

– ELLESMERE ISLAND –

The Environment & the Future of the Arctic

The New Land Expedition will engage students and the general audience in Norway and the United States about the future of the Arctic.

Since Otto Sverdrup's discovery of western Ellesmere Island and the Sverdrup Islands some 110 years ago this region has by in large remained the great wilderness that the original explorers experienced. New Land Expedition 2013 will take its audience through close encounters the wild animals of the north, Arctic history, the daily challenges of an expedition and the fact that, **Ellesmere Island, like the rest of the Arctic, now faces an uncertain future due to climate change and resource exploitation.**

New Land outreach will create awareness about:

- The changing environmental characteristics of the Arctic
- The experience of traveling through untouched land
- Why the Arctic important to other places in the world

Changes in the Arctic:

- The past six years (2005-2010) have been the warmest period ever recorded in the Arctic.
- The Arctic Ocean is projected to become nearly ice-free in summer within this century, likely within the next thirty years.
- The area of Arctic Ocean? sea ice persisting in summer has been at or near record low levels every year since 2001. It is now about one third smaller than the average sea-ice cover from 1979 to 2000.
- New observations reveal that average sea-ice thickness is decreasing and the sea-ice cover is now dominated by younger, thinner ice.

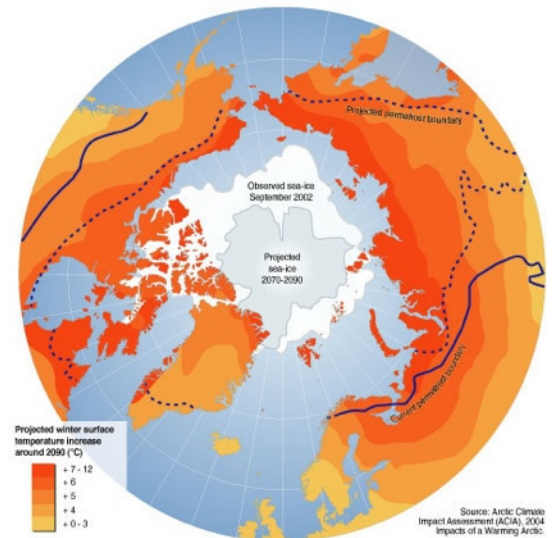
These changes in the arctic climate create new opportunities for the shipping industry and fossil fuel extraction. Industry estimates that 3 trillion kubic feet of oil and gas exist in the in the Sverdrup Island region.

Oil and gas exploration is already underway throughout the Arctic – including projects in Baffin Bay (Canada), Beufort Sea (U.S.), Barents Sea (Russia and Norway), and near Jan Mayen Island (Norway).

- U.S. Geological Survey estimates that as much as one quarter of the remaining oil and gas reserves in the world is in the Arctic.
- The world's arctic nations have over the last years increased their military and civilian presence in the Arctic.
- The shipping route through the Northeast Passage has formally opened up.

What we as northern nations decide to do in the Arctic over the next decades will determine the future of this unique territory. With our partners we will develop a framework for interaction with schools in both Norway and the United States.

New Land Expedition Education Outreach Partners:



"How the world deals with its remaining wildernesses will be a crucial test of our civilization's stewardship of the planet in the twenty first century. Will we allow a free-for-all in the polar regions of our planet or can we work together to protect, share and manage these areas responsibly?"
– Joan Walley, British MP



Tobias Thorleifsson is one of Norway's busiest environmental speakers.



Ellesmere Island is sometimes called Musk Ox Land.