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Announcements
IRPP Conference
The IRPP’s Northern Exposure conference, held from October 25th to 27th, 2007, opened with a panel discussion among six young leaders from across the north. The panelists outlined their vision of the future of the north and underlined the importance of education, culture, aboriginal languages and the land.


IPY Call for Proposals
International Polar Year is the largest ever international program of coordinated, interdisciplinary science and research focused on the Arctic and Antarctica. The Government of Canada Program for International Polar Year has issued a Call for Proposals for Training, Communications and Outreach projects in conjunction with International Polar Year. The Government of Canada Program for International Polar Year places important emphasis on engaging children and youth and wishes to encourage partnerships and collaborations in all aspects of its program. See www.ipy.gc.ca. Call closes on January 15th, 2008.

Training the Next Arctic Leaders
Meet the Newest CYL Interns
By Carolee Buckler
In the fall of 2007, two young northerners descended on Winnipeg to participate in a training program through the Circumpolar Young Leaders (CYL). The training, in conjunction with the Young Canadian Leaders for a Sustainable Future program, consisted of an introduction to IISS and its projects, cross-cultural training, team building, communications training, fundraising, proposal writing and an introduction to networks. A highlight included meeting 22 youth from southern Canada who were poised for a similar journey. A third intern, Harry Borlase, was unable to join the group in Winnipeg, as he was finishing a work term in Finland.

As part of the CYL experience, Shannon Mallory packed her belongings and left the Yukon for Arendal, Norway, where she is now working with the University of the Arctic and GRID Arendal on a UArctic On-line Atlas, and contributing to the UArctic On-line News Service for the next six months.

“I think that my internship with UArctic and GRID will be a great international work experience for me. I am very excited to work on UArctic projects and collaborate with colleagues in Finland and Sweden,” she says.

Nancianne Grey-Gardiner was based in Winnipeg at IISS. Her spouse and two small children came along with her from Kangirsuk, Nunavik (northern Quebec) to try out life on the prairies. This is the first time an Arctic intern has been placed in Canada for the duration of an internship. She was in Winnipeg until December 2007, and will continue the remainder of her internship in her community.

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Bound for Norman Wells, NWT. Just one of many stops for intern Nancianne Grey-Gardiner.
As part of my Arctic internship with the International Institute for Sustainable Development, I travelled to the capital city of the Yukon, Whitehorse, stopped in the small Yukon airports of Dawson City and Old Crow, visited Inuvik and continued on page 3.

Training the Next Arctic Leaders

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Being in Winnipeg makes me feel more Canadian. It’s a pleasure for me to meet people in Winnipeg, share with them my culture and lifestyle experiences from the North. In return, I experience the unique prairie culture and friendliness of Manitoba. There is no doubt that I’ll return to the North with a better understanding of our amazing country,” she says.

Grey-Gardiner is updating ookpik.org. She is recruiting northern writers and introducing new collaborative projects. Grey-Gardiner is also working on a project to promote waste reduction strategies in the North. She wants to examine which communities are the most environmentally-friendly and which communities are introducing recycling programs.

Harry Borlase was born in St. Anthony, Newfoundland and raised in Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Newfoundland and Labrador. Harry attended Mount Allison University, Canadian Studies. Here he developed an interest in the Arctic and spent a year in Finland at UArctic. Having returned to Canada for his fifth and final year of study, Harry wrote his honour’s thesis on Inuit cultural sustainability, with a focus on Labrador, and was granted a scholarship by the Association of Canadian Universities of Northern Studies to help fund his research. Harry is very pleased to be returning to Finland’s north to start his internship with the University of the Arctic Secretariat in Rovaniemi, Finland. His duties at the Secretariat will include communication tasks, as well as policy research. “I am really excited about working for the UArctic. Having had such a great experience as a student, I anticipate that working for them will be just as rewarding. Also, I am grateful for having this opportunity to join the Arctic community of educators and researchers. Having just graduated from university, I could not ask for a better internship to help me on my way,” he says.

IIISD, the organization managing the CYL program, wants to see young northerners across the circumpolar region engaging in regional cooperation, planning and decision-making to ensure that the sustainable development work that is being done today is continued into the future, with fresh insights and new dedication. The CYL program works with emerging young leaders to help them build their networks with current Arctic leaders, experts, institutions and their peers.

Funding for this program is made possible by Aboriginal and Circumpolar Affairs Division, Foreign Affairs Canada and the Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation.

An Eastern-Arctic Take on the Western Arctic

By Nancianne Grey-Gardiner

I always thought I had a good understanding of Canada’s North, until I had an eye-opening experience recently on a trip to the western Canadian Arctic. Born and raised in Arctic Quebec and central Ontario, I’ve heard many east-west stereotypes: British Columbian “tree-huggers,” French-Canadian poutine lovers; and “Newfie” jokes. On the prairies, I’ve also heard complaints about Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver and Calgary and “big-town” favouritism. But the Arctic?

As part of my Arctic internship with the International Institute for Sustainable Development, I travelled to the capital city of the Yukon, Whitehorse, stopped in the small Yukon airports of Dawson City and Old Crow, visited Inuvik and continued on page 3.

Shannon Mallory

Prior to participating in this program, Mallory worked as a research assistant for the Northern Climate Exchange, an organization that serves as a catalyst for climate change research in the Canadian north. Mallory has also been involved in community adaptation strategy workshops involving local community groups, Yukon Territorial Government, City of Whitehorse and local First Nations. After her internship, Mallory plans to start a masters program in the area of environmental security and water management.

Shannon Mallory is developing an online atlas at UArctic as part of her CYL internship.

IN DEPTH

An Eastern-Arctic Take on the Western Arctic

By Nancianne Grey-Gardiner

I always thought I had a good understanding of Canada’s North, until I had an eye-opening experience recently on a trip to the western Canadian Arctic. Born and raised in Arctic Quebec and central Ontario, I’ve heard many east-west stereotypes: British Columbian “tree-huggers,” French-Canadian poutine lovers; and “Newfie” jokes. On the prairies, I’ve also heard complaints about Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver and Calgary and “big-town” favouritism. But the Arctic?

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Tuktoyaktuk, NWT, and continued to pass by Norman Wells and Yellowknife to gaze at the Mackenzie Valley landscape. As an eastern Arctic Canadian, the western Arctic has always been the “other” side of Hudson Bay. I’ve been so curious about the Inuvialuit and the Gwich’in First Nations. Here was an opportunity to experience Canada’s western Arctic. Although my purpose was to gain a better understanding of Arctic views on sustainability and recycling, I found myself getting a better feel for differences between Arctic peoples and culture.

Like western and eastern Canadians, northern Canadians compare themselves to one another—on top of comparing themselves to southern Canadians. For us northerners, we’re really aware that we live so far north of everybody else. We know it can be a culture shock for many Canadians on their first trek north. They are hit by the sudden wall of remoteness, the largeness of nature and most significantly: the cold.

But let’s start in the Vancouver airport. I hadn’t realized that Japanese visitors, or Japanese-Canadians, would mistake me for Japanese. This never happened in Montreal, Toronto or Ottawa, so while I waited for my Air North flight to Whitehorse, I found myself explaining that I neither spoke nor understood Japanese. On the contrary, I’m sometimes mistaken for Nepalese or Tibetan in Toronto. It also never ceases to surprise me that southern Canadians always assume I’m an immigrant, and not Inuit Canadian.

Once I arrived in Whitehorse, I immediately noticed that lots of people who want to change the world live in the Yukon capital. I did not feel like I was in the North, yet my mind registered that Whitehorse is geographically closer to the Arctic Circle in comparison to my Arctic town of Kangirsuk, Quebec. The city itself is surrounded by an incredibly breathtaking mountain landscape and it really feels like a great extension of northern British Columbia. The most obvious difference I noted was that I was surrounded by trees. Now I realize the temperate climatic effects of Pacific and Atlantic Ocean currents.

Most of Whitehorse’s population appeared to be non-indigenous to the area, and I met many European, African and Asian-Canadians, various visitors from Europe, like Germans and French, and the odd American Alaskan. I was aware of a First Nations population within the city and the outskirts of the larger “town,” but most people on the streets and in businesses weren’t native Canadian. It is a city full of resources for the urbanite and nature enthusiast, and it is expensive. After speaking to many people at restaurants, coffeehouses, businesses, recreation centres and private homes, I learned that many Yukoners (people who identify themselves as inhabitants of Whitehorse) come from either heavily populated regions of southern Canada, or small-town Yukon or northern British Columbia. Everybody seems to dwell in chic cafes and restaurants with jazz music in the background, absorbed in intellectual conversations about life, politics and philosophy. I’ve never been to a place with so many organic, fairly-traded, 100 per cent whole grain, hemp-woven, naturally-dyed products. It was inspiring, but a little surreal.

After my visit to Whitehorse, I caught a glimpse of Dawson City and Old Crow’s tiny airports. They both reminded me of typical small airports that dot Nunavik’s landscape, and the land looked very similar to my Quebec home, only with trees.

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A sign of development in Inuvik? A man waits at a stop light to cross the street.

An Eastern-Arctic Take... continued from page 3

When we landed in Old Crow, it felt similar to landing at any Nunavik-like airport because the local people came to see who was getting off the airplane. Their Gwich'in culture was displayed in fancy glass-encased shelves with beautiful artifacts, artwork, models of hunting tools and clothing. This is nothing like the stark white walls and old black and white-framed photographs of Inuit families in Nunavik's 14 remote airport terminals. No local Gwich'in First Nations shook my hand, which didn't really surprise me, but I felt many eyes on me as I sat or stood with the white airplane passengers waiting for the plane to refuel.

Inuvik, NWT, is so industrial. If there was a sign at Inuvik's airport on the long road to the centre of the giant town it would say: Big Money = Big Business. I am referring to the oil and gas industry that has established its roots so deeply into this unique Arctic city. I was told by a Muslim taxi driver from Lebanon that approximately 5,000 people live in Inuvik, the "Place of Man." I was struck by the many shops, businesses, government buildings, public housing, hotels and traffic. What got me was that I was sitting in the back seat of my yellow taxi, which is also different because I never see cabs in Nunavik, and I saw an Inuvialuktun man waiting for the pedestrian light to flash for him to walk at the intersection. From that moment onwards, I felt very far from my familiar eastern Arctic territory.

I cannot put it all into detail, but I can see now how the oil and gas industry has dramatically influenced and changed indigenous culture and language in this part of Canada. A road system links the economy from the South to the North; it's a highway of modernization linked-up to the once remote region.

The people walk and talk on their cell phones, and I heard English. This was a little alarming for me because in Nunavik or northern Quebec, the primary language is Inuktitut and you hear French or English somewhere in the corner. I went out on a Friday night with my new Gwich'in-mixed-inuvialuktun friends and witnessed posses of migrant oil and gas field workers letting loose at the bar with local girls. It wasn't much different from Kuujjuaq crowds, Nunavik's biggest town, as their local bar is usually filled with French construction workers who can hardly speak English.

I can see how a mass exodus of people has altered the local peoples, shifting the predominating language from Inuvialuktun, Gwich'in and North Slavey to English. This made me think of my region's current conversation with the provincial government about a 1,000 km northern highway from Montreal to Kuujjuaq, Quebec—and how this would change the cultures that currently thrive in isolation from southern Quebec.

I was pleasantly surprised to see how the First Nations and Inuit get along so well, even marry each other. In my Quebec region, it seems so segregated: French live here, the Inuit there and the Cree or Naskapi live right over there.

I found the fashion very different from my eastern Canadian roots, because the Inuvialuit continue to have close ties with Alaskan Inupiat and Gwich'in First Nations who reside in the same communities. The famous Inuvialuktun "sunburst or sunshine" hooded fur is very different from the eastern Arctic version. Where I come from, Inuit elders prefer the least amount of fur on the hood because traditionally, they use only what is available, and in the past, fox fur was needed to trade for tea, tobacco, cooking and hunting supplies and tools. I was wide-eyed at Inuvialuit-use of not just one fur, but two! They use a wolverine fur closest to the face, and a grey Arctic wolf fur for the long hair that sticks out like a "sunburst" from the parka-wearer's head. Wolverine fur is also used on the bottom trimming and sleeve cuff ends, which is also thought to be an excessive use of fur in my region of the Arctic. I think the cold, Arctic Ocean winds that blow along the flat, open terrain contribute to this style of fashion, because the wolf fur stops the wind from hitting the parka-wearer's face. I also recognize a close link to the intermarriage of First Nations and Inuit in the style of mits and mukluks in the region. There is a high use of moose hide (which is very uncommon in the eastern Arctic), and seal and wolverine skins.

As I travelled from Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk, NWT, I was immediately shocked that nobody spoke Inuvialuktun or Inuktitut, but English—and on cell phones. I am so used to arriving at a remote Inuit community and shaking hands with strangers who sit on lonely benches placed in tiny airport terminals, saying "Al!" In Tuktoyaktuk, I shook the hand of a female stranger, who gave me a bewildered look and asked if I knew her. I quickly replied: "do I have to know you to shake your hand?" Her subsequent giggle made me realize I was very far

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from home. The Inuit tradition of greeting strangers and travellers has been completely lost to this community. But, I moved forward and found my way into the town’s bed and breakfast. I arrived on a Saturday, so I was lucky to be invited to participate in the town’s weekend community games night. I went to the local community hall around 11 pm, and played Pictionary with community leaders while listening to gospel Christian hymns sung by the local church choir. I felt at home because they were singing the same tunes I hear my family in the east sing, only in “Tuk” they sing in English. I thought this healthy, alcohol- and drug-free night out quite inspiring. My community has similar events, but only on Christmas, New Year’s, Easter and Canada Day. This incredibly vibrant community of Tuktoyaktuk was simply doing it every Saturday. It’s a wonderful alternative for recovering alcoholics and drug abusers who have difficulty remaining sober, and essentially binds the community closer together. Even though I was sad to see the aboriginal language dying, the western Arctic holds tightly to traditional drumming and dancing ceremonies. In the eastern Arctic we strain to keep our traditional drumming and dancing—and for many regions, it has been completely lost and replaced with western musical instruments. I see throat singing, but guitars, drums, accordions, and fiddles are widely used.

One thing that western Arctic Inuit do that is dramatically different from eastern Arctic Inuit is the way they store their traditional food. They have “ice-houses,” which is basically a hole that goes about 30 feet below the surface of the permafrost, and you climb down a ladder into complete darkness. With a flashlight you can see tunnels with tiny rooms about the size of walk-in closets, filled with frozen whitefish, caribou and rooms about the size of walk-in closets, filled with frozen whitefish, caribou and

dead seals. I was shocked to see giant ice crystals covering the ceilings and walls of the permafrost 30 feet under the ground! Back home, we use man-made chest freezers or giant communal freezers that store wild foods.

It was such an ironic trip for me because in my temporary apartment in Winnipeg, I didn’t have a television or radio, just simply Internet. Yet, my stay in Tuktoyaktuk, thanks to 600 odd satellite channels on a fancy flat screen, allowed me to get updated on world news, international weather and popular culture (like the latest music videos). I also found my favourite organic toothpaste in the local Tuktoyaktuk store at 1:30 am during a midnight madness event. I found myself waking up at 10 am in “Tuk” and believing it was 10 pm because the sun didn’t rise for another hour. I met more Muslims in Inuvik than I did in southern Canada, and ate the best whitman food I’ve ever tasted at the unique “Eskimo Inn.”

I swam in the most amazing recreation centre indoor pool complex in Whitehorse. It’s a recycle depot for the community indoor pool complex in Whitehorse, and sipped the best organic cappuccino made with Malawi fairly-traded coffee beans.

I went to the Canadian western Arctic to do informal research and discovered that western Arctic perceptions of environmental issues are far more refined than in my part of the rock. They have recycle, and their 100-year-old Hudson’s Bay Company building has been renovated. Now it’s a recycle depot for the youth centre in Tuktoyaktuk. They’ve also dramatically cleaned up the town’s waste site. I found that in Whitehorse, recycling was a socially-conscious environmental choice, whereas in Inuvik and Tuktoyaktuk—it’s all about the money and money-back refunds.

The one thing that Inuvialuit in Tuktoyaktuk share with Inuit in the east is the traditional value of giving food to those in need. I was given a box of mattak (beluga skin) by the family who ran the bed and breakfast because I mentioned the terrible fact that in Nunavik there is a quota on beluga whales, even though it is a subsistence hunt. In Tuktoyaktuk, they’ve no such thing, and they’re proud to have killed 40 whales for just one community! They packed up a box of the Inuit delicacy, and I travelled all the way back to the eastern Arctic with my unique gift of whale skin.

In retrospect, I thought it was amusing that the people of the western Arctic make so many north-south comparisons. Yukoners called themselves “northerners” and tell horror stories about living in heavily populated cities of southern Canada. Yet, the people of Inuvik thought Whitehorse was a southern city and they’d mention that “Yukoners” are in denial that they are really southerners. The people of Tuktoyaktuk remark that Inuvik is abundant with southern lifestyles and modern-living charms, and it was like a short trip to the “South.”
Nobody ever said being from northern Canada was easy. Aside from all the typical frustrations of living in such an extreme, remote and expensive part of the country, there is the unavoidable difficulty of trying to explain and describe to people where you are from. In fact, since leaving my beloved hometown of Happy Valley-Goose Bay (HV-GB), Newfoundland and Labrador in 2001, I have struggled with this seemingly easy question many, many, many times and still the answer varies. Not only does the answer change depending on where I am, it also requires a bit of strategy. Let me explain.

When I left Labrador in 2001 for more southerly locations, I never expected it to follow me. I was under the impression that talking about my experiences of growing up in Labrador would only be useful as an effective means of ending a conversation. I thought people would laugh when I said I was from a town called Happy Valley, and that I graduated from Goose High School, whose mascot was a bobcat. And even though it does get a few laughs, I have found that most southern Canadians are intrigued by the idea of being from the North and are either familiar with HV-GB, or the geographic location of Labrador.

Things get a little more complicated when travelling internationally. Although self-identifying usually begins with “I am Canadian,” the real trouble starts when trying to explain where exactly in Canada Labrador is located, (never mind explaining Happy Valley). Saying that I am from “northern Canada” usually isn’t enough, since most of the world identifies Canada as north anyways. So, being from “northnorth Canada” doesn’t really make sense. I’ve tried answering by saying that Labrador is almost the closest point to Europe in Canada, but that usually really confuses people, since it doesn’t really answer the question at all. I have also tried pretending that it is near Montreal or Halifax, assuming people know their whereabouts. But, then that seems ridiculous when I tell them that it’s actually about 1,700 kilometres north-east from those cities. This is a laughable distance considering it is roughly the same as going from London, England to Rome, Italy. No matter what answer I choose, people generally get a vague idea of where it is. The next question is most certainly, “why would anyone want to live there?”

Nevertheless, having to answer these questions on a day-to-day basis has meant that my connection with Labrador, and the feeling of being a northern Canadian, has never been able to leave me. In fact, it has only grown stronger. Rather than feeling shy or embarrassed about being from the North, my appreciation for the Arctic has gone from a personal association to something that I want to share with other people. Living in Finland now, I feel I have a connection to the people here. They are warm, welcoming and proud. And I have no doubt that they must have the same problem I do explaining where Inari is!

**North3 - Your North is My North is Our North**

Are you a young northerner? Do you have something to say about your region, your community, the environment? If so, take a moment and share your thoughts and stories on North3. North3 is an online outreach initiative of Canadian Embassies in circumpolar countries. It’s a Web space devoted to collecting youth perspectives in all circumpolar countries, in English, Français, Русский, Suomi, Svenska, Norsk, Islenska, Kalaallisut. Your thoughts will be compiled into a book! So visit www.ookpik.org/north3/ and sound off!

**http://blog.ookpik.org/**

How can we keep Inuit in school longer? What constraints are keeping young Inuit from achieving post-secondary education? These are just some of the questions Jason Annahatak explores in Ookpik’s inaugural blog. What do you think? Check out http://blog.ookpik.org and share your thoughts on Inuit education. Or, if there’s a burning issue you want to write about, start a blog and see what other young northerners think!

**Harry Borlase**

It was through the Canadian Studies program at Mount Allison University in Sackville, New Brunswick that the Newfoundland and Labradorian became increasingly interested in the Arctic. Given the opportunity to participate in the Arctic Studies Program (ASP), a University of the Arctic program, Harry gladly travelled to Rovaniemi, Finland for one year. The ASP program was a wonderful introduction to circumpolar education, and also a great avenue for travelling throughout the Nordic countries and Russia. Now Borlase is back in Finland as an Arctic intern!
On November 23rd and 24th, 2007 there was a two-day research conference about aboriginal Canadian education in Winnipeg, Manitoba. The Society for the Advancement of Excellence in Education (SAEE) convened “Sharing Our Success: Promising Practices in Aboriginal Education,” showcasing the work, struggles and successes of schools that have made gains in aboriginal education from across the country.

Teachers, principals, school board and government administrators, researchers, policy-makers and students came together for this unique forum. All participated in discussions about: leadership and governance structures; student expectations; academic achievement and long-term successes; school security; cultural relevance and respect within an education curriculum; community partnerships and beneficial external alliances; and the quality of aboriginal staff and development.

I’m native to northern Quebec, which to many is known as Nunavik. I thought it was important and relevant to attend this conference because my own educational history has been guided away from aboriginal curricula. My parents had a lack of faith in the northern Canadian school system. After I finished university, which happened to be funded by an Inuit post-secondary scholarship, I returned to the North, started my own family, and now my eldest son is preparing to enter kindergarten in an aboriginal-run school within the year. I want to better understand where aboriginal educators and school board administrators’ mentalities are concerning their successes and struggles within the education systems. I can see how their decisions may affect my children in their future educational endeavors.

I attended lectures and presentations about aboriginal language programming, leadership and governance in northern school districts, school partnerships, northern education policies, research partnerships in Canada’s North, and capacity building within southern First Nations schools. But, I found the highlight of my attendance was meeting an incredible individual named John Jamieson, who is the principal of Nuiyak School in Sanikiluaq, Nunavut. This is a small island off the east coast of Hudson Bay, and this community is very similar to my home town of Kangirsuk, which is on the west coast of Ungava Bay. Both of these Inuit communities are isolated with no roads and strictly have fly-in or fly-out transportation. Even though they have different territorial and provincial government infrastructures, Sanikiluaq and Kangirsuk are similar in terms of 20th century Inuit colonization. They share similar effects and factors that follow such an adaptation to modern western society.

Jamieson discussed partnerships between Nuiyak School and the town’s daycare centre Najuqsivik, and their external alliances, which fascinated me. Sanikiluaq has obtained private and government funding, which has greatly influenced positive action in their community. A key aspect of the school’s integration with the community is in its relationship to the local Najuqsivik organization. This non-profit daycare centre was established in 1998, and it promotes and preserves Inuit culture through economic and cultural projects. It operates a picture frame shop, radio and television station and a community museum, and provides training and assistance to local artists in various skills such as bird taxidermy and making polar bear rugs, continued on page 8
housing construction, upholstery-mak- ing, Inuit art and tool-making, and tra- ditional Inuit clothing-making. This seems light-years ahead of what my community is doing. Jamieson made me realize that the potential for interest- ing and rewarding projects are there, it is a matter of writing proposals and coordinating people to “walk the walk and talk the talk.” It has taken him 25 years to achieve such high regard, but in essence, he jump-started the Najuqsivik Day Care to receive its funding by con- tracting services to government, craft sales, community bingo, government grants, photography and leasing a local building to Arctic College. His motiva- tion to work with the community came from the basic instinct to simply ask Elders what they want their youth to learn, do and participate in. The school listened to what the older people want- ed for their youthful community, and they did it step by step. This simplicity seems so easy, and enlightened me on projects that can be done in many other remote Inuit communities, including my own.

What intrigued me the most was that for such a small town like Sanikiluaq, so many positive projects have come from the daycare and school's partnerships, and both thrive upon their Inuit culture. Aboriginal language programming is an important aspect of aboriginal school cur- riculum for many conference partici- pants. There was an agreement by all par- ticipants that aboriginal language defines a particular aboriginal group. Native peo- ple identify themselves as part of a nation, tribe or group if the aboriginal language continues to express a particular culture’s values and way of life.

I listened to many First Nations’ school board administrators and teachers express difﬁculty in seeking ﬁnancial support from their provincial governments to maintain aboriginal language programs. A few successful First Nations and Inuit school boards are using aboriginal lan- guage programming, and they had great presentations about how bilingualism in English or French along with the in- structed aboriginal language program strengthens mathematical and problem-sol- ving skills among students. Native lan- guage immersion enhances English speaking and ﬂuency. I found that suc- cess stories came from school boards that receive high levels of community sup- port, and the aboriginal language is spoken in the home. These successful school boards take First Nations and Inuit cul- ture and values to the core of all educa- tional programming. I think failure sto- ries about aboriginal language program- ming are the result of a lack of funding from provincial governments and a lack of oral communication in the aboriginal language at home. My focus on Sanikiluaq’s Nuiyak School principal John Jamieson was based on the fact that his school’s partnerships and student suc- cess rates are highly dependent on the community’s respect for cultural lifestyles, the preservation of Inuktitut language, values, identity and thus healthy self-esteem amongst students.

One issue that Jamieson mentioned that I can identify with is the present-day situation of Inuit men, in comparison to Inuit women. Inuit women continue with their traditional gender roles, but the men are not adapting as well to a modern cash-based society. Men are finding less work and appear to have fewer opportunities to continue tradi- tional ways of hunting and providing food for the family. This switch to a cash-based economy has become superi- or to the subsistence hunting way of life, but many young and old men are not keeping up with the reality of an educated society that rewards only those with higher educations. I thought of the social problems such as domestic vio- lence related to abused women and alcoholism that remain prevalent in Canada’s North. If the community is happy, the students are happy. The part- nership between Sanikiluaq School and daycare centre has shown me that not only young students, but mature stu- dents who dropped out of school in their teenage years, can and are return- ing and learning hands-on technical skills that they can use to gain employ- ment in a cash-based economy, and incorporate within their native culture.

The objective of the conference was to share knowledge and provide a forum for educators and anyone involved with edu- cation for aboriginal people to: gain opportunities to collaborate, build on models of successful schools, and enhance current and future students from Canada’s First Nations, Metis and Inuit communities. What I came away with was that a successful aboriginal school environment involves many dif- ferent factors: strong local leadership, the integration of aboriginal cultural activi- ties, innovative and entrepreneurial spirit, ﬂexible and consistent updating of abo- riginal language programming and teacher commitment.

I see many problems at the elementary, secondary and post-secondary stages of the aboriginal school system in my region. But, I am a true believer that the result of a student’s educational success highly depends on the student’s personal family support system. If a community is plagued with social problems, such as a dysfunctional family unit, this will great- ly inﬂuence a young person’s perform- ance in school. This performance will greatly affect the student’s self-conﬁdence and esteem for their own culture.

More importantly, I see potential for a good education system to be placed in aboriginal communities, if the school is supported by local, regional and national government infrastructure. I think that parents must be involved in their chil- dren’s education, in any culture, but I realize that Canada’s aboriginal societies struggle to maintain a healthy number of successful native-Canadian educated graduates. I think this is related to a lack of government and community support systems, the integration of good quality aboriginal language and cultural pro- gramming with core curriculum and the obvious social and economic factors found within almost all aboriginal com- munities. It is a given that people want a better “everything” for their children and grandchildren, so those in current and future positions of power should make steps towards that change.
Imagine you sit down one morning at your computer to an e-mail from an old friend. This friend has just been looking over the abstracts for the upcoming annual American Geophysical Union meetings, one of the largest annual international science conferences on the planet. While he was browsing through the abstracts he found a set relating directly to your thesis field area—the same field you are working in. Neither you, the local northern governmental agencies responsible, nor the First Nations on whose traditional territory the work has taken place have ever heard of this researcher or their project; if it wasn’t for your friend’s by-chance discovery, none of you would have. It sounds far-fetched in our current political climate where both collaboration with northern communities and informing northerners of research throughout the entire research process is so highly valued, and yet it was the situation I found myself in less than one year ago.

My particular story has a silver-lining; I was able to make contact with the researcher in question and we are now collaborating. She was unaware of the territorial permitting process for research; did not have the exposure to First Nations communities to realize the necessity of contacting them directly; did not know how important it is for northern governments to be made aware of research activities undertaken within their jurisdictions; and did not understand the fundamental importance of involving northern communities in the research process, from the project’s outset and the formulation of research questions, through to the reporting of results. To a northerner, like me, these concepts are common sense and fundamental principles which all researchers must follow. Through discussions with my collaborator and other “southern” researchers undertaking studies in the North, I have learned that fundamental concepts I was taught are not viewed as such throughout the entire research community working in the North.

Throughout the North’s history it is this lack of understanding that has painted researchers in a bad light and has resulted in negative impressions of both researchers and northern communities. Northerners are rightly upset at their lack of involvement in and access to research and the resulting data; and researchers are baffled by the cold reception they receive from communities and feel betrayed by their southern institutions for not better preparing them for work in the North. Experiences like this propagate negative feelings and lack of trust on both sides. The question we face now is whether to allow this negative cycle to continue to build upon itself, growing until we reach a breaking point; or stop it now.

I would argue that this question only has one right answer, and that answer is easily achievable with proper foresight and planning; we stop the negative cycle and change the way research is done in the North for the benefit of all involved. The first step is the simplest—communication. Southern researchers are not evil. Many are either not informed or misinformed of their obligations to northern communities. Universities and research institutions need to make sure that their researchers are properly prepared for work in the North. This includes procuring the necessary research permits, involving northern communities in their research, informing northern and First Nations governments of their work and receiving permission from these bodies, and following up with communities. Many resources and organizations are in place to help institutions with this task, including the Association of Canadian Universities for Northern Studies (ACUNS), the Northern Science Training Program (NSTP), ArcticNet, the Canadian Polar Commission, the International Polar Year (IPY), the Arctic Council and regional governments. We must also recognize that researchers from the North are not always shining examples of proper research in a northern context either; we must be held to the same high standard set for our counterparts in the South.
By Nancianne Grey-Gardiner

In mid-October 2007, I had the rare opportunity to drive with three students from the University of Manitoba across part of the Canadian prairies to a conference in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. I felt very Canadian as I sat in a car driven by a Swedish-Canadian, a Chinese-Canadian and a Colombian student, with Saskatchewan’s rolling hills, endless prairies and lonely farmhouses whizzing by. The four of us had one thing in common: we have all worked or lived in the Canadian Arctic.

The conference was the 8th International Association of Canadian Universities for Northern Studies (ACUNS), “Melting Boundaries: Carrying Out Effective Research in the Circumpolar World.” More than 200 researchers, scientists, students, policymakers and northerners came together to address the human and environmental research conducted by universities in the circumpolar world. It featured undergraduate, master’s and PhD research projects ranging from the social sciences to land claims to glaciology.

It was a forum for relationship-building between researchers and scientists. There was a consistent emphasis on the importance of communication and ethical principles in Arctic research. Speeches and presentations led by experienced scientists advised emerging young northern researchers about the outcomes of past, current and future scientific investigations in the North.

The scientists and researchers with extensive and broad experience in Canada’s North raised an important issue: how to conduct scientific research and collaborate with northern aboriginal peoples’ traditional knowledge. I sensed a great emphasis on southerner’s relationship-building with aboriginal northerners for purposes of gathering substantial information for their projects. I agreed with the idea of changing attitudes towards aboriginal traditional knowledge. I heard about the logistics, communications and moral challenges these outgoing southerners face when they travel to remote Arctic areas.

I come from a remote Inuit community in Nunavik, northern Quebec, and I am aware of the silent uneasiness among Inuit towards southerners who conduct research in the North. This wariness is rooted in the history of Inuit settlements, land claim agreements and the obvious fact that some southerners come to the North motivated by personal profit. Where I come from, people tend to remember the negative impacts more than the positive.

The ACUNS conference presented me with a new perspective about northern science and I developed a personal agenda to break the “southern researcher” stereotype. I think avoiding segregation between aboriginal peoples and non-aboriginal people in the North can only work if both parties collaborate on the same goal. I spoke to a few university students who were very active and motivated to work in the North with Inuit, and I tried to help them understand the Inuit’s perspective on their research ideas. Inuit are generally very straightforward, and they will ask a student or scientific researcher the basic question: why are you here and what is the purpose of your thesis? What will this research and your thesis do for our community?

A small number of Inuit were panelists and gave significant insight and contributed discussion to various presentations. Sheila Watt-Cloutier who represents Canadian Inuit is well-known for filing a case with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights in defending Inuit against the impacts of climate change. Her presence and keynote speech reminded me about the importance of my attendance at this conference because I will return to my Arctic home with a renewed vision to work more with southerners.

The recent Governor-General’s throne speech which occurred a week before the conference, excited the academic community because it spoke much about Canada’s role in the North. The conference’s participants mentioned that this speech means future financial contributions to the infrastructure of northern research and logistics in Canada’s Arctic; ideas about what will be needed to develop and establish an infrastructure for Arctic research stations in the next 25 years. What will the impact be on aboriginal communities? It’s not just climate change that will have a dramatic effect on northern peoples and the environment. The common trend seen elsewhere in the world is the concentration of populations into larger communities. What will happen to the viability of smaller communities? All of these considerations made me think about the culture and present day way of life in the Arctic. I already see the influence of Internet in my remote community. If a hunter wants to go out on the land to fish at some remote hunting grounds, that hunter can check the Internet for weather forecasts, and download GPS maps from various websites. The traditional knowledge of weather forecasts and sense of direction is being influenced by technology, and the modern shortcut to this information is replacing the traditional Inuit way of life.

The ACUNS conference introduced me to a new awareness that southern researchers are on a mission! A mission based on past research done by their

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Reflections

Nancianne Grey-Gardiner

Nancianne was attracted to IISD’s Arctic internship through her personal interest in natural resources management, particularly circumpolar mineral exploration and ecotourism. Previously, Grey-Gardiner worked in the finance department of the municipal office of the Northern Village of Kangirsuk. Through Grey-Gardiner’s internship, the Nunavik youth is exploring how Arctic youth perceive the problem of waste in their communities. In the end, she wants to open the doors of environmental change for northern youth.

Inuit Youth Perspective…

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academic peers, and travel to the North to conduct studies and write a thesis based on their findings. Before attending this conference, I have only had the unique experience of working with Inuit in my community, and very little collaboration with science researchers. The Inuit perspective that I’m aware of is that Inuit often dismiss scientific studies, especially on harvested wildlife species. Many Inuit believe they have the answers to many of the questions scientists propose to investigate in subjects like glaciology, wildlife, geology and social issues in their environment. Maybe this contributes to the complicated reasons why Inuit students are not studying science in southern universities. It’s an unfortunate fact that Inuit from remote Arctic communities simply don’t have the same level of education and access to scientific opportunities as their counterparts in the South. Inuit youth have more difficulty meeting educational requirements to enter college and universities in southern Canada. Someday, I want to see more aboriginal northerners participate in conferences like this, not only as contributors to roundtable discussions, but as students with affiliated universities who conduct and lead Arctic research.

A Northern Perspective…

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As northerners it is our responsibility to recognize that we don’t always make it easy for researchers to find the important information they need. Research permit applications must be straightforward and easy to find. So too must points of contact within government organizations, communities and First Nations so researchers are able to make necessary connections. We must also be patient, realizing that many researchers are not familiar with northern practices, acknowledging that they will occasionally make mistakes, forgive them for those mistakes and help to teach them so that they will not repeat those mistakes in the future.

Building on initial communication and information exchange, training programs must be established that help researchers working in the North develop necessary skills. These programs should provide training for both researchers working in the North and residents of the North, allowing the two groups to better understand and learn from each other. In this context researchers would learn how to appropriately work with northern communities and northerners would be given the opportunity to build capacity through training to conduct research themselves or aid researchers in their work.

The shifts of perception necessary to truly move northern research forward will not be instantaneous, but it will come; in fact, many are already underway. I recently attended the ACUNS Student Conference: Melting Boundaries: Carrying out Effective Research in the Circumpolar World. Many conference sessions focused on researcher obligations to communities and how to better meet these obligations. It was obvious that the majority of the conference participants felt very strongly about these issues and that they are already trying to make a difference within their own research programs. It is also important to recognize the contributions of many in the current senior northern research community. Programs such as ArcticNet and the Northern Contaminants Program have not only shown that collaboration with communities is possible, but that it is very beneficial for both sides. These initiatives are first steps. For a true shift in the way northern research is done, both researchers and northerners must be willing to work for it.
In early 2007, there was a call for youth to submit photos, drawings and poems about their North to be published on the Ookpik (www.ookpik.org) Web site. Here is a contribution from Caitlin Gammie.

My Life in the North

By Caitlin Gammie, Dawson City, Yukon

I like living in the North. It may be a challenge sometimes, but in the long run, it’s all worth it!

I’ve lived in the Yukon, particularly Dawson City, for 16 years (all my life). I love it here; how everyone gets along with each other, and how everyone is so friendly. I love my small town. Some may say: “well there’s nothing there to do,” but I disagree. Just because we don’t have a movie theatre, fast food restaurants or a bowling alley, doesn’t mean there’s nothing to do. Lots of the kids play volleyball for the school teams, and all kinds of people play hockey, curling, baseball and many other things. There are tonnes of things to do here, but if you’re used to the big city and all its glitz and glamour, Dawson City may not be the place for you.

Many kids graduate in Dawson City and can’t wait to get out of this so called “dump,” but in the end, about half end up back here. They go out and see that the city is a cruel, unfriendly place.

Many people ask if I see the North in my future. I used to say “no way.” But now that I’m getting older and closer to graduating (one-and-a-half years to go), I realize that I really love it here. I also used to think that since I had to go out to Alberta to get the schooling I wanted, that Alberta or British Colombia was where I was really going to end up living. I also thought that the career I want to pursue wasn’t up here. But the more and more I think about it, the more I like the idea of coming back here, and continuing my life here. I’m definitely planning on coming back to the Yukon or just the North in general.

The career I’m interested in is Equine Activities (horse stuff). I plan on attending college in Alberta to get my degree in horse sciences. I then plan to get a degree in equine massage therapy and chiropractic sciences. I am now starting to think about opening up a stable in the Yukon somewhere. If I build it, they will come…..The equine massage therapy and chiropractic sciences. I am now starting to think about the career I want to pursue wasn’t up here. But the more and more I think about it, the more I like the idea of coming back here, and continuing my life here. I’m definitely planning on coming back to the Yukon or just the North in general.

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Anouncements…..continued from page 1

Recruiting Inuit Field Program

The 2008 Circumpolar Inuit Schools on Board Field program is a major outreach program of the International Polar Year Circumpolar Flaw Lead System Study—a Canadian-led international research project that will examine the physical-biological coupling within the flaw lead system near Banks Island in the Canadian high Arctic. The program will bring together Inuit Youth from Inuvialuit, Nunavut, Nunavik, and Nunatsiavut; and one youth from Alaska, Greenland, northern Europe or Russia. The goal is to introduce Arctic climate change research to youth and integrate it with traditional knowledge.

Interested Inuit and indigenous youth must apply through our northern partners and complete the participant application. To see if there is an agency in your area contact: gisla@cc.umanitoba.ca or visit our website http://www.ipy-cfl.ca.

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Assistant Editor: Carolee Buckler.

Contributors: Carolene Buckler; Amber Church, Nancianne Grey-Gardiner, Harry Bofase and Caitlin Gammie.

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IISD’s vision is better living for all—sustainably: its mission is to champion innovation, enabling societies to live sustainably. IISD operates with support from the Government of Canada, the Government of Nunavut, Nunavik, and Nunatsiavut; and one youth from Alaska, Greenland, northern Europe or Russia. The goal is to introduce Arctic climate change research to youth and integrate it with traditional knowledge.

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