

For Immediate Release

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Images of research available upon request

University of Guelph SSHRC Vanier Scholar tells Oslo International Polar Year Conference that Canada's Arctic communities must have help with social problems in order to adapt to climate change

"Adaptation planning identifies opportunities to help Arctic communities cope with and adapt to current and expected future climatic change," says PhD Candidate and SSHRC Vanier Scholar Tristan Pearce. "This research demonstrates the need to consider the perspectives and experiences of local people for climate change research to have practical relevance to Arctic communities."

"The rapid pace of climate change in the Arctic has serious implications for Inuit and also for all Canadians," says Pearce. "But climate change is just one of many stresses affecting Arctic communities. Efforts need to be made to address current problems—such as housing shortages, substance abuse, inadequate education opportunities, loss of language, etc.—to help strengthen the capacity of communities to deal with climatic changes".

On June 9th, Pearce will present the findings of his research at the International Polar Year (IPY) conference in Oslo, Norway. Pearce's presentation, entitled "Inuit Vulnerability and Adaptive Capacity to Climate Change in Ulukhaktok, Northwest Territories, Canada", is based on research conducted as part of the IPY CAVIAR (Community Adaptation and Vulnerability in Arctic Regions) team.

"Inuit in Ulukhaktok are coping with climatic changes by taking extra precautions when traveling, switching species harvested, supplementing their diet with store bought foods, and shifting modes of transportation, travel routes and hunting areas to deal with changing trail conditions," explains Pearce. "Speaking at the International Polar Year conference is an opportunity to share with others the rapid changes that are occurring in the Arctic environment and how these changes are affecting the livelihoods of Inuit in the Canadian Arctic."

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Tristan Pearce is a PhD Candidate and SSHRC Vanier Scholar at the University of Guelph and Co-Director of ArcticNorth Consulting. His main research interests involve the integration of social, physical and health sciences and local/traditional knowledge in climate change vulnerability and adaptation research. He has undertaken this interdisciplinary and applied research throughout northern Canada and in partnership with First Nations and Inuit communities and government.

The Community Adaptation and Vulnerability in Arctic Regions (CAVIAR) project is based on assessments of the vulnerability of communities across the circumpolar Arctic to changing environmental conditions, including climate change. The research, under the auspices of International Polar Year (IPY), involves 26 case studies using a common framework and participatory methodology. The research outlines the ways in which communities experience environmental changes and explores adaptive strategies and adaptive capacity, including roles of governance institutions. More information is available at <http://www.ipy.org/projects/item/305-caviar-community-adaptation-and-vulnerability-in-arctic-regions>.

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