



Photos: Studio Terho Photography

Fulbright Arctic Initiative

Research to Transform Practices and Inform Policy Development

We know that complex problems require interdisciplinary solutions but how do we translate this into practice? The inaugural Fulbright Arctic Initiative (FAI) has done just that by creating an interdisciplinary and multinational team of researchers who are working together to understand the impact of change in the Arctic.

I am a health scientist from the State of Alaska, specializing in the impact of trauma and stress on health and well-being over the lifespan. My research project in Finland is used to create an on-line, open access toolkit on understanding and overcoming childhood trauma that can be shared by the eight countries that compose the Arctic region.

Due to the innovative and collaborative model of this initiative, we are also working on small group projects and all of our group is working collectively across disciplines on the over-arching issue of climate change. Through the FAI, we have the opportunity to change how we think, analyze and approach problem solving for some of the much complex issues we have ever faced in the Arctic.

Too often, we stay focused on how things look from the ground within our own area of expertise. From the very first FAI meeting held in Nunavut last May, my perspective elevated to a worldview across disciplines. Our group of research-

ers were led by several young adults out to the edge of the ocean ice to observe and discuss the effects of climate change. Our conversation as we walked past the local businesses and the cemetery, however, was on a very different topic—suicide, substance abuse, family violence and inter-generational trauma. It was at that moment that I realized that climate change is a major stressor that has not been considered in the work I do to help communities overcome adversities. Climate change can weaken the adaptive capacity and resilience of communities, in other words, the capacity to heal. Now, I find myself frequently reaching out to fellow Fulbrighters from different disciplines that I doubt I would have consulted in the past.

Fulbright Finland has helped me make an ever-expanding web of connections within my field and across disciplines that have taken me from the northern Sami region of Inari to the southern city of Helsinki with many stops in between to conduct my research. In short, the support I have received

from Fulbright Finland opened up doors that exceeded my wildest expectations. I am just beginning to analyze my data but there are some preliminary findings I am certain of. What I am learning from my research in Finland is going to trans-

form practices and inform policy development in the Arctic. And finally, this is not a one-time experience. New partnerships have emerged that are providing the foundation for future international collaborations between the United States (Alaska), Finland and beyond.

Thank you to the Fulbright Arctic Initiative and Fulbright Finland for creating a cutting-edge, interdisciplinary model

that builds on our collective strengths and will challenge and change how we conduct research.

*Text: Linda Chamberlain
Fulbright Arctic Initiative Research
Scholar 2015-16, University of Oulu and
University of Jyväskylä*

“Thank you to the Fulbright Arctic Initiative and Fulbright Finland for creating a cutting-edge, interdisciplinary model that builds on our collective strengths and will challenge and change how we conduct research.”