassuk² is the myth/story mentioned most frequently in the responses (four out of 23). Anngannguujunnguaq³ is mentioned in three out of 23 responses.

Professionals (24/28)

In almost all responses, the professionals emphasised the importance of passing down ancestral knowledge to the next generation. One describes: “*To know about the way of life, beliefs, and customs of our ancestors. To be aware of where one comes from*”. They described the stories and myths as vital to preserve because they contain important information that should be maintained for the future. The professionals explained that the stories and myths can include accounts of the ancestors’ lifestyles, beliefs, and customs, providing insight into how life was lived in the past. They can also address dangerous aspects of life that one should be aware of, life values, tales of “qivitoq”,⁴ child-rearing practices, and stories that help shape identity. Additionally, they can teach how to treat others, as exemplified by the myth of Kaassassuk.⁵

The Spiritual World

Older participants (18/28)

When the older participants expressed themselves about the spiritual world, opinions are divided. Some

¹The song “Pavunga Qaqqamut” is a traditional Greenlandic song about longing and a deep connection to nature, especially the mountains. It describes a journey into the mountains in search of strength, peace, and self-understanding.

²A myth about the orphan boy Kaassassuk, who is bullied in his settlement. When Kaassassuk receives supernatural powers from the Lord of Strength, he takes terrible revenge on his tormentors Rex, [43]. *Kaassassuk – den forældreløse*. Milik.

³A myth about a boy who was abducted and his father and a shaman sets out to rescue him Andersen, [44]. *Anngannguujuk – Drengen som blev bortført* (Vol. 2). Milik.

⁴A qivitoq was a person who deliberately left human society and went into the mountains, for example, due to shame, guilt, anger, or insult. It was imagined that over time, mountaineers would take on animal-like traits and supernatural abilities Rasmussen, [45]. *Myter og Sagn fra Grønland. Første samling*. Lindhardt og Ringhof.

⁵A traditional Greenlandic myth about a boy who grows up in poverty and is mistreated by his community. The name *Kaassassuk* means “the one with small hands”, referring to the boy’s perceived weakness, which the community looks down upon.

participants related the category to Christianity while others related the category to the Inuit spiritual world. In five out of 18 responses, the spiritual world is described as something to be feared, disliked, or difficult to explain, such as *"I like to listen to it, but I don't want to experience it"*, *"I don't like it"*, *"I find it difficult to explain the spiritual"*, and *"It's not for me."* In the remaining 13 responses, the older participants described the spiritual world more positively, for example *"The spiritual is a part of Greenlanders' lives"*, *"We have learned this from our ancestors (church attendance on holidays)"*, and *"I believe in the spiritual."*

Professionals (25/28)

In the professionals' responses it is also clear that the spiritual world is important for several reasons. They described the spiritual world as something that is conveyed through stories and myths and is associated with Inuit belief, such as *"It is important to understand the foundation of our Inuit beliefs, because it is also crucial for our identity, as we have a way of life in nature with a spiritual strength"* and *"To know something about the way of life, beliefs, and customs of our ancestors. To understand where one comes from"*. In four out of 25 responses, shamanism is mentioned (a shaman is a person, who acts as an intermediary between humans and the spirit world). For example, *"It is important for the children to gain knowledge and learning about shamanism and about drum dance songs from the old days, as it is crucial that these traditions do not disappear"*. Several times, the spiritual world is also connected with life and death, for example *"Our ancestors' beliefs, for example, when we are born, there are amulets, and where we go when we die"* and *"Because it is important to maintain spirituality in daily life, which for example include shamans and the cycle of life"*. Several professionals say that one can draw spiritual strength from nature, such as *"we have a way of life in nature with spiritual strength"*.

Animals

Older participants (23/28)

Almost all the older participants described that they like animals. Most of them say they like animals because they have good memories of hunting, for example *"It is refreshing. I like animals because I participate in hunting"* and *"I have enjoyed reindeer hunting. I started hunting reindeer when I was 12 years old and did not stop until I was 72"*. Other mentioned that they like animals and that it is important to know about all the different

animals that exist in the country and to know something about healthy food. Animals mentioned in the responses include dogs, hares, ptarmigans, reindeer, musk oxen, fish, seals, cod, foxes, and more.

Professionals (24/28)

In 23 out of 24 of the professionals' responses, it is mentioned that it is important for children to gain knowledge about all the animals living in Greenland, for example *"It is good to learn about the animals in our country, what they eat, and where they live, both on land and at sea"* and *"When they have caught something, they need to know what it is because they must be able to identify and explain it"*. Additionally, it is said that animals are an important part of Greenlanders' lives, and therefore, children should learn what the animals eat, how to prepare and cook their meat, and what can be made from the animal remains after eating the meat – decorations and clothing items are mentioned, for example. One participant mentioned that reindeer sinew can be used for sewing and general clothing production. Several also mentioned that children should know about sustainable animal populations, better resource utilisation, and that it is important not to engage in "predatory hunting". Other things mentioned is that children should learn about animals including where certain animals can be hunted, and when they can be hunted.

Plants

Older participants (18/28)

When the older participants wrote about plants, they described that they like plants – both indoors and outdoors. They emphasised the importance of teaching children about the various plants in the Greenlandic nature, including how they can be used by humans and what they can be used for. They also described it as important to pass on knowledge to children about which plants are potentially poisonous and which plants can be beneficially used as medicine. The plants mentioned include rhododendron groenlandicum, roses, juniper, fireweed, bellflower, heather, reindeer lichen, and dwarf birch. In five responses, juniper is mentioned, and in four responses, rhododendron groenlandicum is mentioned.

Professionals (25/28)

In the professionals' responses about plants, it is also clear that they find it important to pass on knowledge

about plants to children. Like the older participants', the majority of professionals emphasised that children should learn which plants can be used for cooking, which are poisonous, and which can be used as medicine. One professional participant mentioned that many different plants are significant to human life because they influence health, happiness, and curiosity. Another professional wrote that children should learn where different plants can be found at specific times of the year and that they should also learn to care for and respect nature. In six out of 25 responses, rhododendron groenlandicum is mentioned. Additionally, the following plants are mentioned: Greenlandic thyme, bellflower, dwarf birch, heather, and juniper.

Skills in nature

Older participants (25/28)

Conveying knowledge about survival skills in nature was important to the older participants. This includes reindeer hunting, rifle hunting, learning to dry fish and meat, gathering Greenlandic food items for different seasons, lighting a stove in a cabin, hiking in the mountains, berry picking, boating, dog sledding, and more. One older participant wrote that nature is an integral part of family life. Another mentioned that one must be familiar with many aspects of nature and skills for surviving as nature can be harsh. A third participant mentioned that he/she still navigates nature – both on land and at sea – and will continue to do so until he/she are physically unable. In five out of 25 responses, gathering Greenlandic food items in nature is cited as an important skill. In four out of 25 responses, hunting is mentioned as a crucial skill children should learn.

Professionals (25/28)

The professionals also believe it is important to teach children skills related to nature. The following skills are mentioned by the professionals: hiking in the mountains, gathering plants, hunting, lighting a stove in a cabin, understanding the landscape (e.g. knowledge of snow conditions in the mountains during winter), having a sense of direction, and boating. In addition to these skills, it is also noted that self-sufficiency, processing a caught animal, and gaining a deeper understanding of cultural identity are benefits of utilising the surrounding nature. In two responses, nature is mentioned as a place where one can train motor skills and mobility, thereby improving daily life. One professional emphasised the importance of children experiencing the potential dangers of nature, as it builds

human resilience. Another professional highlighted that the characteristics of nature vary significantly from place to place – wind, soil fertility, high and low mountains, cold and heat. This professional further explained that children must learn that humans must adapt to nature, not the other way around. Several professionals described the psychological benefits of spending time in nature. One stated that humans cannot do without nature, as our lives are interconnected with – it is where we draw strength and inspiration, and where communal activities take place. Another professional mentioned that being in nature can boost self-confidence, inspire new ideas, and foster independence.

Skills at home

Older participants (20/28)

The older participants consistently emphasised the significance of maintaining a tidy and clean home. In nine of the responses, cleaning and organising are identified as essential skills to teach children, while cooking is highlighted in five responses. Many respondents value a clean, orderly, and cosy home. Besides finding it important for children and youth to learn keeping a home proper, many of the older participants enjoy activities related to this goal. One older participant underscored the necessity of caring for one's home and the critical importance of instilling skills in cleaning, organising, and cooking.

Professionals (23/28)

Among the professionals, the importance of a clean and orderly home is acknowledged, though it is not as prominently emphasised as in the responses from the older participants. Only four professionals mention cleaning and organising as crucial skills to impart to children. In contrast, 16 responses focus on intangible values within the home, such as family cohesion, unity, identity formation, respect, and shared responsibility. It is evident that all family members should take responsibility for the home and that everyone should be obligated to contribute as much as possible. One professional describes the home as a foundational element that can significantly influence a child's success, for instance, at the onset of their schooling. Another professional views the home as fundamental for the development of children's identities. Several responses also stressed the importance of collaboration with parents and respecting grandparents.

Handicrafts/crafts

Older participants (21/28)

All responses from the older participants indicated that handicrafts hold great value for them. In six responses, knitting was mentioned as an important craft to teach children. Additionally, sewing, crocheting, leatherwork, embroidery, and beadwork were mentioned. One older participant emphasised the importance of adults encouraging children to learn handicrafts and supporting their interests. Another participant mentioned that one can either use their imagination or follow patterns when learning a craft.

Professionals (24/28)

The professionals also underscored the importance of teaching handicrafts to children. In four responses handicrafts were described as crucial for preserving Greenlandic traditions with several mentioning the national costume as important to learn about. Specific skills mentioned include knitting, beadwork, leatherwork, drawing, making Christmas cards, creating items from recycled materials, and woodworking. Several professionals highlighted the physical benefits of engaging in handicrafts. One noted that practicing a craft impacts the body and stimulates thought processes, asserting that it is more beneficial than mere conversation. Another participant mentioned that handicrafts contribute to brain development and can enhance personal growth and cultural identity. A third professional described handicrafts as a way to avoid boredom in daily life.

Other relevant areas

To make room for responses regarding other areas than the predefined categories, the form had room for participants to write about other areas they might find important.

Older participants (11/28)

Among these, community involvement, family cohesion, language, and the Greenlandic way of life were mentioned. One older participant mentioned the importance of learning to be among other people and seeing friends occasionally.

Professionals (11/28)

In the professionals' responses, language is also emphasised as crucial to pass on to children. Additionally,

Greenlandic games, spending time with older people, traditions, and rituals are mentioned.

An overview of the descriptions of each category by older participants and professionals is listed in [Table 1](#).

Discussion

In the previously mentioned study on mental health and well-being among 15–34-year-olds in Greenland [4], it is evident that children and young people who have experienced strong communities and intergenerational relationships during their upbringing are better protected in terms of mental health and well-being later in life. More than half of the respondents of the study living in settlements reported feeling strongly connected to older people in their community. The data presented here show that professionals working with children and youth in different ways acknowledge the benefits of children and youth spending time with and learning from older people. The engagement of older participants in the workshops indicate that they also find it important to focus on intergenerational meetings and knowledge transmission. The overall involvement and enthusiasm during the workshops reveal that the topic is relevant and that both older people and professionals have many ideas, values and reflections regarding what is important for children and young people to learn about Greenlandic culture, knowledge, traditions, and ways of life.

In the workshops, the expectation was for the participants to specify, within each category, which songs, myths/stories, etc., they deemed important to pass on to children. Rather than writing specific items for each category in the form, the participants utilised the categories in a broader sense with responses focusing more on why the topic itself is important for children to learn about or how they can benefit from specific activities. While the responses did not align with our expectations before the workshop, they provided valuable insights into why the older people and professionals believe it is important to educate children and young people about certain categories. In a few instances, respondents provided specific examples. For instance, in the category of storytelling/myths, an older participant wrote: *“Old stories that recount the old days (i.e. Qooqa and Anngannguujunnguaq). These stories can be used to encourage children to open up more”*. In this response, the older participant mentions two specific stories and explains why they find these stories important for children to know. In the song category a professional wrote: *“Nunarput utoqqarsuanngoravit (the national song) because this song speaks of connection and feelings*

Table 1. Overview of descriptions of each category by older participants and professionals.

Category	Descriptions	
	Older participants	Professionals
Song:	Something positive, joy, physical and mental health, can help someone to open up if they are sad or feel “heavy” inside, spiritual strength, learn the language, strengthens community and solidarity.	Something positive, helps with memory, happiness, unity, passing on traditions to preserve old songs, national anthem, mental and spiritual inputs, courage, confidence, ability to “step forward”, preserving the language.
Storytelling/ myths:	Ensure this knowledge, use YouTube to listen to old stories, encourage children to open up more.	Passing down ancestral knowledge, historical information, insight into how life was lived in the past, address dangerous aspects of life that one should be aware of, life values, tales of qivitoq (mountaineers), child-rearing practices, and stories that help shape identity, how to treat others.
The spiritual world:	Christianity, Inuit spiritual world, feared, disliked, or difficult to explain, Greenlandic belief.	Inuit belief, identity, shamanism, drum dance, life and death, help people talk more openly about what happens when we die, spiritual strength from nature.
Animals:	Good memories with hunting, important to know about different animals that exist in the country, healthy food.	Knowledge about all the animals that live in the country, important part of Greenlanders’ lives, sustainable animal populations, resource utilization.
Plants:	Liked plants – both indoors and outdoors, teaching children about various plants, how they can be used, which plants are potentially poisonous, plants used as medicine.	Knowledge about plants, cooking, poisonous, medicine, health, happiness, and curiosity, specific times of the year, to care for and respect nature.
Skills in nature:	Survival skills, reindeer hunting, rifle hunting, learning to dry fish and meat, gathering food, lighting a stove in a cabin, hiking, berry picking, boating, dog sledding, family life.	Hiking, gathering plants, hunting, lighting a stove in a cabin, understanding the landscape, boating, self-sufficiency, cultural identity, motor skills, mobility, improving daily life, experiencing the potential dangers of nature, humans must adapt to nature, psychological benefits, cannot do without nature, our lives are interconnected, strength, inspiration, communal activities, boost self-confidence, inspire new ideas, independence.
Skills at home:	Tidy and clean home, organizing, cooking, cozy home, brings joy, caring for one’s home.	Clean and orderly home, cleaning and organizing, family cohesion, unity, identity formation, respect, shared responsibility, collaboration with parents and respecting grandparents.
Handcrafts/ crafts:	Knitting, sewing, crocheting, leatherwork, embroidery, beadwork, imagination.	Preserving Greenlandic traditions, national costume, knitting, beadwork, leatherwork, drawing, making christmas cards, creating items from recycled materials, woodworking, physical benefits, impacts the body and stimulates thought processes, more beneficial than mere conversation, brain development, personal growth, cultural identity, avoid boredom in daily life.
Other relevant areas:	Community involvement, family cohesion, language Greenlandic way of life, learning to be among other people, seeing friends occasionally.	Greenlandic games, spending time with older people, traditions, language, rituals.

for one’s country”. Both examples show how some participants in their responses demonstrated the connection between specific cultural knowledge, personal development, identity, and community. This understanding would not have emerged if the responses had been restricted to lists of songs, plants etc. as expected. In this way the participants answers enriched the data material from the workshops as well as tested if the workshop format was in fact as involving as it was meant to be [32]. The facilitation was adjusted continuously during the workshops to fit the needs and priorities of the participants. Although the project is mainly created in collaboration between the municipality and researchers, it is of utmost importance that it is relevant for individuals in the community if we wish them to engage in it.

Even though older participants and professionals mentioned many of the same themes in their responses, there is a noticeable difference in the words they used, the length of their sentences, and the underlying reasons they provided for why they believe certain knowledge is important for children

and youth. Compared to professionals, the older participants’ responses are generally more concise, with shorter sentences or even single words. Their statements are brief and direct, often without detailed explanations or arguments. Examples are statements such as: “Because it brings me joy”, “It makes people happy”, “I find it difficult to explain spirituality”, and “They need to learn about nature”. In contrast, the professionals’ responses tend to be longer, with more extended sentences and a didactic perspective supporting their reasoning for why certain knowledge is important. For instance, one professional states: “It is important to understand the basis of our beliefs as Inuit. This is crucial for our identity because we have a way of life in nature and a spiritual strength”.

Since the categories are inspired by the Kalaallit Health Model [19] mentioned earlier, it is no surprise that the responses correspond with categories in the model. However, the more elaborated responses can help us understand how these categories might look when implemented in people’s everyday lives in kindergartens, in schools, or when older people spend time with younger

generations. In practice the categories are connected. Thus, a child might learn about the connection between human, nature, and animals from a song or a myth. When being in nature, the child will gain bodily experiences of these things and at the same time it is important to learn skills related to surviving and taking care of oneself as well as of the surroundings and other species. These experiences and connections are also fore fronted in the previously mentioned study of the importance of nature for most Greenlanders' subjective well-being [18]. The results of the present study can also be seen as an illustration of what can be covered by the three dimensions in the balance-oriented Inuit health concept *peqqinneq* [20]. The combination of knowledge about animals and plants, specific skills in the home and in nature, and songs, myths and handicrafts connect individual and collective identity to practical life skills, and the spiritual connection between everything present in the world as well as past, present and future. Both older participants and professionals mention that songs among other things are good for practicing and preserving Greenlandic language. A person's first language is important for understanding and being able to express one's experiences, opinions and emotions. Greenlandic is developed in a specific context and, thus, words, structure, ways of talking and idioms together reflect this context as well as the individual language user [42]. In this way language is connected to both cultural, individual and collective identity as well as to well-being and mental health which is why it is also an element of *Peqqissuserput* [19]. The emphasis on family, relationships, and community are also elements that are reflected both in the participants' responses and in the Kalaallit Health Model. Being part of a community in one way or another holds significant importance, which is also observed in other health-promoting interventions in the Arctic. As previously mentioned, social and cultural determinants, such as family, relations and community are often integral to substance abuse treatment among indigenous populations [22,23]. The responses from the professionals participating in the workshops show that pedagogical and didactic reflections about the use of nature and culture in the work with children and youth in municipal institutions are already present. They do perceive the suggested categories to be relevant when describing what is important for Greenlandic children and youth to learn about. There seems to be agreement between the older participants and the professionals that such knowledge can successfully be transmitted from older to younger generations and that it is a good idea to invite older people from the community into the municipal institutions for intergenerational activities. Such activities will most likely be planned and facilitated by professionals while older people will most likely focus on the activity itself rather than on didactics.

As opportunities for passing on knowledge and skills from older generations to younger ones seem to have diminished over time [3,9], the KI-concept offers a way to establish intergenerational relations and meetings between young and old, based on relevant, cultural, and meaningful activities. By establishing and facilitating the framework for the transmission of important knowledge to children and young people, the project can offer these important connections to children and older people in the municipality even if they do not have such opportunities in their homes or their own families. While the concept cannot protect children from adverse childhood experiences, it can contribute with some experiences identified as protective factors [4]. One barrier for having the fullest benefit of the concept might be challenges with engaging enough older people as volunteers in the project. While 16 out of 28 older participants indicated an interest in being a volunteer, several of the others said during the workshops, that they were too busy in their own families to be volunteers in kindergartens and schools. However, being aware of the importance of intergenerational relations and cultural and nature-based activities is still a benefit within their families.

The workshop as a format for exploring perception of important knowledge

The number of participants indicates that both older people and professionals working with children and youth find it important to contribute to an exploration of important knowledge to pass on from older to younger generations. Especially surprising was the number of older participants who turned out to be three times as many as we expected. The predefined forms and other exercises conducted during the workshops made sure that the topic and the purpose of the workshops were clear. It also made it possible to standardise the workshops and have comparable outputs from all three workshops. The predefined categories facilitated reflections and made it easy to answer even when one had only little to say. Simultaneously, the workshop format allowed for immediate adjustments along the way, when it turned out that participants followed another line of thought than we had anticipated. There was room for individual reflection, sharing one's thoughts in plenum, listening to each other as well as discussing with other participants. Moreover, the workshop format allowed all participants to express themselves directly in plenary sessions rather than writing their responses on paper. Several participants took advantage of this opportunity, which led to various topics being brought up for discussion and debate.

This format provided deeper insights compared to only written responses, as it allowed for the elaboration of answers and the possibility of participants questioning each other. The participation and engagement of the older participants demonstrated their interest in being involved in matters affecting their local community. This corresponds with experiences from another participatory project in Greenland using workshops as the most important format of engaging older people [30]. The KI-concept benefits from the voluntary engagement of the older participants as it shows their genuine willingness to participate and their perception of the concept as a meaningful use of their time.

Conclusion

This paper aimed to elucidate the types of knowledge and skills that older people and professionals consider valuable and essential to transmit from older to younger generations of Greenlanders. Participants were specifically asked, “What is important to teach children about Greenlandic culture?” Their responses were categorised into the area’s song, storytelling/myth, the spiritual world, animals, plants, skills in nature, skills at home, handicrafts/crafts, and other relevant domains. The results illustrate a strong consensus among older participants and professionals on the importance of preserving and passing on various aspects of Greenlandic cultural knowledge to children and youth. The results are a crucial element in the ongoing development and implementation of the KI-concept, providing a vital foundation for the project’s future. To ensure the project’s sustainability, it is highly valuable to gather the perspectives of both older people and professionals regarding what they consider important for children to learn, as they are the driving forces in the implementation of the concept. Consequently, it is imperative that future project activities are based on the insights from older people and professionals rather than solely from researchers.

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