

NEWS FROM THE NORTH: THE SCHOOL OF PLANNING AND SUSTAINABILITY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN BRITISH COLUMBIA

/ Rylan Graham RPP, MCIP; Tara Lynne Clapp RPP, MCIP; Santana Patten, UNBC Student Member Representative

GREETINGS from *BC's Northern Capital* – Prince George! We offer a big thank you to our colleagues at UBC and VIU for their earlier submissions – and of course we look forward to the spring edition of *Planning West* to learn more about what's happening at SFU! It's both interesting and inspiring to read about the many exciting faculty and student-led projects underway elsewhere in the province.

We are pleased to be able to offer the readers of *Planning West* an update on what's new at the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC), as 2021 brought plenty of change and new faces! Broadly, UNBC went through a major reshuffling, as the two colleges which long served the university evolved into five faculties. Our program now finds an obvious home in the Faculty of Environment, alongside the Department of Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences, and the Department of Ecosystem Science and Management.

Excitedly, the reshuffle allowed the School a moment to pause and think about our own identity. Taking the opportunity to reflect, we move forward now as the School of Planning and Sustainability. The name change (previously, the School of Environmental Planning) reflects a merger with the Environmental and Sustainability Studies program led by Dr. Annie Booth, RPP, MCIP and Dr. Sinead Earley. While the two programs remain as distinct entities, they have come together under one umbrella in forming the newly named school.

Leading our planning program are four full-time faculty and our Administrative Assistant, Janice MacKay. Our program

is strengthened by the addition of several practicing professionals who bring a wealth and diversity of experience to the classroom. Collectively, the range and diversity of expertise allows us to provide an undergraduate planning program that is unique in Canada with the specializations we offer: Rural and Northern Community Planning; First Nations Planning; and Natural Resources Planning.

In addition to the excitement of reshuffling and name changes, 2021 began with some big moves as we welcomed two new faculty members: Dr. Rylan Graham RPP, MCIP and Dr. Tara Lynne Clapp RPP, MCIP.

Dr. Clapp joins the School as an Associate Professor and Chair. She comes to the program from southeastern British Columbia where she practiced sustainability consulting and brings a wealth of experience to her new role. Previously, Dr. Clapp was a faculty member in the community and regional planning program at Iowa State University. Her research interests are defined broadly within the areas of rural community resilience and sustainability, including infrastructure, housing, and the economy. Currently, she is developing a project that looks to improve rural climate resilience and disaster recovery. She also serves as a board member on the Kaslo Housing Society, helping to navigate the approvals process for construction of its first housing project, in partnership with New Commons Small Communities Initiative.

Dr. Graham joins the School as an Assistant Professor. Prior to joining UNBC he was a Postdoctoral Research Fellow in the Westman Centre for Real Estate

Studies, and an Instructor in the School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape at the University of Calgary. His research centres around issues related to growth management, intensification, downtown revitalization, with a particular focus on mid-sized Canadian cities (such as Prince George). Exploring the mid-sized context, Rylan has two projects underway:

- the first seeks to better understand the barriers to intensification (within the context of Regina), and;
- the second hopes to assess preferences and attitudes amongst young adults towards downtown living in Prince George.

In addition to teaching and research, Rylan remains active with PIBC and CIP, serving on several committees and as a sponsor for several candidate members.

Our longer-serving faculty members continue to make impacts through their research and service. Dr. Mark Groulx RPP, MCIP is an Associate Professor whose research focuses broadly on sustainable and resilient communities, and specifically on the importance of community engagement and placemaking in effective collaborative planning. Inspired by the creativity and careful craft of placemakers of all types, Mark explores how communities are tapping into local knowledge and values to ensure that planning and design for inclusive and resilient communities is person-centred.

Mark is currently working on projects examining community-based approaches to low-carbon resilience and is leading the SSHRC funded *Nature for All* project. This project includes a diverse network of



Views of the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC) and local landscape. All images provided courtesy of UNBC.



academic, tourism sector, not-for-profit, and government partners collaborating in the development and use of new tools to document accessibility in nature-based tourism and recreation spaces. The project supports an evidence-based approach to promote inclusive experiences across BC through barrier-free design.

Dr. Theresa Healy is an Adjunct Professor and Lecturer who also leads a well-regarded consultancy, with clients located throughout the north. Her reputation as a facilitator especially for issues involving conflict or paralysis, has helped to build a rich and rewarding career

with a legacy of positive change. Part of her success is attributed to her capacity to “co-design” with clients on what works from their perspective, and then marry these ideas with her solid knowledge of community engagement techniques. Her current research includes Nature for All (in collaboration with Dr. Groulx), Everyone at the Table – a food security assets and networks research project, and Plural: Health Economics in the North. She remains active on the Advisory Board for the Peace Project, focusing on training for anti-violence measures in circumstances of domestic violence.

As faculty, we consider ourselves fortunate to work alongside a student body who are a source of constant inspiration. As the only accredited undergraduate program in the province, we pride ourselves in offering a learning environment that boasts small class sizes, and where students and professors can work closely and collaboratively. Our emphasis on experiential learning means that students undertake community-based projects, with recent successful partnerships with the City of Prince George and the Downtown Prince George Business Association. Our aim is to create opportunities that engage students in work that prepares them for life after graduation,

ready to step into the communities of their choosing.

Excitedly, we also continue to strengthen our connections across the province. In 2020, a new partnership with Selkirk College was formed, where students enrolled in the Integrated Environmental Planning program can transfer into the Bachelor of Planning program at UNBC. We are looking forward to this unique collaboration and look forward to welcoming more students to Prince George through this partnership!

2021 has been a year of significant change - at the School and more broadly. While we look towards 2022, we eagerly anticipate a year where we continue to build our school as a place for experiential learning, and innovative and impactful research - with the intent that our students and faculty will continue to serve communities of the North, BC and more broadly, Canada. ■

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