

Office of Aboriginal and Northern Studies: Director's Report 2008

This past year, the Office of Aboriginal and Northern Research entered the second year of our SSHRC Aboriginal Research grant and our final year of our Northern Research Development Program grant. Both these grants were targeted toward developing and exploring certification for the Innu Environmental Guardians Program (IEGP) as well as researching and creating alternative educational pathways for at-risk Innu youth. Three modules were offered as part of the IEGP, two of which were accredited through SMU under the Atlantic Canada Studies Program and through the Division of Continuing Education—Innuts mak Atikwuts: The Innu and Caribou in a Shared Landscape; 8,000 years of Innu Culture and History in Northern Nitassinan (a.k.a. Fieldwork in Archaeology, September-October, 2006), Woodland Caribou Management (March, 2007) and Climate Change (September 2007). As a result, we now have a proposed Innu Studies Program being collaboratively designed with the Innu Nation in which the IEGP and other potential certification programs can be included. Alexander MacLeod, ACS B.A. program coordinator, and now Betty MacDonald replacing Linda Macdonald from the Division of Continuing Education, have been assisting with this process.

New to the program was the participation of at-risk Innu youth in our educational modules. Following our first module, we initiated a video production training project for the youth in the communities of Sheshatshiu and Natuashish. This training was viewed as a way to increase the youths' skills in interviewing and documenting their own heritage, and as an avenue of expression for them to tell their own stories. Supplemental funding was provided by the Aboriginal Human Resource Development Agency. One Innu youth subsequently was hired onto a film shoot in Northern Ontario and we are planning further youth involvement in the coming years pending funding.

We also received a \$77,000 grant from the Northern Ecosystems Initiative, Environment Canada to develop a climate change module and to research indicators of climate change from both Innu and Western scientific perspectives. We worked closely with climatologist, Dr. John Jacobs from Memorial University of Newfoundland, who was also the instructor for the Climate Change module. Napess Ashini from the community of Sheshatshiu and some of the Guardians worked with Dr. Jacobs to discuss Innu indicators of climate change.

In January, 2008, we began a project with the Federal-Nova Scotia-Mi'kmaq Tripartite subcommittee on heritage and culture to assess the potential for the development of a Mi'kmaw place names web site. The web site is envisioned to be for the general public and assist in raising awareness of the longstanding heritage of Mi'kmaq in Nova Scotia. As a consequence of the research, we will also be reviewing and hopefully renewing the GRI's Memorandum of Understanding with the Traditional Aboriginal Rights and Research Centre.

Two other major proposals have been put forward for the next three years. The first is an International Polar Year (IPY) proposal in partnership with the Innu Nation Environment Office, the Smithsonian Institute's Arctic Studies Centre, and the University of the Arctic, Memorial University of Newfoundland,

the University of Alaska, Pinegrove Productions, and the Tshikapisk Foundation. The second is an Aboriginal Health and Human Resources Initiative (AHHRI) proposal to develop an educational path for Innu health workers. Our partners include MUN, Environment Canada, the University of the Arctic, the Tshikapisk Foundation, the Sheshatshiu and Natuashish Band Councils and the Innu Nation Environment Office.

Also new this year is my role as the SMU representative on the Atlantic Association of Universities subcommittee researching barriers to Aboriginal participation in post secondary institutions and the Atlantic Aboriginal Economic Development Integrated Research Program committee. I also continue as the SMU representative to the University of the Arctic and attended the Member's Council meeting in Arkhangelsk, Russia last spring. Other activities included presentations at the Transnational Governance Mechanisms in Borderland Regions conference; the Atlantic Canada Studies conference, Knowledge in Action with Richard Nuna and Anthony Jenkinson from the Innu Nation, and Margaret Harry and Alexander MacLeod from the SMU faculty; and the Imaginaire du nord conference at the Nouvelle Sorbonne in Paris at which I co-presented with Valerie Courtois from the Innu Nation Environment Office. I was a contributor to the book "The Authentic Dissertation" by Don Four Arrows Jacobs, and have been asked to write the chapter on Mi'kmaw culture and history for the Native Peoples: The Canadian Experience, edited by Christopher Fletcher and C. Roderick Wilson. I also co-taught the ACS M.A. seminar course, Indigenous Peoples of Atlantic Canada, Contemporary Issues with Gillian Allen, and am M.A. thesis advisor to a Mi'kmaw student, Caroline Johnson, in the ACS program. Finally, Mike Carey has come on board as a research assistant this year. Mike recently graduated from Mount Allison University and has been assisting with the Mi'kmaw toponym project.