



The Arctic Institute of North America Presents the 2014-2015

# *Arctic Speaker Series*

## The Maintenance of Indigenous Food Systems in Border Regions of Northern Canada



**Who:** David C. Natcher  
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**Date:** Wed., February 25, 2015

**Time:** 4 – 5 p.m.

**Place:** University of Calgary,  
Science B 142

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) affirms the rights of Indigenous peoples whose lands are divided by international borders “to maintain and develop contacts, relations and cooperation, including activities for spiritual, cultural, political, economic and social purposes, with their own members as well as other peoples across borders” (Article 36). Although Canada and the United States are now signatories of the Declaration, those indigenous peoples whose traditional territories span border regions of the US and Canada are being challenged to exercise this fundamental right. In this paper, I will discuss the challenges faced by the Vuntut Gwitchin (Old Crow, Yukon) whose traditional lands extend across the Yukon border into Alaska. Once the exclusive political domain of the Gwitchin, this territory is now under the administrative authority of two federal governments (U.S. and Canada), one territorial government (Yukon), one state government (Alaska), and two comprehensive land claims (ANCSA, 1971, and VGFNA, 1993). Arguably the Vuntut Gwitchin now find themselves with more territorial restrictions upon their lives and livelihoods than any other Indigenous people in North America. By focusing on the social and political dimensions of food production, this paper will explore: 1) how the enforcement of the U.S./Canada border has affected the Vuntut Gwitchin’s ability to exercise their territorial rights, as expressed through wildlife harvesting; and 2) how political and legal restrictions relating to cross-border travel have affected traditional/contemporary food sharing networks between the Vuntut Gwitchin and Gwich’in communities in Alaska.

**Bio:** Trained as a cultural anthropologist, Dr. Natcher’s research interests rest largely in environmental and economic anthropology. Dr. Natcher holds graduate degrees from the University of Alaska Fairbanks (M.A. 1996) and the University of Alberta (1999) and has held faculty appointments at the University of Alaska Anchorage (Anthropology) and Memorial University of Newfoundland (Anthropology). While at Memorial University, he also held a Canada Research Chair in Aboriginal Studies. Dr. Natcher is currently a Professor in the Department of Bioresource Policy, Business and Economics at the University of Saskatchewan where he also serves as a Senior Research Chair with the Global Institute for Food Security.

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