

Report to the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia

Bernadette Hince

May 2014

With the help of a 2013 Australia–Canada collaborative travel grant from the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia, I made a study trip in October 2013 to Greenland, Canada, Washington DC and Fairbanks Alaska. The research trip allowed me to ‘ground truth’ my lexicographical and historical examination of Greenlandic, Canadian and Alaskan Arctic English words for *The Grand Polar Dictionary*, a historical study of the words of Arctic and Antarctic English on which I have been working since 2000. (In 2000 my book *The Antarctic dictionary: a complete guide to Antarctic English* was published by CSIRO and Museum Victoria). While travelling, I was able to make many contacts while attending an interdisciplinary conference of the humanities and social sciences at Ilisimatusarfik, the University of Greenland.

Duration of study tour

The two main aims of the study trip were to ground truth my research on Arctic English, and to expand my network of Arctic experts in many fields. Although the internet can allow much fact-checking and information gathering, the informed comment of experts in many fields to verify the accuracy and detail of the dictionary’s definitions is still needed.

The travel met both of my aims most successfully.

Because of the heavy expenses of travelling to arctic regions, the ambitious itinerary of a longer six-week tour was scaled down to a very busy three-week journey. The main intercontinental airfare was \$6400; supplementary air and land travel, accommodation and living expenses were another \$3500. Although the trip was shorter than originally anticipated, it was also fortunately more productive — I was able to attend a multidisciplinary conference in Greenland, visit the Arctic Studies Center of the Smithsonian Institution, and observe the Alaska Federation of Natives convention in Fairbanks.

Nuuk, Greenland (10–16 October 2013)

In Nuuk I attended ‘Heritage and change in the Arctic’, a four-day interdisciplinary conference of the humanities and social sciences at Ilisimatusarfik, the University of Greenland. The conference was sponsored in part by the Network in Canadian History and Environment, directed by my collaborator and fellow applicant for the Australia–Canada collaborative travel grant, Prof Alan MacEachern (History Department, Western University, London Ontario).

This was a small conference of about 50 participants, almost all of whom gave papers. Although I learnt of the conference too late to present a paper, I was able to address participants on my Arctic English project and to distribute information on it.

The conference was an excellent source of information and contacts. The project evoked a lot of interest among participants. I had useful discussions with Dr Dag Avengo (polar historian, Division of History of Science, Technology and Environment, Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm, where I was an invited departmental guest in November 2011), environmental historian Prof Stephen Bocking (Trent University, Canada), Professor Daniel Chartier (Department of Literary Studies, University of Quebec, Montreal), Professor Karen Langgaard (Head, Department of Language, Literature and Media, University of Greenland), Greenlandic Parliament Minister Nick Nielsen, Professor Mark Nuttall (Greenland Institute of Natural Resources/Department of Anthropology, University of Alberta), Dr Richard Powell (School of Geography and the Environment, University of Oxford), and PhD student Hanna Vikström (Division of History of Science, Technology and Environment, Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm).

In Nuuk I saw the museum and former residence of Danish explorer and coloniser Hans Egede, the Nuuk Town Hall with its display of tapestries depicting Greenlandic history, the National Cultural Centre, and (on two long visits) the National Museum of Greenland, where many items of daily use and clothing to be defined in the dictionary were on display — from **polar bear trousers** to **seal gut parkas** and **ulus**.

I collected a substantial amount of literature and had discussions with Greenlanders and others working on Arctic issues.

I also visited local supermarkets and fish markets, where I was delighted to see many of the foodstuffs named in the draft dictionary files — including **mattak** (whale blubber), **seal flippers** and **Greenland halibut**. Minister Nick Nielsen hosted a reception at Hans Egede House for the conference participants at which **musk ox** and **whale meat** were served.

Ottawa (18–20 October 2013)

I spent a full and highly productive day in discussions with Dr John MacDonald, Ottawa, former head of the Igloolik Research Institute, Nunavut and his wife Carolyn, long-term residents of Igloolik. Dr MacDonald facilitated a visit to another longtime resident of Igloolik, author Kenn Parker (*Give me my father's body*), who is intensely interested in northern words and was extremely helpful, providing me with citations and other details of language from his personal files.

London, Ontario (20–23 October 2013)

From Ottawa I travelled to London, Ontario. On 21 October I spoke at Western University jointly hosted by the Network in Canadian History and Environment and the History Department of Western University, on 'Looking for cold words — a lexicographer in the Antarctic and Arctic'. This was followed by an extended question session with the audience, which included undergraduate and graduate students in linguistics and history, historians of the Canadian Arctic and environmental historians.

As further strengthening of the existing ties between Canadian and Australian environmental historians, Professor Alan MacEachern of the History Department of Western University, Canada, will visit Australia this month to participate in an environmental history workshop for PhD students run by my PhD supervisor, Professor Libby Robin.

Toronto (23 October 2013)

During a brief stopover, I visited the Art Gallery of Ontario to see an exhibition on the recently deceased Inuit artist Kenjuak Ashevak. In a survey exhibition of Canadian art at the gallery, I also saw paintings of the Canadian Arctic.

Arctic Studies Center, Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History (23–24 October 2013)

During two days in which I was generously hosted by Arctic Inuit art and clothing specialist **Dr Bernadette Driscoll Engelstad**, I had a lengthy meeting with Arctic anthropologist **Dr Igor Krupnik**, Ethnology Department, Arctic Studies Center, and discussions with **Dr Ives Goddard**, Arctic Studies Center.

I spent a morning at the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian, and visited the National Art Gallery.

Fairbanks Alaska (25–28 October 2013)

On 26 October I attended an open session of the Alaska Federation of Natives convention held in Fairbanks on 24–26 October. Between 4000 and 5000 attended this convention, the largest annual representative gathering of Native peoples anywhere in the US. Native peoples constitute about 19% of Alaska's population.

I also spent several hours investigating the art and artefacts on display and for sale at the convention, where more than 170 artists and stallholders had come from every part of Alaska. This was an unrepeatable opportunity to see many items which will be defined by the dictionary.

On Sunday 26 October I met the director of the Alaska Native Language Center at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, Professor Lawrence (Larry) Kaplan, for discussions.

I established contact with the University of Alaska Press, with whom there may be possibilities for publication of the dictionary.

I made two extensive visits to the University of Fairbanks' Museum of the North, a rich source of information on culture, art, life and language of northern peoples.

summary

This short study trip was extremely valuable, and exhausting! I packed as much into it as humanly possible. I was able to meet and talk with historians, geographers, anthropologists, museum curators, scientists, and linguists of the North. In addition, I met and talked with Greenlandic, Danish, Swedish, Russian, Canadian and Alaskan inhabitants of the Arctic, and read and collected newspapers and other ephemeral material. I thank all those who gave me their time and generously offered hospitality.

I am preparing a paper for a refereed journal which will also act as the basis for the introduction to the final book.

acknowledgement

I am extremely grateful to the Academy for allowing me this chance to make this study tour of the Arctic and near-Arctic, something which would have been unaffordable in the normal course of events (and all the more so since I resigned from my job a year ago to be a care-giver for my father). A sincere thank you to all those involved.