

Newsletter of the Northern Studies Program at UNBC

March, 2021

## Northern Research Links:

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In this issue of *The Northern Voice* we introduce four of UNBC's current graduate students whose research focuses on the North. These students' projects traverse several northern regions – Yukon, Northwest Territories and northern British Columbia – and several degrees: Aven is pursuing a MA NRES, Susan a MA First Nations Studies, and Jessica and Stephanie, MSc NRES degrees. They exemplify the breadth and diversity of northern research at UNBC. While the pandemic has certainly challenged their research plans, our students are exercising flexibility and ingenuity in moving ahead with their plans. We look forward to their theses, and their future contributions to strong and sustainable northern regions.

Gail Fondahl, Acting NORS Coordinator

## **GRADUATE STUDENTS' PROFILES**

### **STEPHANIE CHAN**



Stephanie Chan is currently pursuing a Master's degree in Natural Resources and Environmental Studies at the University of Northern British Columbia. Having completed a Bachelor's degree in Environmental Studies (Biodiversity and Conservation) from McGill University, Stephanie has always been interested in using research to study biodiversity in areas most vulnerable to climate change. Her passion for arctic research developed after visiting an Inuit community in Nunavik, Quebec, where she worked as a summer field assistant.

Her current Master's project looks at the impacts of climate change on an arctic fishery in the western Canadian Arctic. The research is focused off the coast of the community of Ulukhaktok, Northwest Territories, studying the Greenland cod (*Gadus ogac*) population. Greenland cod serves as an indicator species for better understanding the impacts of climate change on other arctic marine species in coastal environments. Her research will bring together scientific methods and traditional knowledge to address climate change impacts at the local scale, and the implications for Inuit food systems in the western Canadian Arctic.

## AVEN KNUTSON



In September 2020, the Government of Yukon released Our Clean Future: A Yukon strategy for climate change, energy, and a green economy. This strategy was developed through partnership between Government of Yukon, municipalities, and territorial and transboundary Indigenous Nations. This engagement between the Government of Yukon and Indigenous partners is one of the first models of this type of shared decision-making strategy. It will be important to document this process to understand its usefulness in future state-Indigenous planning collaborations. My thesis aims to document the partnership approach to climate change planning undertaken by the Government of Yukon and its Indigenous partners in the design of Our Clean Future. It aims to assess the suitability of this state-Indigenous collaborative climate planning process in representing community voices and agency in policy development and outcomes, and to develop recommendations to guide future climate planning partnerships between governments and northern communities.

## SUSAN MILLER

My name is Susan Miller and I am a non-Indigenous researcher, public servant, and former wildland firefighter. My research interests include: decolonization, wildfire, and social change. I am a Master's student in the First Nations Studies department at UNBC. I am grateful to have been invited into a collaborative research relationship with Cheslatta Carrier Nation, and would like to acknowledge the community of the Southside for their warm welcome and interest in this work.

The 2018 wildfire season in British Columbia was record-breaking and displaced Indigenous and non-Indigenous community members alike. The Southside of Francois Lake (the traditional territory of Cheslatta Carrier Nation) was at the heart of some of the largest, and most aggressive wildfires in British Columbia that year. Developed and implemented in collaboration with Cheslatta Carrier Nation, this Master's research project aims to better understand how the 2018 wildfires impacted lands, individuals, and communities, as well as the relationships between them. Integrating both Western and Indigenous ways of knowing, this thesis is grounded in two theoretical lenses which derive from two differing worldviews. Using a qualitative case study methodology, ten semi-structured interviews with thirteen different community members inform its findings. Given that the 2018 wildfire season impacted a significant portion of Cheslatta Carrier Nation's traditional territory, this study is written for the community as a proactive and solution-seeking document. Its findings explore ways that wildfires can unite, divide, and transform individuals and communities, along with recommendations for diverse organizations to work together toward community safety and resilience.



## JESSICA SMART



Jessica Smart is completing her MSc in the Natural Resources & Environmental Studies department at the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC). Jessica has always been fascinated with human's relationship with the natural world and how both components interact and influence one another. During her undergraduate degree in Environmental Studies at Wilfrid Laurier University, she was provided with the opportunity to spend two summers in the Northwest Territories (NWT) working as a field assistant. This position introduced her to working in the North, collaborating with experts in the field and Indigenous communities, and conducting research on traditional

lands. During Jessica's time in the NWT, her passion for the environment and interest in research developed

In September 2019, Jessica began her graduate studies at UNBC and is working under the supervision of Dr. Tristan Pearce. Her research investigates climate change impacts on Arctic char and the implications for Inuit subsistence in Ulukhaktok, NWT. More specifically, her research aims to better understand the longer-term changes in Arctic char by working alongside community members and fishery biologists from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. Currently, Jessica has been working closely with key knowledge holders to document their knowledge and observations of Arctic char, what changes they have seen, and how they are adapting to those changes. The results of this study will be useful for Ulukhaktok's local wildlife co-management bodies such as the Olokhaktomiu Hunters and Trappers Committee and Char Working Group. Additionally, this study can serve as an example for future studies completed in the North that aim to bridge together traditional and scientific knowledge.

## LÆRA INSTITUTE FOR CIRCUMPOLAR EDUCATION LAUNCHES, HOLDS FIRST WORKSHOP

Læra Institute for Circumpolar Education was established in 2020 to support and strengthen University of the Arctic (UArctic) member capacity to deliver locally appropriate and pedagogically high-quality Circumpolar Studies programmes, without compromising their own academic flexibility. Drs. Gary Wilson (UNBC) and Heather Nicol (Trent University) serve as academic co-directors, with Dr. Anthony Speca (Trent) as executive director. The Steering Committee also involves colleagues from Arctic State Agrotechnological University (Yakutsk, Russia), Lakehead University, Nord University (Bodø, Norway), UNBC, and Yukon University.

Læra's name derives from the Icelandic and Norwegian verb meaning 'to learn'. Læra Institute will provide a new 'best-practice baseline' for UArctic's Circumpolar Studies programme. It will also help to knit UArctic together as a borderless academic community by hosting workshops for UArctic faculty on Circumpolar Studies teaching and pedagogical innovation, and by convening undergraduate symposia for UArctic students learning about the Circumpolar world. A first pair of workshops was held on 12 March for faculty involved in teaching northern studies, entitled: 'Circumpolar Studies Is...', with two sessions to encompass the span of time zones. Læra Steering Committee member Irina Dranaeva from Arctic State Agrotechnological University hosted the 'Transpacific' section, attended by colleagues from Arctic State Institute of Culture and Arts and Northeastern Federal University (both in Yakutsk), Trent and UNBC;. The second, 'Transatlantic' section of the workshop involved colleagues from Florida State University, International Sami Film Institute (Guovdegeaidnu, Norway), Nipissing University, Royal Military College, Scott Polar Research Institute (Cambridge, UK), University of Alaska Anchorage, and University of Washington.

# ACUNS UPDATE: STRATEGIC PLANNING & UPCOMING MEETINGS



Association of Canadian  
Universities for  
Northern Studies

Over the last year, the Association of Canadian Universities for Northern Studies (ACUNS) has undertaken a strategic planning process that is designed to reposition the organization in a changing and dynamic northern research and education landscape. The final draft of the new 2021-2026 5-year Strategic Plan entitled Growing to Meet Northern Needs Through Collaboration has been sent to the ACUNS Council for review and ratification. The Plan was developed through an extensive process of consultation with representatives from post-secondary institutions and northern organizations. It builds upon ACUNS reputation as a supporter of research and teaching in and about the north and commits the organization to a variety of strategic directions and goals, including actively supporting Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous-led research, increasing capacity in northern research and post-secondary education, supporting the development of the next generation of northern and Arctic researchers and positioning ACUNS as a vital bridge between northern and southern-based institutions and organizations that are active in the field of northern studies. In September, ACUNS will hold its Annual General Meeting (online). Among the matters to be discussed will be changes to the organization's bylaws that support the new strategic direction. In November, the triennial ACUNS Student Conference will be held online. This year's conference is being organized by students and faculty at York University in Toronto. For more information, see the ACUNS website: <https://acuns.ca/>. For information about the ACUNS student conference, contact the co-organizers: Kristen Coleman ([kcoleman@yorku.ca](mailto:kcoleman@yorku.ca)) and Amanda Little ([ajlittle@yorku.ca](mailto:ajlittle@yorku.ca)).

## UARCTIC CONGRESS 2021



The UArctic Congress 2021 is being held in Reykjavik, Iceland from May 15-18, 2021, in conjunction with the Arctic Council Ministerial meeting. While the Congress hosts many business meetings, the Congress' scholarly program will focus on Iceland's priorities of the Arctic Council during Iceland's chairship and also on the new realities of circumpolar higher education and research in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Congress also includes a Rectors meeting organized for the heads of UArctic member institutions, in partnership with the Icelandic chairmanship.



# ICASS X



Originally scheduled for June 2020, the Tenth International Congress of Arctic Social Sciences (ICASS X) will be held 15-19 June 2021. ICASS is the triennial Congress of the International Arctic Social Sciences Association (IASSA). Hosted this year by the ARCTICenter at the University of Northern Iowa and Northern Arctic Federal University (NArFU), ICASS X will take place mostly on-line but will involve an abridged in-person component at NArFU in the city of Arkhangelsk, as part of the celebration of the Russian Federation assuming the chairship of the Arctic Council (2021-2023).

The theme of ICASS X is “Arctic Generations: Looking Back and Looking Forward.” It will focus on all aspects of human existence in the Arctic (past, present and future): social, cultural, historical, economic, political, linguistic, educational, archaeological, engineering, health, legal, psychological, to name a few. The Congress will also emphasize history, future and sustainability of Arctic peoples and environments throughout generations and the co-production of knowledge with Indigenous knowledge holders and Arctic stakeholders.

More information is available at <https://icass.uni.edu/>. Dr. Gary Wilson is a member of the ICASS program committee, as well as a member of IASSA’s governing Council.

## ACSUS 2021 BIENNIAL CONFERENCE



In celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Association for Canadian Studies in the United States (ACSUS), the Association will host its 26th biennial conference, 21-42 October 2021, in Washington, DC. The conference is open to all proposals with a significant Canadian focus. Papers and panel proposals are welcomed from graduate students, professors, independent scholars, and practitioners on all diverse and critical perspectives related to the theme, ‘Canada: Near and Far’.

Proposals will be accepted through April 1, 2021. For further information see:

<https://www.acsus.org/conference/conferences/26th-biennial-conference-oct-21-24-2021-washington-dc>