

TORONTO MODEL UNITED NATIONS II

**UNHRC**

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# Director's Letter

Hello Delegates,

My name is Hanz Po and this year I will be one of the directors of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) at this year's iteration of TMUN. Along with my co-director Jorin Liu and my chairs Emily Chen and Jordin James, I would like to extend a warm welcome to all of you who will be joining us at the **Sheraton Centre Toronto Hotel**. With intelligent and insightful delegates from around the world joining us, it is without a doubt going to be an incredible weekend, for both delegates new to Model UN and those with experience.

This year, we will be discussing two topics as part of the UNHRC. The first one is regarding a new and emerging field with many unanswered questions awaiting discussion; artificial intelligence. The committee will have to explore the benefits and risks of artificial intelligence, how they should be balanced, and what steps we should take to mitigate the risks while maximizing the benefits. Our second topic revolves around mining in the Arctic. With technologies like fracking threatening ecosystems in the Arctic while also yielding significant economic benefits, it is an important topic with many perspectives to explore.

On a personal note, Model UN has played an incredibly positive role in my life. It has allowed me to practice skills in public speaking and research, while also educating me on various global issues that are occurring in the world. It has also allowed me to build lifelong friendships and have experiences that would be hard to find elsewhere. I hope that TMUN this year will provide you with the same experience, whether it is helping you see a perspective you had not considered before, meeting new people, or building your confidence when speaking in front of an audience.

I look forward to seeing all of you on **March 22, 2024**, and wish you luck in writing your position papers.

Hanz Po

# Committee Description

The United Nations Human Rights Council, also known as the UNHRC, was established by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 2006 and is dedicated to protecting human rights around the world, addressing violations of human rights, and establishing recommendations on how to resolve them. Comprising member states committed to upholding the principles established in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the UNHRC serves as a platform for open dialogue, critical discourse, and collaborative action on pressing human rights issues.

## Topic A - Responsible Use of Artificial Intelligence

### Overview

In an era of rapid technological advancement, the first topic of the UNHRC aims to address the ethical and human rights concerns revolving around Artificial Intelligence (AI). Delegates will develop ethical frameworks to ensure transparency and accountability in AI systems and address the impact on human rights, privacy, and labor. With this rapidly developing field, it is important to create international guidelines that foster the responsible development and deployment of AI technologies, promoting fairness, transparency, and the protection of fundamental rights while harnessing AI's potential for positive change on a global scale.

### Timeline

Despite the rapid adoption and widespread popularity of ChatGPT in December of 2022, there has been a long history of development that led to the current artificial intelligence landscape.

### Early Development

Humans have hypothesized the possibility of a machine that exhibits human-like intelligence for a long time. In the 1940s, English mathematician and computer scientist Alan Turing became the founding father of modern computing, demonstrating that a computer was a “universal machine”, capable of doing what it was programmed to do. In 1950, he would go on to write a now infamous article titled, “Computing Machinery and Intelligence”, in which he proposed a “game of imitation”, a scenario in which a human observer attempts to identify if they are communicating with a human or a machine. Since then, AI systems have grown increasingly more complex and have moved closer to achieving the objective of passing the imitation game. Other pioneers such as John McCarthy solidified the field, coining the term “artificial intelligence” in the mid-1950s, which he defined as “the construction of computer programs that engage in tasks that are currently more satisfactorily performed by human beings because they

require high-level mental processes such as perceptual learning, memory organization, and critical reasoning".<sup>12</sup>

Another pioneer of artificial intelligence came in the form of one of the first chatbots, known as Eliza, developed by Joseph Weizenbaum in the 1960s. It was a computer program that attempted to act similarly to a therapist and was capable of simulating human conversation to a limited degree. It was designed to mimic the role of a psychologist by taking the user's input and returning a plausible output. When Weizenbaum's secretary used Eliza, she asked Weizenbaum to leave the room, as she wanted to divulge personal and emotionally charged thoughts with Eliza. This raised interesting ethical considerations regarding how computers should be allowed to have an impact on human emotions and thoughts, even at such an early stage of development.<sup>3</sup>

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Welcome to
          EEEEE LL    IIII  ZZZZZZ  AAAAA
          EE    LL    II    ZZ    AA  AA
          EEEEE LL    II    ZZZ    AAAAAA
          EE    LL    II    ZZ    AA  AA
          EEEEE LLLLLL IIII ZZZZZZ  AA  AA

Eliza is a mock Rogerian psychotherapist.
The original program was described by Joseph Weizenbaum in 1966.
This implementation by Norbert Landsteiner 2005.

ELIZA: Is something troubling you ?
YOU:   Men are all alike.
ELIZA: What is the connection, do you suppose ?
YOU:   They're always bugging us about something or other.
ELIZA: Can you think of a specific example ?
YOU:   Well, my boyfriend made me come here.
ELIZA: Is it important to you that your boyfriend made you come here ?
YOU:   He says I'm depressed much of the time.
ELIZA: I am sorry to hear that you are depressed.
YOU:   It's true. I am unhappy.
ELIZA: Can you explain what made you unhappy ?
YOU:
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## The Internet Age

Due to the development and widespread proliferation of the Internet, companies were provided with the infrastructure necessary to collect, process, and share large amounts of data. This accumulation of data provided companies with the ability to use increasingly sophisticated AI algorithms and provided breakthroughs in fields such as natural language processing (NLP), computer vision, and machine learning. Social media sites such as Instagram utilize machine learning to better predict user behavior and suggest content that is more relevant to the user,

<sup>1</sup> <https://sitn.hms.harvard.edu/flash/2017/history-artificial-intelligence/>

<sup>2</sup> [plato.stanford.edu/entries/turing-test/](https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/turing-test/)

<sup>3</sup>

[www.theguardian.com/technology/2023/jul/25/joseph-weizenbaum-inventor-eliza-chatbot-turned-against-artificial-intelligence-ai](https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2023/jul/25/joseph-weizenbaum-inventor-eliza-chatbot-turned-against-artificial-intelligence-ai)

based on metrics such as their interest in certain topics, recency of their activity, and their relationship with other people.<sup>4</sup>

Despite the benefits of collecting large amounts of data for the training of machine learning models, there are also a plethora of privacy concerns that have arisen. Large tech corporations, leveraging the internet's capabilities, have amassed colossal amounts of user data. This data has fueled the development of AI-driven services and products, but it has also raised substantial ethical questions regarding the safeguarding of individual privacy. One notable instance exemplifying these concerns was the Facebook-Cambridge Analytica scandal. In 2018, it was revealed that the personal data of millions of Facebook users had been harvested without their explicit consent for political profiling and targeting. This event underscored the importance of increased regulation in artificial intelligence, including stringent data protection measures and transparency in data handling practices, to mitigate the potential misuse of machine learning technologies for unethical purposes. The 21st-century advancements in technology, intertwined with the expansion of the internet, have highlighted the critical necessity of balancing technological progress with ethical considerations in the responsible deployment of AI systems.<sup>5</sup>

## GPT and Beyond

The late 2010s and early 2020s marked the rapid development of generative AI, making it more accessible to the average person than ever. This accessibility, while revolutionary in many ways, also brought to the forefront a series of ethical and societal concerns. As we delve deeper into the responsible deployment of AI systems, it is crucial to understand the broader context in which these technologies are evolving.

One of the defining features of generative AI, such as Generative Pre-trained Transformer, or GPT, is its ability to generate human-like text and content autonomously. This has been leveraged across various sectors, from natural language processing in customer service chatbots to content creation for marketing and media. Diffusion-based machine learning models, such as Stable Diffusion, are also capable of generating content in the form of images. While incredibly useful for a wide range of applications, it also introduces ethical considerations concerning its use.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> <https://techcrunch.com/2018/06/01/how-instagram-feed-works/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.wired.com/story/cambridge-analytica-facebook-privacy-awakening/>

<sup>6</sup> [hbr.org/2022/04/the-power-of-natural-language-processing](https://hbr.org/2022/04/the-power-of-natural-language-processing)



Generative AI models, especially large language models, are often trained on data sourced from the internet. As such, they may exhibit biases that reflect the biases of human-generated content posted on the internet. This phenomenon underscores the interconnected relationship between AI and the digital landscape it learns from. The internet, while a vast repository of knowledge and information, is also a space where diverse perspectives, opinions, and beliefs collide. The biases present in AI models can manifest in various ways, from subtle gender, racial, or cultural biases in the generated text to more overt forms of misinformation and hate speech. For example, if a model is predominantly exposed to biased or extremist viewpoints online, it might inadvertently produce content that perpetuates those biases, even if unintentional.

## Past Actions

Governments and international organizations have begun to take steps to ensure that AI is used responsibly. One example of this is the Government of Canada, which has begun taking steps to outline regulations and best practices that ensure generative AI is used ethically, and the data collected for AI does not violate privacy rights. They have also introduced a Directive on Automated Decision-Making, which ensures that all federal institutions comply with a set of standards when using generative AI. <sup>7</sup>

## Ongoing Actions

Due to the rapidly developing nature of artificial intelligence, there is not yet a universal framework of guidelines upon which organizations developing such technologies are required to follow. However, companies such as OpenAI have pledged to follow certain safety guidelines, including adding safeguards and restrictions built into their technologies when used by a

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[www.canada.ca/en/government/system/digital-government/digital-government-innovations/responsible-use-ai.html](https://www.canada.ca/en/government/system/digital-government/digital-government-innovations/responsible-use-ai.html)

consumer and spending time on “alignment” before public release, which involves ensuring that models are properly tuned to avoid causing harm in the real world.<sup>89</sup>

## Discussion Questions

1. How can international cooperation facilitate responsible AI development and governance in a globalized world?
2. In what ways can governments strike a balance between regulating AI to ensure responsible use and fostering innovation in the AI industry?
3. What ethical considerations should AI developers prioritize when creating AI systems, especially those used in critical applications like healthcare and autonomous vehicles?
4. How can we ensure that AI algorithms are transparent and accountable, especially when they make decisions that affect individuals' lives?
5. What strategies can be employed to prevent and mitigate the risks associated with algorithmic bias and discrimination in AI systems?
6. To what extent should companies be held responsible for the misuse of AI technologies developed within their organizations, and what accountability mechanisms should be in place?
7. How can education and training programs be improved to equip the workforce with the skills necessary for the responsible development and deployment of AI?
8. How can we ensure data privacy in an age of increasing AI-driven data collection and analysis, and what regulations should govern the use of personal data in AI applications?
9. What are the potential long-term societal impacts of AI, and how can responsible AI practices help address issues such as job displacement and AI-driven misinformation?

## Additional Resources

- <https://www.canada.ca/en/government/system/digital-government/digital-government-innovations/responsible-use-ai.html>
- <https://ai100.stanford.edu/gathering-strength-gathering-storms-one-hundred-year-study-artificial-intelligence-ai100-2021-1/sq7>
- <https://openai.com/blog/our-approach-to-ai-safety>

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<sup>8</sup> <https://openai.com/blog/our-approach-to-ai-safety>

<sup>9</sup>

[ai100.stanford.edu/gathering-strength-gathering-storms-one-hundred-year-study-artificial-intelligence-ai100-2021-1/sq7](https://ai100.stanford.edu/gathering-strength-gathering-storms-one-hundred-year-study-artificial-intelligence-ai100-2021-1/sq7)

# Topic B - Mining Practices in the Arctic

## Overview

The UNHRC will also turn its attention to the complex issue of mining practices in the Arctic region. Delegates will explore the environmental, social, and geopolitical challenges posed by increasing mining activities in this sensitive ecosystem. Discussions will revolve around sustainable resource extraction, indigenous rights, environmental protection, and international cooperation. The objective will be to formulate strategies that balance economic development with the preservation of the fragile Arctic environment, respecting the rights of indigenous communities, and safeguarding the global common interests associated with this region.

## Timeline

The Arctic region has a rich history of mining activities dating back centuries. This essay explores the timeline of mining practices in the Arctic, focusing on their evolving impact on human rights. From the early days of exploration to modern resource extraction, this timeline sheds light on the complex relationship between mining, the environment, and the rights of Indigenous Arctic communities.

In the pre-industrial era and throughout the 19th century, mining in the Arctic primarily centered on subsistence-based activities. Indigenous Arctic peoples engaged in sustainable mining practices, extracting essential minerals for tools and cultural artifacts while respecting the environment and their traditional way of life. Human rights violations were relatively limited during this era, with mining activities closely tied to the needs and practices of indigenous communities.

The late 19th century brought a significant shift in Arctic mining with the Klondike Gold Rush in the Yukon. The influx of non-Indigenous miners disrupted Indigenous communities and led to conflicts over land and resources. Indigenous peoples experienced encroachment on their territories, loss of control over traditional lands, and cultural disintegration, highlighting early human rights concerns.

In the post-World War II era, the Arctic region gained geopolitical significance during the Cold War, leading to intensified exploration and mining for strategic minerals. Unfortunately, Indigenous rights violations continued, as military interests often took precedence over human rights and environmental conservation. Toxic pollutants from mining operations began to pose health risks to Indigenous communities, affecting their right to a clean and healthy environment.



Moving into the late 20th century, growing awareness of environmental issues and Indigenous rights led to increased scrutiny of Arctic mining practices. International agreements, such as the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy, aimed to mitigate the environmental impact of mining while addressing indigenous concerns. Indigenous organizations, like the Inuit Circumpolar Council, advocated for stronger human rights protections in the face of expanding resource extraction.

In the 21st century, climate change has accelerated the accessibility of Arctic resources, resulting in a renewed interest in mining. Indigenous communities continue to face challenges, including land dispossession, pollution, and health problems linked to mining activities. International agreements like the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) have provided a framework for asserting and protecting the rights of Arctic indigenous peoples.

## The Value of The Arctic

Arctic minerals, particularly rare earth metals like neodymium, praseodymium, terbium, and dysprosium are the valued products beneath the ice. These minerals play a pivotal role in the global shift towards electric vehicles and renewable energy, serving as essential components in battery technology and wind turbines, among other applications. It's noteworthy, however, that significant quantities of lead, iron, nickel, zinc, gold, silver, coal, mica, precious stones, and construction minerals such as sand, gravel, and crushed rock are also believed to be present.

The estimated value of minerals in Arctic Russia is staggering, ranging from \$1.5 to 2 trillion. The Geological Survey of Norway has identified a remarkable abundance of various minerals beneath the surface of the Kola Peninsula. Simultaneously, the Canadian Shield, spanning eastern and central Canada from the Great Lakes to the Arctic Ocean, boasts high-grade metamorphic rocks with substantial reserves of copper, gold, lead, molybdenum, and uranium. In Greenland, the melting ice is unveiling mineral belts likely to contain gold, nickel, platinum-group elements, copper, lead, zinc, molybdenum, diamonds, and rare earth elements.

The majority of these known resources are situated within the territories of Arctic nation-states, making the ownership and rights for exploitation politically undisputed and resistant to challenge. Mathieu Boulègue notes, 'The land masses are relatively clearly defined among the Arctic Eight and their exclusive economic zones,' emphasizing that there is no frenzied competition for resources on land and within their continental shelves, allowing for easy access for many arctic nations.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> <https://geographical.co.uk/geopolitics/the-world-is-gearing-up-to-mine-the-arctic>

## Past Actions

### Canada

The Government of Canada has invested \$62.6 million over 5 years starting in fiscal year 2019 to 2020, with \$10.4 million ongoing to support changes to the Nutrition North program, including a Harvesters Support Grant to help lower the high costs associated with traditional hunting and harvesting activities. Canada has also invested \$71.7 million in federal funding through Canada's National Trade Corridors Fund for four Nunavut transportation projects, including preparatory work on the Grays Bay Road and Port Project and an expansion of the Rankin Inlet airport terminal building capacity, as well as provided infrastructure investments totaling over \$190 million to build multi-use buildings, food processing units and harbors as part of its commitment to support new protection for the High Arctic and create opportunities for Inuit.<sup>11</sup>

### Norway

At the beginning of 2024, Norway's parliament approved commercial initiatives to initiate seabed mineral exploration in the Arctic Ocean, a move that has sparked concerns from environmental groups and the fishing industry. Despite warnings about potential threats to vulnerable ecosystems, the legislation, passed with an 80-20 majority, permits the exploration of an expansive 280,000 square kilometers (108,000 square miles) of Arctic seabed, a region surpassing the size of the United Kingdom, situated between Norway and Greenland.

The decision, aimed at diversifying Norway's economy away from fossil fuels, is in contrast to the stances of the European Union (EU) and the UK, both of which have advocated for a temporary ban on such practices due to environmental apprehensions. The move may pave the way for an agreement on deep-sea mining in international waters later in the year.

Norway, endowed with vast oil and gas reserves, justifies its decision by highlighting extensive mapping and data collection efforts in the northern Norwegian Sea since 2017. The Norwegian continental shelf contains sulfide crusts potentially holding 45 million tonnes of zinc, and manganese crusts with an estimated 3 million metric tonnes of cobalt, according to a government white paper released in June.

Critics, including Greenpeace and the Environmental Justice Foundation (EJF), express disapproval, with Greenpeace calling it a "shameful day" for Norway and the EJF describing it as an "irrevocable black mark" on the country's reputation. Kaja Lønne Fjærtøft of WWF's No Deep

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<sup>11</sup> <https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1560523306861/1560523330587>

Seabed Mining Initiative notes a "small glimmer of hope" in the requirement for parliamentary approval for extraction licenses, added after strong international opposition.<sup>12</sup>

Analysts warn of potential geopolitical tensions in Europe's northern and Baltic regions, especially around the Barents Sea and Greenland Sea, the areas Norway has opened up for exploration. Disputes arise over Oslo's claim of sole mining rights in this region, contested by Russia and the European Union.

The mid-Atlantic Ridge, part of the designated exploration area, is believed to contain volcanic springs that host an estimated 38 million tonnes of copper, exceeding the world's annual copper production. Rare earth elements have also been discovered in polymetallic sulfides at depths of nearly 3,000 meters.

While proponents argue that deep-sea mining can expedite the transition to a low-carbon economy with lower environmental costs than terrestrial mining, critics, including scientists, raise concerns about the limited knowledge of the world's oceans, potential impacts on ecosystems already affected by pollution and the climate crisis, and the absence of international rules for seabed mineral extraction.<sup>1314</sup>

## Russia

Russia has demonstrated a consistent interest in the Arctic throughout its history as a colonizing power. The country controls over 53% of the Arctic Circle coastline, and its citizens constitute nearly half of the global Arctic population. As a consequence of rising global temperatures, Arctic ice is melting, providing increased access to the region's concealed resources.

In 2007, the Russian government symbolically asserted a claim to Arctic territory by planting a flag below the North Pole. Numerous nations have since expressed interest in the potential resources of the Arctic. One specific focus is the Svalbard archipelago, where the town of Pyramiden, once a Soviet-era coal mining settlement, played a unique role. Despite being economically unsustainable for resource acquisition, Pyramiden served as a Soviet utopia during the Cold War, showcasing a high standard of living.

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<sup>12</sup> [wwf.ca/habitat/arctic/](http://wwf.ca/habitat/arctic/)

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.mining.com/norway-approves-deep-sea-mining-in-arctic-ocean/>

<sup>14</sup>

[https://www.bnnbloomberg.ca/norway-s-parliament-approves-deep-sea-mining-in-arctic-1.2019786#:~:text=\(Bloomberg\)%20%2D%2D%20Norway's%20parliament%20approved,said%20in%20a%20website%20statement.](https://www.bnnbloomberg.ca/norway-s-parliament-approves-deep-sea-mining-in-arctic-1.2019786#:~:text=(Bloomberg)%20%2D%2D%20Norway's%20parliament%20approved,said%20in%20a%20website%20statement.)



Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, many residents left Pyramiden, but Russia has maintained a presence. The establishment of the Svalbard Committee in 2019 by Putin's aides underscores ongoing Russian interest in the archipelago. While traditional mining activities decline, Russia engages in activities such as scientific research and resource collection to legitimize its presence in Svalbard and the broader Arctic.

Some observers argue that seemingly benign activities, like scientific research, are strategic maneuvers to sustain Russia's presence in the Arctic for geopolitical or military reasons. Recent concerns include Russia perceiving Western military activities in the Arctic as a threat to its interests. The Arctic Council, a forum for Arctic nations, suspended its activities post-Russia's invasion of Ukraine, signaling a shift away from collaborative efforts in the region.

Economically, there is a notable interest in maintaining a presence in the Arctic, especially in the aftermath of sanctions and scarcity affecting energy supplies following the Ukraine invasion. Russia's bastion strategy, dividing the sea into zones of 'sea control' and 'sea denial,' underscores the critical importance of Svalbard. Its proximity to the Kola Peninsula, hosting Russia's naval and nuclear assets, makes the archipelago vital. Losing control of Svalbard could pose a threat to Moscow's bastion strategy.<sup>1516</sup>

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<https://ici.radio-canada.ca/rci/en/news/2037122/mining-the-arctic-council-russian-Ing-arctic-roundup-2023-with-heather-exner-pirot>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.mining-technology.com/features/arctic-mining-svalbard-russia/?cf-view&cf-closed>

## Ongoing Actions

The Arctic and Northern Policy Framework is an initiative started in 2019 by the Government of Canada collaborating with local governments, northerners, and Indigenous governments and organizations to provide Canada's Arctic and northern residents, especially Indigenous people, to have access to the same services, opportunities, and standards of living as other Canadians, including transportation, energy, communications, employment, community infrastructure, health and education. The framework will also tackle the issues of climate change and ensure a more sustainable future for northerners.

World Wildlife Fund (WWF)-Canada is supporting the conservation of the LIA (Last Ice Area) region by advocating for the establishment of protected areas, supporting Inuit-led management, and conducting research to advance understanding of this region. WWF also identifies the most important places for biodiversity conservation and their connections, both within Canadian seas and through the circumpolar Arctic. Advancing knowledge of Arctic habitats and species is important to planning and managing activities to help ecosystems stay resilient to the changing climate. The WWF has already helped protect Arctic areas such as Tallurutiup Imanga, Tuvaijuittuq, and The Kullorsuaq through supporting Indigenous movements and making agreements.

## Discussion Questions

1. How has the history of mining practices in the Arctic evolved over time, and what factors have contributed to these changes?
2. What were the key human rights concerns and violations during the Klondike Gold Rush in the Arctic, and how did they affect indigenous communities?
3. In what ways did the Cold War era influence mining activities in the Arctic, and how did this impact the rights of indigenous peoples?
4. How have international agreements and regulations, such as the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), addressed the rights of Arctic indigenous communities in the context of mining?
5. What are the environmental consequences of mining in the Arctic, and how do these impact the human rights of both indigenous and non-indigenous populations?
6. How can the global community strike a balance between economic interests in mining and the protection of the human rights and cultures of Arctic indigenous communities?
7. What role can sustainable and responsible mining practices play in mitigating the negative impact of mining on the Arctic environment and indigenous rights?
8. How has climate change affected the accessibility and interest in mining in the Arctic, and what challenges and opportunities does this present for human rights protection?
9. What lessons can be drawn from the history of mining in the Arctic to inform future policies and practices that better uphold the rights of indigenous Arctic communities?

10. How can indigenous voices and perspectives be more effectively integrated into decision-making processes regarding mining in the Arctic to ensure their rights are respected and protected?

## Additional Resources

- <https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1560523306861/1560523330587>
- <https://wwf.ca/habitat/arctic/>

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