Professors Mary Emery and Meredith Redlin had the opportunity to travel to Unalakleet, Alaska to visit Wendy Young a GP IDEA student. Unalakleet is a small Inupiaq village situated just south of the Arctic Circle on Norton Sound. Unalakleet is a village currently struggling to adapt to changing social, cultural, and environmental conditions while holding on to the Inupiaq traditional and lifestyle. They participated in many of the local activities. They fought the notorious Alaska mosquitoes while having a picnic on the Unalakleet River. They drove 12 miles to the end of the road and strapped on a gun and bear spray to walk on the tundra to an overlook marking the last human activity for hundreds of miles in any direction. Returning to the jeep they found that it would not start. Thankfully Mary’s numerous skills include car mechanics and she was able to fix the jeep.

Imported food is expensive and fresh food difficult to get. Mary and Meredith had the chance to eat many traditional foods while visiting such as salmon, herring eggs on sea kelp, muk–tuk (raw whale), and seagull eggs. They also had the chance to see the first king salmon arrive in the village and visit with locals as they began the process of cutting, drying, and smoking the salmon to preserve it for the winter.

Undaunted by the jeep experience they braved the river in a small boat used for generations of salmon fishing. Meredith took a four wheeler to explore the village and beaches. Nights were filled with conversations with locals about community development, resource use, and community resilience.

Spotlight: Professors Experience Community Development in the Arctic while Visiting GP IDEA Student

Meredith remarked that the biggest surprise of the trip was learning and seeing the limits of traditional community development planning in the context of an isolated community highly dependent on subsistence activity. Both Mary and Meredith believed that the most meaningful event in their trip was the generosity and openness of the Inupiaq people.

(continued...)
Spotlight: ...continued. Professors Experience Community Development in the Arctic while Visiting GP IDEA Student

As follow up, Meredith and Wendy are working on a paper for Journal of Society and Natural Resource Management and together with Mary are looking at submitting a proposal for the 2011 conference on Arctic social science in Iceland.

One of the ways faculty keep up-to-date in community development, is to spend time in the field learning from local people about what is working, why and who, and how it might work better. In return for the opportunity to experience different communities and learn with community members, we look for opportunities to give back such as the training in Nome. If you may have some ideas about how the faculty might assist with a project or program in your community, let us know. With funding cuts and increasing responsibilities, we cannot go everywhere, but we do look for opportunities that add value to students, faculty, and communities.

Faculty Spotlight!

Teresa Lamsam, an associate professor at the University of Nebraska at Omaha and professor with GP IDEA has received the 2010 Gutenberg Award for her work with Native communities and journalism. Dr. Lamsam’s current work focuses on historical trauma in Indian Country and using historical trauma as a frame for reporting on health in Indian Country. For more information on the Gutenberg award you can go to:

Student Spotlight!

Tia Thomas is the new publisher of the GP IDEA Community Development program newsletter. Also, she is a new student to the program, an enrolled member of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians in North Dakota, living in Minnesota and her background is in architecture and non-profit work. Please feel free to contact her with new topics for the newsletter!

SAC Connection

Feel free to contact anyone on the Student Advisory Council with questions and/or concerns you may have about the Community Development Program.

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Teresa Lamsam

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This newsletter is published by North Dakota State University, which does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, age, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, sex, marital status, disability, or status as a U.S. veteran. For more information about this newsletter, contact Tia Thomas, tia.thomas@ndsu.edu

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Fall 2011 EPA Science to achieve results fellowships for graduate study


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Social Sciences and Tribes and American Indian/Alaska Native/Pacific Islander Communities have been added as topic areas in response to the EPA Administrator’s priorities.