

Riddell Faculty Seminar Series presents:

Asking for a Disaster:

The Concept of “Risk” in the Emergency Evacuation of Northern Aboriginal Communities

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Date: Thursday, April 10, 2014

Time: 2:00-3:00 p.m.

Place: 221 Wallace Building

(Photo Credit: James B. Waldram)



Discussants: Dr. Myrle Ballard and Asfia Gulrukh (Ph.D. candidate)

Abstract: The rapid evacuation of northern Canadian Aboriginal communities due to wildfire and flood is commonplace, yet the approach to managing “*risk*” remains based on southern, non-Aboriginal models that define who is most “*at risk*” and the sequence of evacuation priority. This individualized approach has great iatrogenic potential for all when little consideration is given to the intended destinations of evacuees. This paper describes the evacuation of a northern Canadian Dene community to several southern centres in which the invocation of standard risk protocols resulted in the fracturing of family units, increasing the levels of distress in an already stressful process. It argues not only for a reconsideration of the concept of risk, but also the development of evacuation plans that are diachronic and focus as much attention on the longer term experiences of evacuees as on the response to the immediate threat of fire or flood.

Biography: Professor James B. Waldram has undertaken fieldwork in more than a dozen Aboriginal communities in Canada, in medical clinics, and in prisons. His current projects include field research among a group of Q’eqchi (Maya) healers in southern Belize, and an exploration of the psychological and sociocultural implications of disasters and community evacuation in northern Canada.

12:30 p.m. Free pizza lunch for graduate students with Dr. Waldram,
Dean’s Office Boardroom - 440 Wallace Building.