

## THESIS AND DISSERTATION ABSTRACTS

Monty Rogers

Stephen R. Braund & Associates, 308 G Street #323, Anchorage, AK 99501; monty.rogers@gmail.com

The thesis and dissertation abstracts below describe recent research on Iñupiaq resilience in the face of climate change, the influence of dance in Yup'ik women's health, expectations of Euro-American mining expeditions on the Kenai Peninsula, impacts of fetal alcohol syndrome on Alaska populations, a pre-Dorset faunal collection from Baffin Island, the role of subsistence among Dena'ina youth, and an emic analysis of the historic effects of alcohol on Tlingit.

Contact Monty Rogers to submit an abstract of a recently completed thesis or dissertation that deals with topics of interest to *AJA* readers.

### CLIMATE CHANGE AND ITS IMPACT ON THE IÑUPIAT OF POINT LAY, ALASKA

Alain Beuparlant

M.A. thesis, 2014, Department of Anthropology,  
University of Alaska Anchorage

#### ABSTRACT

This thesis examines resilience among the Point Lay Iñupiat in the context of climate change. Resilience is manifest in the ability of community members to maintain meaningful subsistence practices and activities despite ongoing changes in weather, ice, and resource conditions. Twenty-one Point Lay Iñupiat were interviewed for this thesis. Respondents were divided into three cohorts: youths (ages 18–29), adults (ages 30–49), and elders (ages 50–70+). Respondents shared changes in weather, ice, and resource conditions. Respondents also shared community concerns, including concerns not attributable to climate change. Received responses were sorted and compared by cohort to identify trends in weather, ice, and resource

conditions, as well as to identify adaptive and maladaptive strategies for coping with climate change and other stressors impacting the community. The question of whether the community can maintain meaningful subsistence practices and activities if local changes in weather, ice, and resource conditions remain unchanged or intensify is also considered.

### MAINTAINING BALANCE THROUGH DANCING: PERCEPTIONS AND PRACTICES OF HEALTH AMONG YOUNG ADULT YUP'IK WOMEN

Cecilie R. Ebsen

M.A. thesis, 2014, Department of Anthropology,  
University of Alaska Fairbanks

#### ABSTRACT

Ten years ago the Center for Alaska Native Health Research (CANHR) asked Yup'ik men and women of all

ages how they would define health and wellness, i.e., what it means to be well and happy. The answers were largely centered on living a subsistence lifestyle, eating subsistence foods and respecting natural spirits and lands. Today a new generation of young Yup'ik women has emerged—a generation that has grown up in villages and cities with store-bought food available next to subsistence food, TV, and the internet. In this study young adult Yup'ik women's perceptions of health and their use of dancing as a practice of health are investigated in order to understand what they consider important to stay healthy and also how the notion of health itself can be understood.

Ideas of what it means to be healthy are crucial to understand before conducting any kind of health research. How people interpret, navigate and understand the very notion of health must be uncovered in order to work with them on any and all health issues. Health is not merely the presence or absence of disease but includes a wide network of social, spiritual, physical, mental, and emotional factors. This study approaches health from a holistic perspective implementing a wide network of factors in the investigation of young adult Yup'ik women's perceptions and practices of health.

# **THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF EXPEDITIONS: FROM BROOKLYN TO ALASKA WITH THE KING'S COUNTY MINING COMPANY IN THE GOLD RUSH ERA**

**Richard W Galloway**

M.A. thesis, 2013, Department of Anthropology,  
University of Alaska Anchorage

## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis explores the experiences of those who sought change in their lives during the gold rush and Victorian eras of the late 1800s and early 1900s in North America. It displays the expectations of change that affected all members of society, if not always in the same manner. The members of the King's County Mining Company (KCMC) of Brooklyn, New York represent one group that aimed for a frontier in expectation of a life change. These expectations started long before the purchase of the bark *Agate* [three-masted cargo vessel] in 1897 and extended long after the departure of the majority of the members from Alaska in 1900. Did the expectations of the KCMC, after leaving

Brooklyn, meet what it found in Alaska? Were its expectations realistic given the variables of available technologies and the climatic conditions of their destination? The archaeological evidence and historical evidence provides at least partial confirmation of the hypotheses concerning these questions and offers. The names of the party are known including those who left before the ship's arrival on the west coast, those on the train who went through Portland, Oregon and those who left from Montevideo on the way. The fate of part of the party is told in reports from the Alaska Commercial Company (ACC) in 1899 and 1900. Weather, disease, and accidents account for some of the issues that sent the party home with no recorded gold finds in Alaska.

# **THE CULTURAL POLITICS OF FETAL ALCOHOL SPECTRUM DISORDERS AND THE DIAGNOSTICS OF DIFFERENCE**

**Travis H. Hedwig**

Ph.D. dissertation, 2013, Department of Anthropology,  
University of Kentucky

## **ABSTRACT**

My research examines the social and cultural implications of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) in Alaska. FASD is an umbrella term that encompasses the range of diagnoses and effects associated with prenatal alcohol exposure. Impairments associated with FASD are life-long and involve considerable personal, family and community costs. I collected data in the form of observational notes, disability life histories and recorded interviews with foster/adoptive parents ( $n = 18$ ), extended natural family (i.e., grandparents) ( $n = 10$ ), direct service professionals, including program administrators and parent support professionals in state, tribal and non-profit organizations ( $n = 10$ ), and adults over the age of 18 who had a diagnosis of FASD ( $n = 5$ ).

Primary research questions were designed to better understand how a diagnosis of FASD is made, how family, kinship and residence patterns are adapted and reconfigured following diagnosis, and how everyday impairments associated with FASD are managed through participation in both formal and informal networks of care. I participated in FASD-related community activities, including the statewide family camps sponsored by Volunteers of

America, foster family picnics, parent support groups, trainings and public presentations offered by agencies involved in providing information and referral as well as direct care services for individuals experiencing FASD and other disabilities.

Diagnosis of FASD (in some cases, even the suspicion of diagnosis) has a profound influence on patterns of residence, family/kinship forms, and community inclusion. It sets in motion particular sets of practices, discourses and institutional relationships that are shaped by racial and gendered assumptions about fetal exposure to alcohol. Research participants described family disruption, (sometimes coerced) relocation, and social perceptions of risk and blame as prominent themes in their everyday experience. Understanding and documenting the contexts in which impairments associated with FASD become disabling offer an opportunity to build more accommodating and responsive community-based systems of care.

Anthropologists working in these and other community-based healthcare settings can make significant contributions at a number of levels including policy and advocacy, program improvement, community organization and family support. As individuals and families struggle to meet the everyday care needs of their loved ones, anthropologists play an increasingly important role in documenting the lived experiences of health inequality and working with community partners to improve human health outcomes for people around the world.

Online at: [http://uknowledge.uky.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1006&context=anthro\\_etds](http://uknowledge.uky.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1006&context=anthro_etds)

### **AN EXAMINATION OF PRE-DORSET CARIBOU HUNTERS FROM THE DEEP INTERIOR OF SOUTHERN BAFFIN ISLAND, NUNAVUT, CANADA**

**Deanna McAvoy**

M.A. thesis, 2014, Department of Anthropology,  
University of Manitoba

#### **ABSTRACT**

The faunal remains from four archaeological sites on the northwest shore of Mingo Lake, in the interior of Southern Baffin Island, are examined in this thesis. All four sites are radiocarbon dated to Pre-Dorset times (4500–2700 BP).

The faunal assemblage is dominated by caribou remains. As such, this study is the first, large-scale faunal analysis of an interior Pre-Dorset site with caribou as a main subsistence resource. In total 18,710 faunal bones were examined. Elemental frequencies, fracture patterns, bone burning, and butchering patterns will provide important insights into the lifeway of the Pre-Dorset. The results of the thesis indicate that the Pre-Dorset were utilizing the Mingo Lake area during the late summer into early fall. The main activity at all four sites was caribou hunting with a focus on marrow extraction. The sites served dual purposes as habitation and butchering sites and were occupied for varying lengths of time.

Online at: <http://hdl.handle.net/1993/23540>

### **NAVIGATING AT A CROSSROADS: THE ROLE OF SUBSISTENCE CULTURE IN THE SUBJECTIVE WELLBEING OF DENA'INA ATHABASCAN YOUTHS IN ALASKA**

**Jennifer Shaw**

Ph.D. dissertation, 2013, Department of Anthropology,  
Case Western Reserve University

#### **ABSTRACT**

Assimilation policies and practices of past centuries systematically distanced Alaska Native peoples from traditional activities that sustained them for centuries. In the late 20th century, however, a renaissance of indigenous cultures emerged across the Americas that turned attention to the role of cultural activities in modern societies. At the same time, critical youth studies increasingly considered children as active agents in social life. Such research is particularly relevant and timely in contexts of rapid social change such as rural Alaska, where global influences increasingly permeate local life-ways and indigenous youths are charting new courses to adulthood. This ethnographic, case study was conducted with 19 Dena'ina youths in Nondalton, Alaska to examine the role of subsistence culture in their subjective wellbeing and future aspirations. Mixed methods were used, including surveys, interviews and participant-observation over the course of one year. The Developmental Assets Framework and local knowledge were used to interview youths about life experiences in six life domains, including: family, friends, school,

self, community and culture. Surveys queried youths' subjective wellbeing and aspirations, daily routines, and participation in various cultural activities. Participant-observation was conducted in fish camps, family homes, school, community events, and on the land. Study findings suggest that these youths generally experience high levels of life satisfaction, identify strongly with subsistence culture, and desire to practice these traditions in the future. However, individual wellbeing is more variable and patterns of dissatisfaction related to discontinuities in the educational system, peer and elder relationships, and community cohesion are evident. Youths are increasingly faced with historically unprecedented choices and opportunities that conflict with subsistence activities. These factors converge to distance youths from their cultural heritage and diminish their wellbeing and expectations for the future, despite their desires to engage more with these practices. This study suggests that cultural activity is a protective factor for positive youth development and wellbeing. Such activity, in principle and in practice, fosters coherence, continuity and connectivity to increase youths' resilience and capacity to navigate the challenges of coming of age at a crossroads of social and personal change.

Online at [https://etd.ohiolink.edu/ap/10?0::NO:10:P10\\_ACCESSION\\_NUM:case1370624534](https://etd.ohiolink.edu/ap/10?0::NO:10:P10_ACCESSION_NUM:case1370624534)

## **YÉIL KAAWASHÒO, “RAVEN WAS DRINKING”: AN ETHNOTOXICOLOGY OF ALCOHOL AMONG THE TLINGIT**

**Kyle Wark**

M.A. thesis, 2014, Department of Anthropology,  
University of Alaska Anchorage

### **ABSTRACT**

Alcohol killed my mom. Her life and death motivated me to learn how my Tlingit people got to this place we find ourselves in regarding alcohol. This thesis evaluates the colonial Tlingit history of alcohol on Tlingit terms, starting from the Russian fur trade era in the 1770s, through the American military occupation and Gold Rush era, ending in the early 1900s. This thesis includes ethno-toxicological analysis, examining alcohol as a poison that produces culturally conditioned outcomes, including intoxication. It positions Tlingit alcohol use within historic intoxicant use among Euro-Americans and indigenous North American societies. I primarily employ two emic anthropological research methods to understand alcohol: ethnohistory (to discern unwritten indigenous history from written Western records) and autoethnography (to infuse indigenous thinking into Western academic discourse). This thesis concludes that emic Tlingit models of alcohol abuse mandate that emic Tlingit understandings of alcohol be incorporated into alcohol treatment programs, informed by historical antecedents, such as those discussed in this thesis.