

FISSSH TALES

Faculty of Indigenous Studies, Social Sciences and Humanities NEWSLETTER

The UNBC Faculty of Indigenous Studies, Social Sciences and Humanities is grateful to work and learn on the traditional territory of the Lheidli T'enneh First Nation. We take seriously our responsibility to live in good relation with the original occupants of this land.

Our Faculty is also committed to UNBC's values on equity, diversity and inclusion. We believe that social and cultural diversity is core to enriching the learning environment of a modern university. The confluence of diversity and respectful discussion stimulates creative thoughts, new ways of thinking, and new pathways of inquiry.

DEAN'S MESSAGE



Dr. Kriston Rennie

This edition of our Faculty (FISSSH Tales) Newsletter finds its readers at the end of another semester, in what I hope has been a successful start to the 24/25 academic year for all FISSSH students, faculty, and staff.

Delivering on its commitment to the foundational Indigenous, Social Sciences, and Humanities disciplines, the Faculty is currently offering over 100 courses this semester across multiple fields of academic study and programs. Recognising some new contributors to this mission, we're delighted to welcome Drs Erica Kilius (Anthropology), Barrie Blatchford (History), and Taylor Morphett (English) to the Faculty and their first semester at UNBC. On the support side of the house, I'd also like to welcome Zandra Holt and Mansi Manocha to the administrative team.

Both of our Faculty Committees have been engaged in a variety of activities this Fall semester. The newly-assembled Teaching & Learning Committee (Chaired by Dr. Wessell

Lightfoot) is working on an exciting curriculum, recruitment, and retention initiative that we hope to implement for Fall 2025, while the Research Committee (Chaired by Dr. Bouchard) has been hosting events that showcase our relevant, creative, innovative, and curiosity-driven research and scholarship.

The Faculty's common space ('FISSSH Bowl') continues to take shape in the administrative building. It's reassuring to see its increased use for professional and social gatherings, which was our hope and intention. As the collection of furniture grows, the most exciting addition to the room hangs proudly on one wall. My thanks to Dr. Lisa Dickson for creating some special artwork to adorn our shared space, which I encourage everyone to visit and appreciate when you get the chance.

Looking externally, but related to our mission to equip students with the necessary skills and experience to tackle the complex challenges and opportunities facing our communities, many FISSSH activities and achievements are enjoying greater exposure thanks to our new social media content creator, Joyce Cortez, and the supporting work of our Engagement Advisor, Dr. Shauna LaTosky. Keep a close eye on our social media channels (esp. Instagram), and future community- and school-facing initiatives into the New Year.

In the following pages you'll meet two of our new faculty members, learn about the many events being hosted, the outcome of active research agendas, exciting grant success, and much more. As always, a big 'Thank You' to our Newsletter organizers and contributors. Happy Reading!

FACULTY SPOTLIGHT: DR. BARRIE BLATCHFORD

Assistant Professor, History

What drew you into environmental history?

It was a few things. The most salient reason is my belief that today's environmental challenges are the biggest threat we face as a species. Can we sustain our species' existence – and that of many of our fellow creatures – over the next few centuries? There are reasons to be uncertain about that, at the very least. Beyond the possibly existential threat of climate change, environmental problems pose serious developmental and quality-of-life issues in the present and near-term future. Environmental limits, pollution, disasters, and resource inequity currently degrade – and curtail – the lives of billions of people, a situation likely to worsen in a warming world with a still-increasing population. I think attention to these matters is urgent and necessary, and I find that studying the history of environmentalism/conservation, state-directed environmental policy, and historical efforts to “improve” or enhance nature to be instructive for thinking about our contemporary environmental concerns.

I was also motivated to pursue environmental history as it is an alliance of my two favorite undergraduate subjects, History and Biology. A third reason is that I have always loved and been fascinated by animals, and historical human relationships with them. I know animal-centered histories often strike people as offbeat or frivolous, but I have found that humanity's historical instrumentalization of animals is often more consequential than one might think. For example, in studying historical animal “acclimatization” – that is, the intentional establishment of non-native species in new ecosystems – I found a story about technological optimism, scientific prestige, nationalism, and settler colonialism, not just someone's desire to hunt a new animal or behold an attractive bird.



Dr. Barrie Blatchford

What is your current research and/or book project about?

My book project derived from my dissertation is a study of animal acclimatization in America from roughly 1840 until the 1970s. In addition to positing a different set of motivations for acclimatization (which I indicated above), I show how popular and sustained animal acclimatization efforts were. These ranged from trying to induce salmon runs all over the nation and many other parts of the world to decades-long experiments with a kaleidoscopic array of non-native game birds, some of which happily reside in the United States today. The research for this took me to many different archives from coast to coast: Philadelphia, New York City, and Washington, DC, to Kansas City, California, and Hawaii, among others. I remain eternally grateful to institutions like the Smithsonian, the American Philosophical Society, SSHRC, and the Consortium for the History of Science, Technology, and Medicine for partially funding these adventures, without which my research would have been deeply impoverished.

I have some other projects on the go, too. I am working on the history of the American commercial animal trade. Here I am looking to understand both the production and consumption sides of the historical animal trade – how Americans obtained animals, transported them thousands of miles, and retailed them, and also why Americans bought them, with particular focus on trying to understand the appeal of exotic pet ownership. I would like this research to eventually evolve into a book – so far, I have managed to publish an article about it. Readers can find it here, open access, if they wish:

<https://books.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/arthistoricum/catalog/book/1415/chapter/20436>

A final project that I am actively working on is an environmental history of the modern American fur garment industry. This examines the fur industry from roughly 1867 and goes to the present. I think the modern fur industry is an excellent window into environmental change in the US – the development of fur farming, the introduction of new species, like nutria – and the growth of the animal rights movement, too. It also sheds light on the mass marketing of animal commodities and how fashion trends could cause far-flung environmental damage.

How does the exotic animal trade in the US compare historically to the animal trade in Canada?

This is a good question! I do not know, to be honest. I suspect that, historically, Canadians had less access to exotic animals than Americans and less disposable income to spend on them, but I cannot be sure. I know anecdotally of many stories of people having pet snakes, monkeys, and so on. I doubt Canada has the history of exotic big cat ownership that the US does, though, because I think the climate is much less congenial. But more research is needed!

FACULTY SPOTLIGHT: DR. CHRISTINE CAMPANA

Assistant Professor, English

What drew you to Indigenous literatures?

I study Indigenous literatures both because I am enthralled by the stories Indigenous writers tell, and to learn from these writers about Indigenous priorities for building more meaningful relationships on their lands. Although I enjoyed the Indigenous texts with which I engaged during my undergraduate and MA degrees, it was not until my PhD that I began to seriously study Indigenous literatures and consider the important implications of this area of scholarship. When I applied to my PhD at Western University, I thought of myself as a Canadian scholar, and I planned to study Canadian literature. Taking graduate courses and my primary comprehensive exam in Indigenous literatures changed my perspective. Through engaging with Indigenous literatures, I came to appreciate that Turtle Island is Indigenous land and my family and I, who came to this land from locations such as Britain and Italy, are settlers who continue to benefit from its theft. Indigenous literatures, I believe, is a way to listen to and learn from Indigenous peoples about how to respect their lands and sovereignty better. From the first works of Indigenous literature I studied, I loved thinking about the important stories and relationalities the writers offered, and I continue to enjoy reading and learning from Indigenous authors about their particular modes of being, travelling on, and relating to their lands.



Dr. Christine Campana

Can you tell us a bit about your current research and/or book project?

I am developing a book that responds to and reimagines the genre of travel poetry by Indigenous, diasporic, and settler writers who live in Canada. Through studying works about travel on and beyond Turtle Island, I will consider the ways that very different forms of travel can be foundational to the project of settlement, but also vital to decolonization. While the travel genre has historically been dominated not only by men, but by prose, memoir, and realist travel writers, I will explain how studying works by women of varying positionalities can offer new ways to perceive possibilities of travel as well as relationships formed via movement. Putting Indigenous writers from different nations into conversation with Black diasporic writers and white settler writers will illuminate how people of varying positionalities may portray their travels, displacements, and responsibilities towards Indigenous peoples when moving on Indigenous lands. Through analyzing writing and attending to Indigenous theories, I hope my book will demonstrate that depictions of real and imagined poetic journeys across and beyond Turtle Island may convey how travel can be both a violent colonial force of displacement and a means of imagining paths forward towards better relationalities between peoples and with the Indigenous lands on which we live.

Who are some of your favourite Indigenous authors?

From my first time reading their works, to my study of their pieces during my PhD, and into my continuing research, I have loved poetry by Cree writer Louise Bernice Halfe/Sky Dancer, Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg writer and activist Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, and Stó:lō writer Lee Maracle. I find their integration of stories from their nations, Indigenous languages, and humour into their poetic works continues to captivate and amaze me, even after I have read their work so many times. I also love writing by Cherie Dimaline (Métis), Eden Robinson (Haisla and Heiltsuk), and Katherena Vermette (Métis). I had the privilege of including novels by these writers in my literature classes this year, and it has been exciting to discuss these works with students. Now that I live in Prince George, I am reading more works by Indigenous writers from Northern B.C. Last summer, I read two memoirs by Dane Zaa, Nehiyaw, Métis and mixed Euro-descent writer Helen Knott, and I also find her work incredibly beautiful. There are so many amazing Indigenous people sharing their stories through a variety of artful forms these days, and I am grateful to study and teach their works with UNBC's Department of English.

FACULTY UPDATES

Dr. Troy Bordun received the UNBC Faculty Association Wendy Fellers Award. These funds will support his research on online adult content creators and his presentation of that research at the Society for Cinema and Media Studies conference, April 2025.

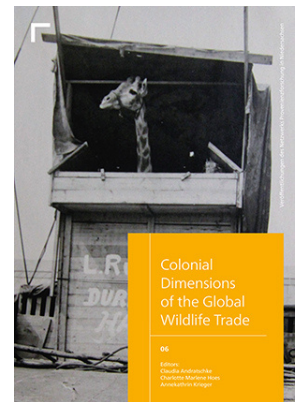
Dr. Maryna Romanets was a visiting Professor, Jagiellonian University, Faculty of Philology (Poland, 16 April–16 June 2024). She was also the Co-organizer and Chair of the roundtable “Ghosts from the Bloodlands: Eastern European Gothic and the War,” ASEES Convention (October 2024), an online ASEES Convention (Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies).

RECENT AND FORTHCOMING PUBLICATIONS

Blatchford, Barrie

Blatchford, Barrie (2024). 'A Monkey in Every Home': Henry Trefflich, Colonial Networks, and the American Commercial Animal Trade."

<https://books.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/arthistoricum/catalog/book/1415/chapter/20436>

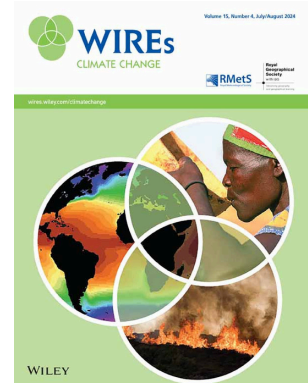


Daoust, Gabrielle

Gabrielle Daoust and Synne L. Dyvik (2024). 'Homes for Ukraine' and the politics of private humanitarian hospitality. *Review of International Studies*.

<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210524000470>

Gabrielle Daoust and Jan Selby (2024). Climate change and migration: A review and new framework for analysis. *WIREs Climate Change*, 15, e886. <https://doi.org/10.1002/wcc.886>



Jan Selby, Gabrielle Daoust, Anwasha Dutta, Jonathan K. Gamu, Esther Marijnen, Ayesha Siddiqi, and Mark Zeitoun (2024). The many faces of environmental security. *Annual Review of Environment and Resources*, 49, 395-418. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-environ-112922-114232>.

LaTosky, Shauna

LaTosky, Shauna, and Pascale de Robert (2024). 'To Wear, or Not to Wear': Symbolism and Technology of Labrets in Mun (Ethiopia) and Mebêngôkre (Brazil)', in Franz Manni, and Francesco d'Errico (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of the Archaeology and Anthropology of Body Modification*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780197572528.013.23>,

Romanets, Maryna

Received from Manchester University Press a contract offer for Russo-Soviet Imperialist Hauntings: NeoGothic Geographies in Central and Eastern Europe Since 1989 (November 2024).

Sims, Daniel

Tara Erb, Krista Stelkia, Robert Hancock, Daniel Sims, Evan Adams, Nadine Caron and Jeffrey Reading, (2014). "Supporting Indigenous Graduate Student Health Research Capacity: Mentorship Through a Provincial Health Research Network Environment in British Columbia, Canada," International Journal of Indigenous Health 20(1): 1-11.

Wilson, Gary

Gary N. Wilson and Gail Fondahl (2024). "Ethnofederalism and Indigenous Self-Determination in Northern Canada and the Russian Federation." The Polar Journal. 14(1): 68-88.

Barbara Oke and Gary N. Wilson (2024). "Health Services Impacts and Extractive Industries: Experiences from Health Service Leaders Operating in a Resource Dependent Region." The Extractive Industries and Society. 19: 1-10

INTERNATIONAL STUDIES STUDENT ASSOCIATION

Hello there!

We're the International Studies Student Association (ISSA)! You might recognize the name from a few years ago, and we're excited to announce that we're bringing ISSA back to life! Our mission is to create a welcoming, diverse, and inclusive space for all students international and domestic, no matter your program at UNBC.

If you're looking to connect, make new friends, and explore the incredible cultural diversity within UNBC's student community, keep an eye out for us. We're kicking things off with events in the winter semester. We're just getting started, there's plenty more to come after that!

ARCHAEOLOGY FIELD SCHOOL AT TSE'K'WA

This past summer the Department of Anthropology offered the Archaeology Field School at Tse'k'wa, located at Charlie Lake, B.C. This was the thirteenth field school directed and taught by Dr. Farid Rahemtulla, and the second one conducted in partnership with the Tse'k'wa Heritage Society. University students and members of several Treaty 8 communities spent 6 weeks in hands on learning about deep Indigenous history through survey, mapping, and excavation at one of the oldest archaeological sites in Canada. The group was joined by faculty and graduate students from the Department of Archaeology at Simon Fraser University. During excavations students recovered stone tools that date to several thousand years ago, and these will be analyzed in the coming year. The students also set up a booth to share their work with the public on National Indigenous Peoples Day. A brief video on the field school research can be viewed here.

https://youtu.be/SGH0MdVud_s



FACULTY PRESENTATIONS

Blatchford, Barrie

Research talks at two conferences in August: The American Historical Association Pacific Coast Branch annual conference in Honolulu, and the World Congress of Environmental History in Oulu, Finland.

Daoust, Gabrielle

'Exploring Critical Perspectives on Climate Security' workshop, hosted by the UK Ministry of Defence's Defence, Science and Technology Laboratory, the NATO Climate Change and Security Centre of Excellence, and the University of Cambridge in Cambridge, UK, (September 2024)

Youth and Women in Action: International Symposium on Conflict Prevention and Gender Equality', hosted by ACRA in N'Djaména, Chad (June 2024).

LaTosky, Shauna

"Without Girarri (African wild olive), We are Not Mun (Mursi): Building a Case for 'Cultural Keystone Places' in Southern Ethiopia" (with Olisarali Olibui). Society of Ethnobiology. St. Louis (April 25-28, 2024).

"The need for Cultural Keystone Practices thinking" (with Andreu Arinyo i Prats and Nancy Turner). Society of Ethnobiology. St. Louis (April 25-28, 2024).

"The biocultural importance of the indigenous fruit tree 'lomay' (Ximena americana) for maintaining women's health and social well-being in Mursi (Mun), Southern Ethiopia". CASCA, Sedimented Histories, Vial Trajectories. University of British Columbia Okanagan, Kelowna, British Columbia (May 15-18, 2024).

Co-organizer of the 4th International Rhetoric Workshop (IRW), Dubrovnik, Croatia, (June 24-26, 2024)

<https://www.internationalrhetoric.com/workshop-2024/>

Romanets, Maryna

"The corpse that sits up and talks back': European Neo-Gothic Fictions After the Fall of the Berlin Wall," Research Symposium, Doctoral School in the Humanities, Jagiellonian University (June 2024).

"Independence, Porno-Chic, and Decolonization," Faculty of Philology, Jagiellonian University (May 2024).

Sims, Daniel

"Indigenous Circle Session 4: The Effects of Climate on Traditional Lands," Association for Preservation Technology, National Trust Joint Conference, Montreal (November 16, 2024).

"Rethinking the Land: A Round Table," 2024 Annual Meeting of the Social Sciences History Association, (November 3, 2024).



UPCOMING EVENTS

UNBC Arts Club is hosting monthly creative writing support groups.

Student Creative Writing Anthology, Pulp Mill Fiction Vol. 4, submissions are OPEN until January 31st. The following link will take you to the journal's website, where submissions are to be made:

<https://ojs.unbc.ca/index.php/pmf/about/submissions>

Ecosocialist/Ecofeminist Club hosting craft nights and readings/discussions. Contact: eetclub@unbc.ca.

Global Friday Speaker Series

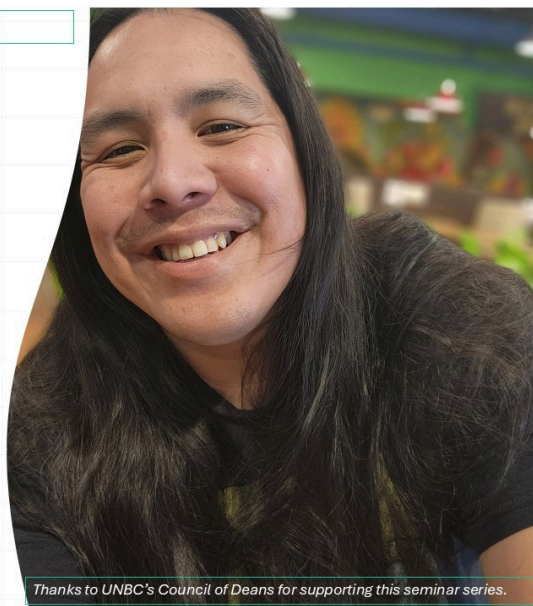
For information on the events scheduled in the Winter semester, visit: <https://www.unbc.ca/global-and-international-studies/global-friday-speakers-series>

RECENT EVENTS

Dr. Daniel Sims and Dr. Christine Ho Youngusband held a Blanket Exercise with incoming teacher candidates. The Blanket Exercise is an interactive way of learning the history of Canada developed by KAIROS. This event was connected to the National Day of Truth and Reconciliation.

The Research Committee hosted *"Gutting the American Elections: A FISSSH Perspective"* to dissect Donald J. Trump's victory in the American election and discussed the significance of this election to Canada and the world at large.

ReconciliAction: Tools for the Classroom – 2024-2025	
<h2>The Illusion of Reconciliation in the Classrooms</h2>	
<p>In this presentation, we will challenge the conditioning of a settler colonial society.</p>	
<p>GITZ CRAZYBOY "M.Ed" (he/him/his) is a Siksikaitstapi (Blackfoot) and Dene father and Indigenous Educator from Mohkínsstsisí (Calgary). Gitz's passion and purpose is helping, guiding, and most importantly, learning from the next generation, and he has held many positions within the youth education profession.</p>	
<p>Time: 6 December 2024 @ 12:00 pm PDT</p>	
<p>Location: Online</p>	
<p>Webinar ID: 691 6586 2179</p>	
<p>Webinar passcode: 074954</p>	
<p>All welcome!</p>	



Thanks to UNBC's Council of Deans for supporting this seminar series.

NEWS MEDIA



Gerald Bent

Documenting Xitl'ix, an Indigenous restorative justice system

Master of Arts in First Nations Studies graduate Gerald Bent was a recipient of the Pounamu Taonga Award at the First Nations Centre graduation in May.

<https://www.unbc.ca/our-stories/story/documenting-xitl'ix-indigenous-restorative-justice-system>

When connections take root

UNBC undergraduate Trisha McCreery received a 2024 Pounamu Taonga Award at the First Nations Centre graduation ceremony.

<https://www.unbc.ca/our-stories/story/when-connections-take-root>



Trisha McCreery



Dr. Daniel Sims

UNBC Panel Highlights Collective Responsibility in Reconciliation

The UNBC Community came together for a discussion on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action. Dr. Daniel Sims discussed UNBC's progress, followed by a panel that highlighted non-Indigenous responsibilities in advancing reconciliation.

<https://www.unbc.ca/our-stories/story/unbc-panel-highlights-collective-responsibility-reconciliation>

Megan Yaskow: Exploring Prince George's Identity Through Award-Winning Historical Research

UNBC History major Megan Yaskow received the W. Kaye Lamb Award earlier this year for Best Student Work for her research on the 1958 British Columbian centennial's role in shaping Prince George's identity. Through hands-on experiences at the Northern BC Archives and local museums, Megan developed a deep interest in public history and heritage studies, which continues to inspire her academic journey.

<https://www.unbc.ca/our-stories/story/megan-yaskow-exploring-prince-georges-identity-through-award-winning-historical-research>



Megan Yaskow



*Dr. Dana Wessell Lightfoot (right)
Dr. Alexandra Guerson (left)*

UNBC researchers receive \$300,000 in federal funding

History professor Dr. Dana Wessell Lightfoot and co-Principal investigator University of Toronto Associate Professor Teaching Stream Dr. Alexandra Guerson in the Jewish quarter of Girona, Spain.

<https://www.unbc.ca/our-stories/story/unbc-researchers-receive-300000-federal-funding>

Honouring women leaders shaping education and equality

Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a Institute (WWNI) President and Chief Executive Officer Dr. Deanna Nyce and UNBC Chancellor Darlene McIntosh are two of the inspiring women leaders helping to advance cultural awareness, reconciliation and equity at UNBC.

<https://www.unbc.ca/our-stories/story/honouring-women-leaders-shaping-education-and-equality>



Dr. Deanna Nyce and Darlene McIntosh



Dr. Luna K C

Developing a women's cyber self-defense toolkit

Global and International Studies Assistant Professor Dr. Luna K C has been awarded a \$50,000 Mobilizing Insights in Defence and Security (MINDS) Grant for an innovative research initiative aimed at combatting online gender-based violence.

<https://www.unbc.ca/our-stories/story/developing-womens-cyber-self-defense-toolkit>

A Prince George Exhibit Looks at Indigenous Body Modification through history to the present day. Interview with CBC Radio West (November 20, 2024).

<https://www.cbc.ca/listen/live-radio/1-96-radio-west/clip/16110355-a-prince-george-exhibit-looks-indigenous-body-modification>

Piercing Through Time: UNBC Students Take a Stab at Anthropological Body Modification. Interview with CKPGToday (November 18, 2024)

The anthropology department at UNBC is holding an exhibit highlighting piercing practices throughout history, illustrated through graphic design. This week, students are setting up an exhibit at UNBC. The exhibits will feature student research and the travelling exhibit "Piercing," courtesy of the Musée de l'Homme Paris, France.

<https://ckpgtoday.ca/2024/11/19/piercing-through-time-unbc-students-take-a-stab-at-anthropological-body-modification/>



Dr. Shauna LaTosky

SOCIAL MEDIA CONTENT CREATOR: JOYCE CORTEZ

Joyce Cortez is an MA student in International Studies and the new social media content creator for FISSSH. She worked part-time as a fashion reporter for Fashion Week Online and collaborated with designers for HitechMODA NYC and was part of the production crew for the New York Fashion Week. Joyce served as a social brand manager for a company in Australia where she wrote articles for South Australian Style Magazine, collaborated on jingle writing with a radio station in South Australia, and received approval for her initial BeSpoke proposal from Vogue Australia.



Joyce Cortez

THE UNITED NATIONS FLAG RAISING



The United Nations flag was raised by MA in International Studies Alumni Ekpeno Ukut and Monique LeFeuvre, Alumnus Oliveth Albert, and MA International Studies student Joyce Cortez at the Prince George City Hall. The UN Charter marked its 79th anniversary as a symbol of hope for the unity of the world. Proclaimed by Mayor Simon Yu and presented by City Councillor Tim Bennett

UNITED NATIONS PEACEKEEPING PHOTO EXHIBIT

On September 12, 2024, MA International Studies student Joyce Cortez led and organized the 75th United Nations Peacekeeping Photo Exhibit together with the United Nations Association in Canada and the UNBC Pre-Med Students Organization. The theme of the event was “The Role of RCMP Women Officers in Peacekeeping Missions to Commemorate the United Nations 75th Peacekeeping Anniversary and RCMP’s 150th Anniversary.” The UN and RCMP have a long history of collaboration. More than 4,000 RCMP officers have participated as peacekeepers in 33 countries, assisting in the rebuilding and development of security forces in nations undergoing conflict and instability. The invited speakers were George Somerwill, Former UN Peacekeeping Operations Director of Communications, Cpl. Jennifer Cooper, RCMP Prince George Communications NCO/Media Relations Officer, and hosted by City Councillor Garth Frizzell. UNAC Prince George recognized Holly Lanvin as a woman in UN peacekeeping for her involvement in East Timor’s transitional mission, or the UN Transitional Administration in East Timor.



Photo Credit: Alireza Noory, NBCGSS Director-at-Large

CREATING ENVIRONMENTALLY AND SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE SUSTAINABLE ENERGY AND RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT IN THE ARCTIC



Joyce Cortez, MA International Studies attended the Fall 2024 of the UArctic Academy for Sustainability in October 2024. The theme for this year was “Creating Environmentally and Socially Responsible Sustainable Energy and Resource Development in the Arctic.” The two-week intensive course was hosted at the Memorial University in Newfoundland and Labrador where the students’ discussion paper stems “Towards a Two-Directional Flow: Making Expert Knowledge Meaningful to Communities and Translating Community Knowledge to Decision-Makers,” Joyce’s discussion paper was, “Wind Energy: Balancing Sustainability and Innovation with Inuit Engagement” where she discussed the importance of meaningful engagement between Indigenous peoples, policymakers and the stakeholders in green energy initiatives for a more sustainable future.

Professor Emeritus Dr. Paul Bowles also attended the UArctic Academy for Sustainability as one of the instructors.

JOURNEY TO THE PERUVIAN AMAZON:

By Rubi J. Briones Venegas

This October, I went to the Indigenous Peoples Observatory Network (IPON) annual meeting to represent UNBC and the Environmental Change Research Group (ECRG website: <https://www.envchange.com/>), supervised by Dr. Tristan Pearce. I felt truly privileged to meet an incredible team of researchers who are actively working on projects with Indigenous communities in different regions of the world.

This year, the IPON researchers (website: <https://ipon-research.net/program/>) chose Peru as the venue for their annual meeting, and I felt lucky to have the opportunity to meet them in my home country. In this meeting, we visited two Indigenous communities in the Peruvian Central Amazon that belong to the Asháninka Indigenous people. Visiting these communities made me feel very fortunate because I could learn a lot firsthand about their worldview, traditional medicine, traditional knowledge transfer, climate change, gender, and their ongoing efforts to preserve their culture. They made us feel their warmth and their kindness since we arrived. They used paint made of “achiote” (in English: annatto) on our cheeks as a gesture to show that we are all the same and that we are “brothers and sisters” welcomed in their community.



They taught us the importance of their connection to their land and shared their food and drinks with us. One of the communities welcomed us with a dance that began in couples before expanding into a larger circle, illustrating their unity while inviting us to join in the celebration. They showed us how they grilled the fish they caught and used a wood raft to cross the river. It was not until we were invited to join that I realized the great skills needed to stand on the raft without falling in, as this was pretty hard for all of us IPON members. We visited a school in one of the communities where they taught us about aspects of their food system and environment. For example, their dances represented the importance of the Carachama fish and the Masato (a drink made of cassava) and the process of capturing a boa. One notable aspect was the communities' commitment to gender equality: One community has a woman as their leader, and the other emphasized their equal collaboration between women and men in community duties.

On a different note, I also saw how the Food and Agriculture Organization is creating a strategic platform for knowledge pairing in the school. Since this was my first experience seeing such collaboration with a community, it was very enlightening for me. That is because I recognize the relevance of the different stakeholders in the efforts to mitigate climate change impacts, such as the community, national and international organizations, researchers, and scientists. Seeing it gave me hope that we can all collaborate in this mission if we put in our efforts towards that.



Besides visiting the communities, we also had workshops to discuss information about each of the research projects with the researchers. I could learn about some of their methods, methodologies, and procedures used in different parts of the world. I was happy to be part of the activities and learn from their thoughts and knowledge. We also did a gender walk to reflect on how people in a community are more privileged or face more challenges due to their economic position and gender. This was very insightful because it was a role-play activity, and we could empathize with the different community roles.

I feel very honored to have been chosen to attend this annual meeting. I was thrilled to represent UNBC abroad, but I was also very excited because it confirmed my enthusiasm for research. My research will focus on working with Indigenous communities in the Peruvian Central Amazon to evaluate adaptation strategies implemented to address climate risks. I believe it will play a critical role in providing valuable insights to inform decision-makers and support the protection of this crucial and irreplaceable region: The Amazon.

I am very thankful to the IPON members and the Asháninka communities who allowed me to share with them and learn from them. I want to sincerely thank my supervisor, who was the first to encourage me to go and to represent UNBC and ECRG. I also want to thank my faculty (FISSSH) members and the Department of Geography, who were very supportive before and after my trip. I feel very happy for all the support I received. THANK YOU!



STAY IN TOUCH



We are located at:
3rd Floor, Administrative Building /
Charles McCaffray Hall

Advisor: April Tod, april.tod@unbc.ca

General Contact: fisssh@unbc.ca

[FISSSH Website](#)

Department Websites:

[Anthropology](#)

[English](#)

[First Nations Studies](#)

[Global and International Studies](#)

[History](#)

[Interdisciplinary Studies \(IDIS\)](#)

[Northern Studies](#)

[Political Science](#)

[Women's & Gender Studies](#)



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**Indigenous Studies,
Social Sciences and
Humanities**