



Sustainability Series



Sarah Marie Wiebe

Imagining Sustainable Futures: Environmental Justice, Sensing Policy and Collaboration with Coastal Indigenous Communities

Aiming to challenge the colonial production of toxic body politics, my research argues that social and political transformation requires an experiential “sensing policy” approach to environmental justice. Building upon past and present aesthetic, affective and interdisciplinary research partnerships with Indigenous communities, my future research will continue to collaborate with coastal communities in Canada, Hawai'i and the Pacific to understand how communities that encounter contaminated land and seascapes mobilize to resist the toxic geopolitics that encroach upon them. My research focuses on how Indigenous communities articulate environmental justice through practices of resistance and resurgence. This informs an interdisciplinary research agenda that intersects political ecology, Indigenous/decolonial community research and mixed media storytelling. Current projects *Seascape Indigenous Storytelling Studio* and *Reimagining Attawapiskat* build upon previous research that involved extensive community engagement in Canada's Chemical Valley, a region that occupies Anishinabek territory and infringes upon the livelihoods of the Aamjiwnaang First Nation. Surrounded by the densest concentration of industrial chemical refineries in North America, Aamjiwnaang continues to fight for sustainable self-determination. Through participatory action research, including political ethnography, community immersion and in-depth interviews with community members and public officials at multiple levels of government, my research uncovered a ‘participatory paradox:’ Indigenous community-members were enlisted in a public environmental health study that simultaneously incited their participation while dislocating their site-specific concerns. This work, recently published as a book with UBC Press, *Everyday Exposure: Indigenous Mobilization and Environmental Justice in Canada's Chemical Valley*, examined how discursive fields of science, scale, lifestyle blame, and jurisdictional ambiguity marginalized Aamjiwnaang's lived-experiences during a participatory process. To challenge these environmental injustices by co-creating alternative futures with communities directly affected by toxic environments, a sensing policy approach contributes to environmental sustainability by envisioning pathways for sustainable self-determination across the Pacific.

Thursday, April 6th

3-4:20 PM

Crawford Hall 105

Please Join Us

Free

Open to the Public

Sarah Marie Wiebe is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow from Coast Salish territory (British Columbia, Canada) based jointly at the University of Victoria and University of British Columbia. Her book *Everyday Exposure: Indigenous Mobilization and Environmental Justice in Canada's Chemical Valley* was published this year by University of British Columbia Press and a volume co-edited with Dr. Jennifer Lawrence (Virginia Tech) on Biopolitical Disaster is forthcoming with Routledge. In addition to holding an interfaculty teaching appointment with the Department of Political Science and School of Public Administration at the University of Victoria, she directs a collaborative community-based Reimagining Attawapiskat project alongside Cree youth, is a Co-Director for the Seascape Indigenous Storytelling Studio and a Research Affiliate with the POLIS Project on Ecological Governance.