

## Office of Aboriginal and Northern Studies: Director's Report 2009

We have been continuing to work closely with the Innu Nation of Labrador to create unique, community-based and community-driven educational programs, as well as to formalize these programs within the SMU curriculum. This past year, we received an International Polar Year Grant (IPY) to assist in building the capacity of Innu Environmental Guardians to monitor and document Climate Change in Nitassinan, their ancestral lands. Our IPY was submitted as part of a University of the Arctic education and outreach “cluster”, with me as the Principal Investigator, in partnership with Valerie Courtois and the Innu Nation Environment Office; Climatologist, Dr. John Jacobs of Memorial University of Newfoundland, Dr. Stephen Loring, Arctic Studies Centre, Smithsonian Institute; and Dr. Elena Sparrow, University of Alaska. To date, two educational modules dealing with climate change have been offered to the Innu Environmental Guardians. These modules were held at areas of significance to the Innu within their ancestral lands—the first off the Phase III of the Trans-Labrador highway, and the second along the Grand Lake Road. Field tents and the boreal forest acted as our classrooms, and Innu Protected Sample Plots were created for ongoing monitoring of change.

The IPY is supplemented by the SSHRC Aboriginal Research Grant, now in its final year. The SSHRC Northern Development Grant is currently reaching completion, and I, along with Valerie Courtois of the Innu Nation, and Dr. Margaret Harry, Dr. Alexander MacLeod, and Linda MacDonald of SMU, are discussing potential publication of the findings.

We are also attempting to work with the Innu Band Councils on an educational survey to determine the needs of the Innu Band and Nation members for continued development of programs. We hope this survey will be completed this summer, and that it will inform the Innu Nation and SMU faculty and staff of a working basis for a program design.

I was a co-investigator on a Canadian Council on Learning Grant submitted by the members of the Atlantic Association of Universities Working Committee on Aboriginal Issues, on which I sit. The grant, entitled, “Retention of Aboriginal Students in Atlantic Canada’s Post-secondary Institutions: An analysis of the supports available to Aboriginal students,” was submitted by Vianne Timmons, Principal Investigator and former co-Chair of the committee. Co-investigators included: Fred Wien, Dalhousie, Laurel Lewey, St. Thomas University, Lindsay Marshall, Cape Breton University, and Bernadette Power, MUN. Alana Lee was hired as the co-researcher for the Halifax area. This research was conducted to identify Aboriginal students’ perceptions of the social and academic supports, and lack of these supports, available to them in universities in Atlantic Canada.

I assisted in a project coordinating a national survey on Urban Aboriginal Peoples for Environics Institute. Halifax is one of ten Canadian cities where 250 Aboriginal people are expected to participate in the surveys necessary for completion of this baseline research. We hired and trained ten First Nations and Metis researchers to undertake the research.

As a follow up to the Mi'kmaw Place Names Development Report that I submitted in 2008, The Mi'kmaq-Nova Scotia-Canada Tripartite Forum, Culture and Heritage Working Committee, Mi'kmaw Place Name Sub-Committee requested a sample Mi'kmaw Place Names website demonstration be developed for the committee. Working with Bill Jones, a geomatics expert at ADI Ltd. we developed a sample. Pending approval from the Tripartite Officials Committee, we hope to begin developing funding to support the full development of the website in cooperation with a number of Mi'kmaw communities and organizations.

At the international level, I attended the Gargia Conference in northern Norway to discuss a possible partnership with Finnmark University College. Participants in the conference came from Russia, Canada, Norway and Finland and discussed topics relating to innovative development of the North "through the cooperation of science, local communities and business; and establishing contacts with foreign colleagues for the purpose of international cooperation within the framework of UArctic Northern Governance and Development Thematic Network." Locally, SMU offered its' second, on-line UArctic Bachelor of Circumpolar Studies course this year, taught by Dr. Jeanette Ireland in the Anthropology Department. This year, I acted as the Site Coordinator for the courses in the absence of Dr. Shelley Tulloch of the Anthropology Department.

Two publications are forthcoming in the coming year. The first is a chapter co-authored with Roger Lewis, ethnologist for the Nova Scotia Museum, in *Native Peoples: The Canadian Experience*, Oxford University Press. The second is anticipated in the fall with Cape Breton University Press: *Another Look in the Mirror: Research into the Foundations for Developing a Cross-Cultural Science Curriculum for Mi'kmaw Students*. Two presentations were made at the Aboriginal Economic Development Initiative Research Project (AEDIRP) conference on "Life-Long Learning" in Fredericton.

Finally, I continue to represent SMU at the University of the Arctic Members Council meetings. This year to be held in Kiruna, Sweden. As well I was acting-Chair of the Northern Studies Committee, and I represent SMU on the Aboriginal Economic Development Initiative Research Project, a multi-Atlantic Canada university committee working in collaboration with the Atlantic Policy Conference of First Nations Chiefs.