

Akitsiraq Law School: North Comes South—Twice!

Akitsiraq students left the snow and cold of Iqaluit, Nunavut, for the even colder temperatures in Ottawa in January 2004. During a three-week period, the students participated in the University of Ottawa Faculty of Common Law Intensive Program.

The Intensive Program gave each student an opportunity to take a course not offered in the Akitsiraq Program; to interact with law students from other parts of Canada; to share their knowledge of their culture and the North with others; and to discuss issues of importance to them with their peers. The trip was a great success as attested by the Akitsiraq students themselves. Here's what they said about it.

I would like to thank all of the sponsors who made it possible for the Akitsiraq students to attend the intensive program offered by the University of Ottawa. The courses were exceptional and the interaction with the various professors and fellow students was enriching. Some of the more memorable events outside of the classroom included a lunch with

some of the members of Nelligan O'Brien and Payne and our very own Premier, the Honourable Paul Okalik, a graduate of the University of Ottawa Faculty of Law.

We also had a tour of the Supreme Court of Canada complete with a one-on-one discussion with Madam Justice Louise Arbour; a meeting with Minister of Justice Irwin Cotler; and afternoon tea with Her Excellency, the Right Honourable Adrienne Clarkson, Governor General of Canada. I also had the pleasure of attending my very first live NHL hockey game where the Ottawa Senators decimated the New York Rangers, 9 to 1.

Henry Coman

What I learned was to focus on what we as Inuit want to do and also that nothing is impossible.

There were many aspects of the Ottawa trip that I enjoyed...in particular...listening to the comments and questions of the U of O students during our classes. It was nice to get a different perspective... One of my favourite experiences was our

dinner with the Aboriginal Students Association... I liked listening to the Aboriginal students from U of O talk about treaty and land claim issues. The passion with which they spoke was motivating and inspirational.

Qajaq Robinson

Overall the visit was great. I took Aboriginal Business Law and I learned so much from it... Professor Tracey Lindberg was fabulous. She gave us many tools to use in the future. The Inuit, First Nations, and non-Aboriginal speakers who gave talks on specific issues dealing with the economy and the Constitution gave me hope for the future. They made me realize that I don't need to carry around the effects and pain of colonialism... I was so inspired by their knowledge and lack of ill feelings... What I learned was to focus on what we as Inuit want to do and also that nothing is impossible. I liked hearing about First Nations who have taken control of their own lives in dealing with social, health, and education issues. I got the sense that we need to keep on going so that others can follow behind us...knowing that we are accomplishing something worthwhile.

*Qujannamiik,
Aaju Peter*

The Akitsiraq academic program resumed in May 2004 with Victoria lawyers Adrian Brooks and Nils Jensen heading North to Iqaluit, along with BC Provincial Court Judge Keith Bracken, to teach evidence and criminal procedure during the Summer months. They were joined in that endeavour by Professor Allan Manson of Queen's University Faculty of Law and Justice Marc Rosenberg of the Ontario Court of Appeal. The Summer term also included a course in administrative law, taught by Professor Al Lucas of the University of Calgary Faculty of Law, and a course in Inuit Traditional Law & Culture, taught by Elder Lucien Ukaliannuk.

As the Fall term draws to a close, UVIC faculty, staff, and students are looking forward to welcoming some of the Akitsiraq students to Victoria for the Spring term. This exciting cross-cultural initiative for the final academic term of

the Akitsiraq Program is a wonderful way for all of us to solidify and strengthen our North-South relationships.

The Akitsiraq Program is a partnership between the University of Victoria Faculty of Law, Nunavut Arctic College, and the Akitsiraq Law School Society. The Program and the 11 Inuit lawyers it will soon graduate are proof of what can be accomplished when willing partners work cooperatively together to fund and deliver legal education that is culturally relevant and specially designed to meet the needs of the community it serves.

The Akitsiraq model could easily be adopted (and adapted) by legal educators across the country to build capacity within our Aboriginal communities for all aspects of legal work.

One final piece of news . . .

Inuk Law Student from Nunavut to Clerk at Supreme Court of Canada

In September 2005 Madeleine Redfern will join 26 other law graduates from across the country as a clerk with the Supreme Court of Canada. Madeleine, who was selected by Madam Justice Louise Arbour, will be the first Inuk law graduate ever to clerk with a Supreme Court Justice. This is a great achievement for Madeleine herself and also for her classmates, UVic Law, and the territory of Nunavut generally. ▲

Much of this article was reproduced from the Spring 2004 issue of UVic Law News, with permission from the editor.

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From left to right: Susan Enuaraq, Shelley Wright, Sandra Inutiq, Nigel Qaumariaq, Madeleine Redfern, Henry Coman, Lillian Aglukark, Aaju Peter, Elisapee Karetak, Kim Hart Wensley, Connie Merkosak, Siobhan Arnatsiaq-Murphy, Kelly-Ann Fenney, Sandra Omik