



Polar Educators International 5th Global Conference - PEI 2021: Hofn, Iceland, is postponed due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

PEI regrets that it is unable to provide its biennial conference in Hofn, Iceland in March 2021 as planned due to the continuing COVID-19 pandemic and the guidance issued by the World Health Organisation (WHO) to prevent the spread of the virus.

PEI is an international network of educators and is aware that nations around the world are taking actions to ensure the health and safety of their peoples during the pandemic, often with limited resources to do so. Additionally, our members are responding by providing safe learning environments and support for their students while managing their own health and well being. PEI recognises the extraordinary efforts involved in doing this and wishes them well in their endeavours.

PEI is also aware that travelling abroad to attend an international conference could pose many difficulties to participants and understands that its members often make a personal financial investment in order to attend. PEI realises it would be unwise to book flights in the current climate of uncertainty.

The postponement of similar major events and conferences linked to Arctic and Antarctic research and PEI activities was also a significant factor in the decision.

For these reasons we have decided to postpone the Iceland conference and hope to reorganise the event once the current pandemic is under control and international travel resumes.

As it became clear that the COVID-19 pandemic was impacting different nations in different ways, PEI began a consultative process of reviewing its plans for an in-person international conference in March 2021. The final decision to postpone the conference was made by PEI Executive Committee, following discussions with the conference organisers, conference planning group and PEI International Council.

PEI did not take this decision lightly, as the conference has proven to be a cornerstone of the PEI network. Previous participants have consistently reported the value of meeting and working alongside their professional colleagues, face-to-face. Members are united by their commitment to the polar regions and inspired by polar research themes. The personal friendships and professional collaborations which connect and inspire polar educators to develop professionally

begin and strengthen at this biennial event. Conferences have also provided new opportunities to connect local educators and researchers, and for national polar education networks to grow. PEI is committed to maintaining this essential event.

PEI deeply regrets interrupting the regular biennial meetings, and has carefully considered the consequences of this decision. PEI waited until now to make an announcement, in the hope that the pandemic situation could be resolved in a relatively short time, but that is not the case. In the meantime PEI has continued to plan the Iceland conference and has created an innovative and exciting programme for participants, taking full advantage of the exceptional opportunities that Iceland offers polar educators. PEI is particularly honoured that an Arctic country will host the event.

As one of the network's core principles is inclusivity and it strives to achieve this at every conference, PEI considered delivering the conference solely online. While this could offer more opportunities to participate it would be difficult to recreate the key workshop elements that are so important to our network. Additionally, members wish to preserve the valuable in-person opportunities to understand more about the culture, geography, science and education of Iceland.

In the build-up to the rescheduled conference, PEI will initiate a number of inspiring online opportunities to build excitement and encourage future participation. Details will be announced via the PEI website.

In the meantime, PEI will continue to monitor the WHO guidance regarding the pandemic, in the hope of rescheduling the Polar Educators International 5th Global Conference - PEI: Hofn, Iceland when it is safe to do so.

We wish polar educators worldwide good health in their working environments and look forward to greeting them online and in person in Iceland.

This statement was issued by PEI Executive Committee, 6 September 2020