

Human Security in the Arctic

GAPS: The Impacts of Oil and Gas Activity on Peoples in the Arctic Using a Multiple Securities Perspective - Canada Project Newsletter Number 1

An Annual Newsletter - covering April 2006 to April 2007

August 2007

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A brief project description

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Community consultations

GAPS researchers Gabrielle Slowey, Alana Kronstal, Jessica Simpson and Julia Christensen (left) visited a number of northern communities

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An important partner in GAPS

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Many university staff helped to get GAPS underway

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What is GAPS?

The last few weeks of the fiscal year of 2006-07, February and March of 07, saw a flurry of activity by GAPS researchers once IPY funding was confirmed in February 2007. But what exactly is our project about?

GAPS is looking at the impacts of oil and gas development on northern peoples and its effects on a range of factors, from local ecology and wildlife, to housing and health, to self-government and economic development. This research is especially critical as Northern communities have long expressed the interconnections of these factors in determining their well-being.

The Canadian GAPS project is part of an international project led by Prof. Gunhild Hoogensen of Tromsø University, Norway (see panorama page 3). Including our Russian and Norwegian colleagues, the GAPS research team numbers from 10-20 at any one time, depending on the season and how many young field assistants may be employed. Further details of the International Project may be found at www.ipy.org. The Canadian IPY website is located at www.ipycanada.ca.

Outreach

Each GAPS sub-project conducts its own outreach to communities. However, a newsletter on the GAPS initia-

tive in Canada has been developed to send out to communities to update them on GAPS activities. Additionally, early on in 2007, a GAPS website was established:

www.ipygaps.org.



Prof. Gunhild Hoogensen (right) and Russian GAPS colleague, Maria Lvova



Community consultations and preliminary fieldwork

Planning, planning and more planning!

In 2006-2007, GAPS researchers were busy finalizing their consulting with communities on research plans for 2007. Julia Christensen, Alana Kronstal (pictured above), Jessica Simpson and Gabrielle Slowey all conducted preliminary fieldwork and consultation visits to their research communities in the NWT and Yukon this summer. Community research needs were discussed and ideas shared. Feedback and collaboration from individuals and groups in the communities has been an integral part in the development of each sub-project. Gabrielle Slowey and Jessica Simpson will conduct further fieldwork in Fall 2007, with Alana Kronstal and Julia Christensen following suit in early 2008.

In addition to community consultations, Julia and Alana were busy meeting the requirements of their academic programmes at McGill and the University of Victoria, respectively. Alana's research focuses on the work of community-based mental health and addictions practitioners in the Northwest Territories. Her research is qualitative in nature and explores how health professionals view socio-economic change in relation to their professional practice as well as their perspectives on the future of mental health and addictions service delivery in the territory.

Julia is a PhD student and Alana is a MSc. They are both listed as Principal Investigators on the Canada GAPS IPY application, which is very unusual because large research proposals coming from universities traditionally only have professors listed as principal investigators. We sought to change this in our application and lots of time was spent achieving this.



Jessica Simpson

We were delighted to welcome the former director of the Arctic Indigenous Alliance to our research team

In February 2007, Professor Gabrielle Slowey of York's Political Science Department (above right) invited Jessica Simpson (above left), who was, at the time, Director of the Arctic Indigenous Alliance, to participate in GAPS.

In February, Gabrielle headed to Old Crow to meet with community members as well as to present her intended research activity to the Chief and Council. During her stay, she enjoyed temperatures of -40 and dogsledding by moonlight.

In March 2007, the Association of Graduate Students in the Biological Sciences of York University held their annual symposium. The theme was Global Climate Change. Following an introduction to the day by Karen Kraft Sloan, Canada's former Ambassador for the Environment, Jessica was one of the day's six symposium speakers. She spoke on changes and impacts on indigenous cultures.

<http://www.yorku.ca/yuevents/index.asp?Event=10587&Category=0&ShowCal=Y&TimeSame=Mar&Month=3&Year=2007>

<http://www.biol.yorku.ca/grad/Symposium/symposium2007/KraftSloan.pdf>

Later on in 2007, Jessica joined the Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board as their Community Liaison Officer. Congratulations, Jessica! Fortunately for us, Jessica will continue to be a part of GAPS.



Ecology & Ecosystems

Understanding how things will change

As a high school student in Mississauga, Ontario, Dawn Bazely (above with Paul Hertz and invasive giant hogweed plants from arctic Norway) was inspired by reading the book "This Land is Not for Sale" by Karmel and Hugh McCullum. Her school club made a written submission to the Berger Inquiry, and attended the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline hearings held in Toronto supporting the land claims of the Dene Nation and their position on the pipeline. Today, Dawn is an ecology professor at York University. She has extensive northern field experience in studying the impacts of herbivores such as lesser snowgeese, moose and reindeer on plant communities. Dawn is also interested in the movements of introduced or non-indigenous plants.

Together with PhD student, Nora Soana (pictured below), Dawn developed a project examining the interactions between grazing animals, tundra grasses and fungal endophytes. Fungal endophytes are invisible, microscopic fungi that occur in some grass plants. They can have a harmful effect on the animals and insects that eat them. In 2005 and 2006, we did extensive field work in Sweden, Norway and Nunavut. We found that these fungi are less common at northern latitudes and at higher elevations. Both a warming climate and re-vegetation projects are expected to favour northward movement of grasses holding the fungi.

In the shorter-term, the building of pipelines will provide routes for introduced plants to move into new areas. Future GAPS research will look into how traditional knowledge, geo-spatial technologies, and physical science can be integrated to predict the impacts of introduced plants.



Institutional Support

International Polar Year is a major undertaking for researchers and we would not be able to carry out this project without the help and support of many university staff

Rosalyn Reid



Rosalyn is Associate Director, Office of Research Services, York University

Michelle Lindsay



Michelle Lindsay is Manager Research Contracts and Intellectual Property, Office of Research Services, York University

Gisela Birmingham



Gisela Birmingham is Research Awards Officer, Office of Research Services, York University

University of Victoria



University of Victoria

Debra C. Anderson is Research Grants Officer, Office of Research Services, University of Victoria. She is Gisela's administrative contact at UVic. The signatory on the subgrant agreement is Richard Keeler, Assoc. V.P. Research.

McGill University



Maria Capizzi is Grants Officer, Research Grants Office, McGill University. She is Gisela's administrative contact at McGill. The signatory on the subgrant agreement is Janie Kwan, Interim Director, Research Grants Office.

We also thank Prof. George Wenzel, Geography Department, McGill University, Vicky Wang, Office of Research Accounting, York University, Heidi Isaksen, Tromsø University (who is helping to organize the August 2007 International Workshop in Norway - see top photo - that will bring the GAPS team face to face for the first time), and Rajiv Rawat (rajiv@yorku.ca), our website manager (<http://www.students.yorku.ca/~rajiv/>). Finally, Julia Christensen and Dawn Bazely thank the Norwegian government for their financial support during 2005-2006, which allowed preparation of the IPY GAPS project proposal.



This Newsletter was prepared by Annette Dubreuil, IPY Project Manager, and Dawn Bazely, Principle Investigator. Special thanks to all those who provided pictures, especially Milissa Elliott who provided some of the following beautiful photographs, including the one of herself doing field work. Milissa will be sampling plants along the future Mackenzie Gas Pipeline route in the upcoming year.

