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Regina, 15 November 2023

**2023 SACTS Field Report to WMAC(NS)**

Dear Ryan Durack,

As per our previous communication of July 31, 2023, I would like to provide a brief report on the activities of our 5-year (2022-2027) co-led research project, “Sensory Acts: More Than Human Communication in the Circumpolar North” (SACTS). The project is based at the University of Regina, Regina, SK, and it is now in its second year, while 2023 marks the first year for activities in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region. SACTS is a multi-disciplinary project, but the majority of our researchers have a background in the Social Sciences. Currently, there are nine associate scholars and two graduate students, working primarily in Mongolia and Canada. We are partially funded by the SSHRC, and our research focus is on nonverbal interspecies communication. For more information on the project, please visit [www.sensoryacts.ca](http://www.sensoryacts.ca). In what follows, I will summarize our North Slope activities for 2023 in chronological order:

**Fieldwork Preparations**

In August 2022, I contacted the Joint Secretariat, who shared advice on the Inuvialuit Settlement Region Traditional Knowledge Research Policy and directed me to the Wildlife Management Advisory Council, the Inuvialuit Game Council (IGC), and the Aklavik HTC (AHTC). I was granted a presentation slot at the in-person board meeting of the IGC for their March meeting in Inuvik. On March 9, 2023, I presented to the IGC, and the board agreed to co-lead the proposed SACTS project if the AHTC was to agree. This is confirmed in a Letter of Support, dated April 11, 2023.

On January 24, 2023, the Aklavik HTC meeting discussed the possibility of meeting with me in person. An in-person meeting was scheduled for March, 2023. On March 13, I met with the HTC in Aklavik. The Committee agreed to co-lead the project, which was confirmed in a Letter of Support, issued March 29, 2023. The project received its territorial research licenses by late summer (YG, August 2023 / GNWT, August 2023). Jane Harms, Wildlife Veterinarian of the YG discerned that we did not need a Permit to Handle Wildlife, given the nature of our work (letter dated June 28, 2023). Meanwhile we did obtain a GNWT Wildlife Observation Permit. As some of our Inuvialuit co-leaders may from time-to-time desire to travel to Ivavik and/or Herschel Island, we also obtained a Parks Canada Agency Research and Collections Permit. In August, I met with the AHTC in Aklavik for a special board meeting to review and

amend a Co-led Community Research Agreement (CRA) between the AHTC and the University of Regina (UofR), signed 5 September 2023. The agreement can be viewed on the project website under “Documentation”.

## **2023 Field Season**

In August 2023, I drove up to Inuvik from Regina, along with one of the project’s graduate research students, Alesha Stark. We flew to Aklavik, where I introduced her to the staff of the AHTC and several other contacts. The plan was for Alesha to stay in Aklavik for two months to work with Inuvialuit women who hunt. Because of the late snowfall, Alesha ended up staying until early November to witness the beginning of the trapping season. During her stay, Alesha was able to accompany multiple women to learn about (and to document) fishing, hunting, and trapping activities in and around Aklavik. To my knowledge, none of her travels ventured to the coast or into the National Park during this field season. The focus of her thesis research is on women who hunt, asking what are some particularities in the way women relate to wildlife, game, and on-the-land activities. As a huntress in her own right, she is especially interested in women’s perspectives on sentience in animals and plants, as well as their ways of engaging nonverbally with non-human others. She will be writing up her thesis in the fall and winter of 2023/24, and plans to return to Aklavik in 2024 to present her findings to the AHTC, to collect community member feedback, and to make corrections to her manuscript where needed prior to her defense.

My own field work in 2023 was limited to arranging for licensing agreements with the various governing bodies for the territories in which we work. I hope to return in the summer of 2024 to begin conducting my own fieldwork, alongside my colleague Dr. Sarah Abbott and members of the AHTC.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions about our ongoing research collaboration with the community of Aklavik.

All the best,



Alex Oehler

PS: A copy of this report is publicly available on our website at:  
<https://www.sensoryacts.ca/documentation/>