



The Arctic Institute of North America presents the 2016-17

Arctic Speaker Series

Considering myself in the bosom of the Arctic: What have corsets got to do with climate change?

Who: Matthew Ayre | **Date:** Wednesday, April 19, 2017 | **Time:** 4:00 – 5:00 pm | **Location:** University of Calgary; Science A 106



Climate change is the largest challenge facing humanity and the Arctic is the canary in the mine. For nearly forty years we have witnessed a near continual and increasing downward trend in the extent and thickness of Arctic sea ice. Sea ice not only harbours unique ecosystems and communities, it plays a vital role in the Earth's climate system, helping to drive ocean circulation and regulate incoming solar radiation. Changes in the Arctic affect the rest of the world. To forecast the future of this rapidly changing Arctic it is necessary to put these observations into a longer-term context. Proxy records help extend the sea ice record back millennia but do not have the resolution to capture change on the timescales witnessed today. It is by the very nature of the climate in the Arctic that few historical

observations exist with which to look back into its history. However, there exists a unique collection of documents with which to extend observations of Arctic sea ice back into the 18th and 19th century – the logbooks of Arctic whaling vessels. The Arctic whaling trade, based predominantly around the exploitation of the bowhead whale was undertaken through a period of over 300 years and came close to causing the extinction of the Arctic's largest marine mammal. It was prosecuted for the procurement of blubber and whalebone. The former, rendered down into oil, lit, lubricated and cleaned the march of the industrial revolution – while the latter was the literal mainstay of high society. The manner and methods involved in the execution of this trade make the rare extant documents invaluable to furthering our understanding of the Arctic's past.

Biography: Matthew Ayre recently joined the institute as a postdoctoral fellow. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Sunderland in the United Kingdom. His doctoral studies, under the Leverhulme Trust-funded ARCDoc project, helped to further our understanding of the Arctic climate through historical documentary maritime observations. Matthew's research is specifically concerned with extant logbooks of British and American Arctic whalers who plied their trade in Baffin Bay in the east and the Beaufort Sea in the west, along with logbooks of Arctic explorers. These rare documents contain daily observations of natural phenomena from weather and sea ice to flora and fauna, allowing for a detailed view into the Arctic past. Matthew is dedicated to unlocking the meaning of these detailed narrative descriptions and has spent time in Arctic waters making sea ice observations to compare historical definitions of sea ice with terms currently in use.

This event is **free and open to the public**

There will be a reception in the AINA offices (ES-1040) immediately following the presentation

Email: arctic@ucalgary.ca | **Webpage:** www.arctic.ucalgary.ca | **Phone:** 403-220-7515