

AHIN November 30th, 2021 Webinar: Student Research Series pt. 1

This webinar was part one of a two-part series which featured presentations from student and post-doctoral researchers in the At Home in the North network. The speakers included Matthew Cosby and Muhammad Khan from the University of Alaska Anchorage, Susane Havelka from Memorial University of Newfoundland, and Hans Peter Mønsted from the University of Southern Denmark. Below is a summary of key points of their presentations.

Warm Wear Bags, Matthew Cosby and Muhammad Khan University of Alaska Anchorage

Homelessness in Alaska has increased by 9% from 2020 to 2021, and 70% of homeless individuals in Alaska are located in Anchorage. More people are sleeping outside and are in need of shelter than in previous years, with up to 150 people experiencing complete homelessness on the streets in Anchorage. The cold temperatures, particularly at night, can cause hypothermia, frostbite, and threaten the lives of homeless individuals. The COVID-19 pandemic also contributed to an increase in homelessness and a decrease in resources available. In response to these issues, Matthew and Muhammad created the Health Professionals Student Organization, and through that organization developed the Warm Wear Bags project. This initiative involved the distribution of 150 reusable bags containing wool hats, gloves, socks, blankets, resource pamphlets, handwritten notes, prophylactics, and feminine hygiene products to the homeless community in Anchorage. Moving forward, they hope to partner with multiple local homeless shelters and organizations, tailor the warm bags to the needs of sub-demographics within the homeless community, and reach more people by distributing 1500 bags annually. Additional plans include collecting qualitative and quantitative data on the impacts of this program.

Autonomy in the Built Design, Susane Havelka and Hans Peter Mønsted Memorial University of Newfoundland, University of Southern Denmark

This presentation discusses two very successful community-led self-building schemes in Fort Good Hope, NWT, and Ummannaq, Greenland. In Greenland, Type Houses consist of building kits shipped to each community. Since colonial settlement in Greenland, there have been efforts (with varying degrees of success) to design and build Type Houses for Inuit and settlers that are affordable, easy to build, and suitable for the climate. In Ummannaq today, houses are built where they fit best within the environment, and roads are constructed based on the location of houses. Traditional lifestyles are still very popular, and so housing that accommodates that lifestyle is valuable to inhabitants.

In Inuit Nunangat in Canada, there is a culture of self-building cabins out of reclaimed and recycled materials. These cabins enable hunting and fishing for country food, and also asserting rights to traditional territories. While they are not typically built for full-time habitation, they often contain design elements that the inhabitants desire in a home. Each cabin uniquely fits the environment and the inhabitants. Many of the design features that are important for northern lifestyles (like cold porches) are missing from government-designed prefab houses. Prefab government houses also undermine the design skills, agency, and human resources present in Indigenous communities. In the mid-1980s, the Home Assistance Program (HAP) offered financial help to residents of the NWT who wanted to build their own homes. The program was



particularly successful in Fort Good Hope, where 4-6 houses per year were constructed between 1984 and 1991. Although the program has ended, many other Indigenous communities have since pursued similar community-led housing initiatives.