

Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology

SPEAKER SERIES

PhD Proposal Presentation

“To Spile and Fair: Toward Good Coastal Livelihoods”

Evan Curley

The province of Nova Scotia is facing many challenges in ensuring the wellbeing of its coastal communities; challenges stirred by a deepening instability of resource livelihoods. You need not follow local or national headlines for more than a few days to find out that this is the case: “Things keep getting worse in fisheries,” “lawlessness on the water,” “a Wild West,” “DFO officers refusing to enforce fisheries act,” “Call for federal fisheries ministers’ resignation,” “No peace on the water,” “Is the crown at war with us?,” “end of the line” – and on and on. These headlines tell the tale of always tense and sometimes violent settler-Indigenous relations, increasing commercial concentration of fisheries, a lack of species protection, environmental anxiety, and a chipping away at ocean access. We are a diverse set of sea-girt people living through what I see as the consequences of a common social metabolic rift, a set of material and symbolic relationships run aground by the imperious attitude of capitalism and colonialism dictating the use of resources and the living conditions of communities. The obvious and important questions are how this has come to be, and how do we build better coastal lives going forward. This project takes the notion of “building” quite literally. I propose to follow the process of building a traditional wooden workboat as my research guide. Why? Because it is a real step into the history, materiality, praxes, and relationships that the above conflicts emerge from, but most importantly the act of building itself presents an opportunity to work in the world in a new way. Wooden boats were once very near to coastal lifeways, but over the last half-century have become commercially obsolete – leaving the realm of the utility and becoming, perhaps mistakenly, an object of heritage. This seemingly arcane status, a position a step removed from current livelihoods allows the wooden boat to act as a question and a proposal, a question of what progress really looks like and a proposal for a surer way of working, a more embedded, convivial, and peaceful way to be.

Friday, November 22nd, 2024

McCain, #1116 @ 2:30 p.m.

Reception to follow

All Welcome!