

KEEPING IN TOUCH

The latest and greatest from our team at the University of Illinois



NOTES FROM THE TEAM!!

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We've been struck by the distinctive self-reliance and deep-seated connections that people have with places in the Denali region!

We are delighted to share the second issue of the “Keeping in Touch” newsletter as part of our research about building scenarios and visioning for the future of communities around Denali National Park and Preserve!! We are excited about this opportunity to keep members of the local community like you up to speed on our project happenings.

nali region. Each newsletter will share different parts of our project and keep you all posted on our plans for opening a dialogue and building strategies that respond to community needs and conservation objectives.

We are grateful for your interest and support of our ongoing research with communities in the region. We hope you enjoy Keeping in Touch as we strive to enhance the impact of our research and make sure you benefit from this study.

In the pages of this newsletter, you'll see that we share highlights from what we are learning about community perspectives on future growth, and explain how we are working toward our goal of enhancing processes for inclusive conservation across all communities in the De-

MAJOR HIGHLIGHTS FROM SUMMER VISIT

We visited for one month over the summer and enjoyed catching up with many of you. Our field-work afforded us the opportunity to communicate our early findings, continue learning about the diversity of communities represented in the region, and enrich the development and relevancy of our research. At the beginning of July, we spent time coming to know more about the community of Talkeetna. **We were invited to attend a Talkeetna Community Council meeting** where we provided an overview of our project and learned about local challenges. We also had a series of informal meetings with residents to introduce our study and hear from stakeholder groups. We were particularly interested in perceptions of landscape change experienced by residents of Talkeetna compared to other communities included in our project.

We participated in the Healy Centennial Celebration and learned a great deal about development in the area, major industries, and its strong sense of community identity. **Our team provided an overview of the project at an oral history event.** After our presentation, several residents expressed interest in participating in the next phases of this work. Also, the Chamber of Commerce and Denali Borough invited us to **discuss our research with community members during the Fourth of July celebration at Otto Lake.** At this event, we set up a booth to engage residents with the intentions of the project, and enjoyed the festivities. These events enriched our understanding of Healy and its history, while providing an invaluable opportunity to connect with residents outside of our professional network.



Celebrating 100 years of Healy. We learned so much about the Healy's history and people! Thank you Vanessa Juszczak for inviting us!

We were fortunate to spend four days exploring the Kantishna area this past summer. We learned about the history of the region, as well as business operations and inholdings located at the end of the park road. We were struck by the strong sense of community felt by people working in the park and communicated to visitors. During interviews in this context, a strong commitment to conservation and appreciation for self-reliance came through in stories about people who have settled in the area.

We attended the Denali Borough General Assembly meeting in Cantwell. During this event, we provided an overview of our project, learned about the salient issues that the Denali Borough is facing and heard how residents were responding. This meeting was insightful and provided a broad context to understand changes in the region. We met new people as well as reacquainted ourselves with others we already knew. Thanks to Mayor Walker and the other Assembly members for having us!



We were fortunate to hear stories about some of the pioneering women who have shaped the Denali landscape, including Fanny Quigley

A priority of ours is to learn from the range of interest groups in the area, including subsistence users. We have engaged with a variety of folks in Cantwell, Healy, and the Stampede. Earlier this year, we initiated conversations with the Chiefs of the Native Villages of Nikolai and Telida to explore the possibility of visiting in the future. Though, we haven't yet solidified these plans. At the end of July, **one of our team members observed the process of federal subsistence permits being issued to residents in Cantwell.** This opportunity was valuable for learning more about subsistence use and providing an educational experience for a student who was working on the project. **Thank you, Amy Craver, for inviting us to be part of this experience!**

DEEPENING OUR UNDERSTANDING OF LIFE IN DENALI

As part of our Summer 2019 visit, we continued to learn from people's connections to places, their histories, knowledge, relevant resource management challenges, and the future of the Denali region. We met with several residents from Healy, the Stampede, McKinley Village, Cantwell, and Talkeetna. Some of these conversations were recorded to later analyze and deepen our understanding of distinct perspectives found in the region.

During these sessions, we have asked questions about participants' 'sense of place' and values for the landscape, perceptions of landscape change, organizations that people belong to, knowledge of the landscape, and governance. Findings from these interviews are teaching us about the following topics:

- Freedom to access land to preserve self-reliance of residents
- Regulations to protect land to preserve cherished qualities of the natural landscape.
- Growing industrial tourism sector that provides more local business opportunities
- The shared importance of protecting many qualities of the Denali region across communities
- Relationships and power dynamics throughout the state of Alaska
- The importance of subsistence activities
- Tight-knit communities where neighbors support one another
- Altered weather and climate regimes that impact local conditions and present new challenges to local communities



Our focus group in Talkeetna was a hit! It was helpful to learn more about Denali State Park and hear about the challenges faced by residents!

SHARING OUR FINDINGS

This summer we shared some of the wonderful things we are learning in Denali with our colleagues! Preliminary findings were shared at the International Symposium on Society and Resource Management in Oshkosh, WI and with our international collaborators during an ENVISSION workshop at the University of Amsterdam in the Netherlands. Both of these opportunities were helpful for synthesizing current results and looking ahead to next steps of the research project.

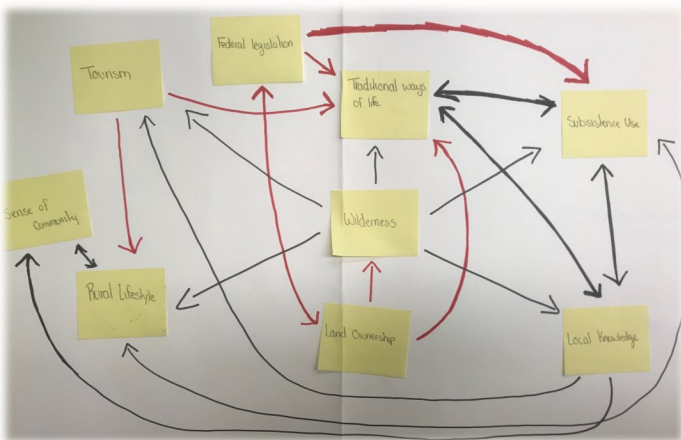


We are working to understand the perspectives of eight different communities in the Denali region. To date, we've conducted 36 interviews and held seven focus groups.

CHARACTERIZING THE DENALI REGION

During our summer visit, three focus groups were held with the goal of continuing to facilitate discussions with local residents. These group discussions were held in Healy (4 people), the Stampede (8 people), and Talkeetna (6 people) to hear group perspectives on the identity of the Denali region and drivers of change. Each focus group included a facilitated dialogue and individual mapping exercises that elucidated the positive and negative relationships between features of the region. Participants completed maps like the one below and shared several observations such as:

- The regional identity of Denali is being characterized by wildlife, subsistence use, healthy ecosystems, open access to land, tourism, recreation, and sense of community.
- Key drivers of change are local leadership, local organizations, federal legislation, public land management agencies, and open access to land.
- Findings aligned with what we've learned from interviews about why the Denali landscape is special.



Example map. Thus far, 43 residents have provided us with maps of their views on social-ecological relationships and drivers of change in the Denali region.



A successful focus group in the Stampede. A big thanks to Henry's Coffeehouse for opening its doors and hosting us!! Thank you, Rose Keller, for spreading the word!

THANK YOU TO OUR EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

One of the most important components of our research is a local **Executive Committee** comprised of leaders from the community that represent the various interests found in the Denali region. This group is providing guidance to help ensure that our research remains relevant and is communicated with residents living around the protected area.

During summer 2019, **our Committee gained four members** and we were grateful for this opportunity to expand representation of the group. We now have ten members who will be brought together this winter to provide feedback on our research. We very much appreciate their advice!!

INTRODUCING NEW TEAM MEMBERS!

We are delighted to report that we have **hired a local community member, Ruth Colianni, to assist in the research process.** She is a local resident of Cantwell and is working with our team to enter and analyze data, while sharing local insights to inform various phases of our research process.

We also would like to **introduce Evan Salcido, a new University of Illinois Ph.D. student** who has joined our team! Fresh from receiving his Master of Science degree at the University of Minnesota, Evan is excited to apply his knowledge and help build an understanding of inclusive conservation. Outside of his work, Evan enjoys camping, hiking, and observing wildlife in natural settings!

He will be involved in several facets of the project, including leading the development of a short film that will aim to represent the diversity of interests and visions for change in the Denali region.

We are very fortunate to have both Ruth and Evan as part of the University of Illinois team!



Meet Evan and Ruth!!!

NEXT STEPS!

We are already looking ahead about our next visit to the Denali region this coming winter!!!

- ⇒ We will be convening our **local Executive Committee** to discuss preliminary findings and seek guidance on the next phase of our research to ensure its relevancy for residents.
- ⇒ We will begin developing a short film that will aim to represent the diversity of interests and visions for change in the Denali region. This film will showcase Denali alongside three other protected areas where we are working to build strategies for how public land management agencies can focus policy in response to community needs and conservation objectives.
- ⇒ We will continue our conversations with members of the local community during **formal and informal interviews**. We are looking forward to learning more about the landscape, the people who care about it, and the various agencies and organizations who have influence on its future.
- ⇒ We will hold a final set of **focus group for this phase of the study**. We are looking forward to the group-based discussions and will aim to hold focus groups in Healy and Anderson. We look forward to continuing to learn about how people in the Denali region are envisioning for their future and characterizing change!

Please contact us if you have any questions about this project!

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<https://publish.illinois.edu/inclusive-conservation-in-denali/>



Other Key Members of our Team

Rose Keller
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David Nguyen
Julianna Rogowski



WE LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU THIS WINTER!