

## Letter from the President

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Website: [www.iassa.org](http://www.iassa.org)  
E-mail: [andrey.petrov@uni.edu](mailto:andrey.petrov@uni.edu)  
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Natalia Khortseva  
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Dear IASSA Members!

On August 23 we celebrate the 30th anniversary of IASSA! My most sincere congratulations to all current and past members! IASSA today is a prominent and well-respected science organization that brings together many hundreds of scholars from a variety of social sciences, humanities and Indigenous knowledge systems.

The wisdom of our leaders in 1988, when the idea of IASSA was born, and in 1990, when our association was established, paved the way for a rapid and continuing growth of social sciences in the Arctic. Needless to say that the volume of published scholarship in our disciplines quadrupled in the last 20 years! By the time of IPY, and especially in the post-IPY Arctic sciences family, we have taken a prominent role in shifting the focus of research and policy to understanding and addressing the challenges faced by Arctic communities. Engaging with Arctic communities and embracing Indigenous knowledge systems, supporting Indigenous scholars and residents has become and will remain the focus of IASSA. The voice of social sciences (written large) is now heard at global and regional fora, from the Arctic Council, where IASSA is an observer, to the International Science Council, where IASSA is one of only few region-based member associations.

Although our successes are plentiful, it is not the time to rest. The new challenges are emerging as we are grappling with climate change, economic instability, political headwinds and COVID-19 pandemic. As individuals and as an organization we are affected by these. COVID-19 postponed our 10th Congress, which will now take place on June 15-19, 2021 in Arkhangelsk, Russia. COVID-19 transformed the life in the Arctic communities and forever altered the ways we conduct research. At the same time, it has given us an opportunity to reflect on what, how and why we pursue science in the Arctic. More importantly, this 'pause' could provide an opening for Arctic communities to consider what kind of research they would like to 'welcome back' when the pandemic is over, and what must fundamentally change to make this partnership more equitable.

As we are celebrating the 30th anniversary of IASSA at the computer screens or in socially-distanced settings we all thank the many colleagues and friends who invested their passion in the growth of our association, thank our current membership for loyalty and support, and rejoice in hoping that the path we are on is not only the road to growth and prominence of our profession, but a path to make a real difference in the world working together across disciplines, knowledge systems, borders and generations!

Visit: <https://iassa.org/iassa-30>

Andrey N Petrov, President



## Features

# Celebrating IASSA History 1990-2020

*IASSA Secretariat & IASSA Past Presidents Working Group*

## IASSA History in Brief

IASSA was founded in 1990 in Fairbanks, Alaska, at a meeting held in conjunction with the 7th Inuit Studies Conference. The creation of IASSA follows the suggestion, made at the Conference on Coordination of Research in the Arctic held in Leningrad, USSR in 1988, to establish an international association to represent Arctic social scientists.

From its foundation in 1990 until 1992, IASSA's secretariat was housed at the Department of Geography, McGill University, Montreal, Canada. The following three years the secretariat was situated at the Arctic Center, University of Lapland, Rovaniemi, Finland. Then from 1995 to 1998, it was housed at the Department of Eskimology, University of Copenhagen, Copenhagen, Denmark. From 1998 to 2001, the secretariat was located at the GÉTIC (Groupe d'études inuit et circumpolaires) of Université Laval in Quebec City, Canada. From 2001 to 2004, it was at the University of Alaska Fairbanks Department of Anthropology. From 2004 to 2008 it was at Ilimatusarfik, the University of Greenland, Nuuk, Greenland. From 2008 to 2011 it was located at the Stefansson Arctic Institute in Akureyri, Iceland. The years 2011-2014 University of Northern British Columbia, in Prince George, British Columbia, Canada was housing the Secretairy. Currently, the Secretariat was housed at ARCUM at Umeå University, Umeå, Sweden between 2014 and 2017. Since 2017 the IASSA Secretariat is located at the [ARCTICCenter](https://arcticcenter.org/), University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, USA.

**IASSA History Special Issue** published in 2010 is available online at:

<https://iassa.org/images/newsletters/northern-notes33.pdf>

In this and following issues we will print **essays written by former IASSA Presidents** on the occasion of the 30th anniversary.

## IASSA Past Presidents



Ludger Müller-Wille  
(1990-1995)  
Montreal, Canada  
Rovaniemi, Finland



Jens Dahl  
(1995-1998)  
Copenhagen, Denmark



Gérard Duhaime  
(1998-2001)  
Quebec City, Canada



Peter Schweitzer  
(2001-2004)  
Fairbanks, USA



Yvon Csonka  
(2004-2008)  
Nuuk, Greenland



Joan Nymand Larsen  
(2008-2011)  
Akureyri, Iceland



Gail Fondahl  
(2011-2014)  
Prince George, Canada



Peter Sköld  
(2014-2017)  
Umea, Sweden



## Features: LETTERS FROM PAST-PRESIDENTS

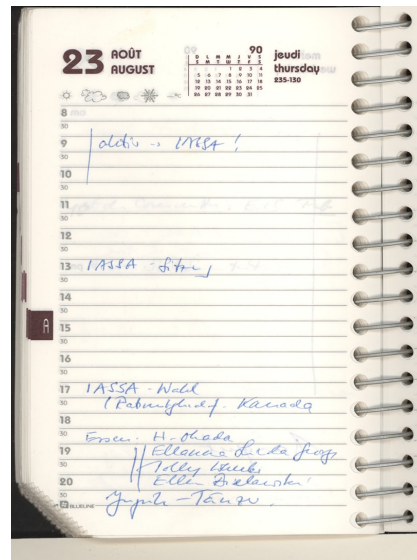
### Letter from Ludger Müller-Wille: IASSA at 30 - 1990-2020: Shaping Social Sciences and Humanities in the Arctic

*anthropologist/geographer, retired professor, active 1977-2008 in the Department of Geography, McGill University, Montréal (Québec) Canada. With IASSA – 1990-1995: acting and first Chair (called President after 2001); 1990-2001: council member; 1992: convener, ICASS I in Québec ; 1995-1998: Past-Chair; 2008: first recipient of the IASSA Honorary Lifetime Membership Award at ICASS VI in Nuuk.*

For the development of social sciences throughout the Circumpolar North August 23, 1990 would become a memorable and decisive day. On the last day of the 8th Inuit Studies Conference, held at the University of Alaska in Fairbanks, participants met to discuss the future directions of their research and the foundation of an organization to accommodate and enhance their scientific efforts. Jointly it was decided to establish the *International Association of Arctic Social Sciences* (IASSA) with a simple, flexible, and independent institutional structure to support common interests and activities. This action also included the strategically ambitious step to call for the first encompassing international scientific gathering on Arctic social sciences including humanities in Québec in October 1992 (see ref.).

The *First International Congress of Arctic Social Sciences* (ICASS I) brought together a large number of engaging and dedicated people from various disciplinary fields throughout the Circumpolar North. Following the basic assumption of free and open access to this venue, they met to further “knowledge/science” throughout the Arctic as an integral part of human-environmental relations globally. Since the first congress in Québec, ICASS has become the central driving element of IASSA’s existence and pursuits, in fact, one could say, redefining itself with each triennial congress. Over close to three decades now ICASS has taken, with the IASSA’s secretariat, its envisioned circumpolar tour to various locations and regions – with ICASS X now to be held in Arkhangelsk in June 2021.

Organizations such as IASSA have a pivotal place to provide a platform and a framework for connecting individual and communal endeavours and achievements in the interests of research grounded in common knowledge and science. The foci of studies



*Ludger's calendar for August 23, 1990, the day IASSA was established*

have been, and continue to be, the immense dynamics of intricate human-environmental relations. Here the emphases are, among others, on the universal human conditions linked to cultural, linguistic, socio-economic, political, and, not least, philosophical dimensions. In this wide realm IASSA has a role to shape visions by presenting propositions for the future based on sound research practices and clearly established objectives guided by encompassing ethical principles. It is worthwhile to refer to the very early statement of objectives and principles which IASSA published and distributed widely to more than 700 individuals and many institutions in October 1991. IASSA's General Assembly adopted all of them at ICASS I in October 1992. Among them are these:

- to promote research and educational partnerships with the Peoples of the North,
- to adopt a statement of ethical principles for the conduct of research in the Arctic regions,

## Features LETTERS FROM PAST-PRESIDENTS

### Letter from Ludger Müller-Wille (cont.)

regions,

– to promote mutual respect, communication, and collaboration between social scientists and the Peoples of the North while recognizing these are not mutually exclusive groups.

These objectives, with others, continue to resonate even as they have been revised and expanded over time.

For an organization it is useful to reflect on its earlier development and practices. Its members, who, over the years, change constantly, have opportunities to introduce fresh thoughts, ideas, and approaches that will shape future positions, directions, and activities. Having been involved deeply in the early organizational and scientific phase of IASSA/ICASS, I could not foresee that I would write this note 30 years later, marking IASSA's continuing existence as a functioning organization enhancing and assuring comprehensive contributions to knowledge and science. Contemplating from my tranquil perch of distance, I still feel that founding IASSA at the time was quite an enterprising, useful, and rewarding step in the right direction – if not always easy

regarding lacking resources at the beginning. Generations come and go — it is to the present generation of members to shape the future of IASSA/ICASS and Arctic social sciences and humanities in the broadest sense and, at the same time, not lose sight of the original ideas and projected goals that put IASSA on its path.

Müller-Wille, Ludger 2010. Establishing the International Arctic Social Sciences Association (IASSA) 1990-1993: Retrospections, Records and Reflections. in: The Beginnings of Arctic Social Sciences: Reconstructing the Genealogy of IASSA. Ed. by Igor Krupnik & Ludger Müller-Wille. Northern Notes, Special Anniversary Issue 33, 2010:20-45.

Personal note: My special thanks for supporting, sharing, and living these particular experiences go to Linna Weber Müller-Wille, wife and colleague, who, without compensation, acted as the first IASSA secretariat from her study in our home. She was organizer, correspondent, editor, translator, and the indispensable designer of customized data bases and other digital applications to assist in the establishment of IASSA/ICASS.



Ludger Müller-Wille & Linna Weber Müller-Wille  
In June 2019. Photo: Debbie Andrews



Ludger Müller-Wille at Work

## Features LETTERS FROM PAST-PRESIDENTS

### Letter from Gérard Duhaime: Changing the World As It Is

*By Gérard Duhaime, President, 1998-2001, sociologist and political scientist, professor, Canada Research Chair on Comparative Aboriginal Conditions, and Louis-Edmond-Hamelin Chair for Northern Social Research at Université Laval, Québec City, Canada.*

#### The World Is What It Is...



"The World Is What It Is," wrote a few times V. S. Naipaul. The sentence, written as if it were a Law of the Universe, is so famous that his authorized biography bears this title. There was a time when e-mail, the Internet and the Arctic Council did not exist; they all emerged around 1995-96. But IASSA, founded in 1990, was already engaged in the task of creating a place where social scientists and humanities researchers could come together and build bridges between our developing community and the world as it is.

#### A Full-fledged Working Group at IASC

Ludger Muller-Wille, founder and first president, and Jens Dahl, second president, had invited me to present my candidacy to succeed them, and to move the secretariat to Université Laval, where the first International Congress of Arctic Social Sciences was held in 1992. Following the election at ICASS III in Copenhagen in 1998, the Board reaffirmed three priorities for action to help achieve the goals of the association, and we divided the portfolios among the Board members. One priority was to ensure IASSA representation on the International Arctic Science Committee (IASC). Founded in 1990, the same year as the IASSA, the IASC had its mandate from the national scientific organizations of the eight Arctic countries; the committee had a high profile with a strong emphasis on the natural sciences. From its inception, the IASC had been challenged from within to integrate the "social and medical sciences", but had difficulty grasping the importance of social issues, and the involvement of social sciences, indigenous researchers and communities. Jens Dahl, ex-officio member of the Board as past president, would explain and promote our perspective to IASC, where our association had permanent observer status. Indeed, he and Ludger Muller-Wille had started the work by proposing, as early as 1995 in Hanover (USA), then in 1996 in Bremerhaven (Germany) and in 1998 in St-Petersburg (RF), the creation within the IASC of a working group on the priority theme of "Rapid Cultural & Societal Change in the Circumpolar

North". The creation of the working group, of which Jens Dahl became the first president, and the mobilization of our community around this theme between 1998 and 2001 had the effect of formalizing the recognition of the social sciences, the relevance of which would soon be demonstrated by the abundance of work carried out upon the subject. The first social sciences working group, whose presence considerably changed the IASC's attitude towards social issues, has since been replaced by the Social & Human Working Group, which has become one of the five full-fledged pillars of the IASC.

#### Permanent Observer Status at the Arctic Council

The second priority was to formalize IASSA's presence in the Arctic Council, and this responsibility fell to Noel Braodbent, Rick Caulfield and Oscar Kawagley. The Arctic Council was established in 1996. IASSA had applied for and received ad hoc observer status. In 1998, the Council had established the Sustainable Development Working Group, then the newest of the Arctic Council's working groups, which was to focus on the human dimensions of the Arctic. In October 2000, IASSA, along with the Arctic Athabaskan Council, the Gwich'in Council International and the Association of World Reindeer Herders, among others, was granted permanent observer status. The third priority was to foster the development and visibility of Arctic social sciences research. This responsibility was entrusted to Yvon Csonka, who was to become the fifth president of IASSA in 2004. In particular, he carried out an important inventory of the research planned or underway in our community, which made possible the implementation of the initiative "Rapid Cultural & Societal Change in the Circumpolar North".

#### Human Dimensions Within the International Polar Year 2007-2008

Begun at the association's inception, these very real advances have created the possibility of a major turning point in the recognition of Arctic social sciences. At the end of my mandate, I represented the association at the Arctic Council, where major projects were being developed with our support: for example, the first Arctic Human



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## Letter from Gérard Duhaime (cont.)

Development Report obliterated the relevance of our disciplines and the views of Indigenous Peoples on human and social realities. I was also asked to serve on the International Polar Year Planning Committee (IPY-PC) in 2003 and 2004. The objectives of the association were the guides for my action. The first version of the IPY programme I was given to review and comment on made no mention of the human dimensions. Even the initially proposed logo symbolically ignored these issues: if memory serves me right, it represented, in the middle of a globe suggested by some continental contours, parallels and meridians, the silhouette of a standing polar bear. However, as the only representative of our disciplines, it would have been impossible for me alone to change this situation. I found few allies inside the IPY-PC, but many on the outside. I had alerted Peter Schweitzer, our fourth president. What followed was a mobilization never before seen. Through the efforts of our community – thanks to the tireless contribution of people like Igor Krupnik and Michael Bravo to name but a few of those not yet mentioned – we rallied not only the IASC, but also the several national Polar Commissions, Permanent Participants and national delegations to the Arctic Council. This support resonated strongly at the following IPY-PC meetings. So that after the last one, an entire section of the IPY science programme was devoted exclusively to the human dimensions; moreover, each component of the so-called “hard” sciences (one could have said “inhuman” sciences instead to ironically balance the scale of institutional prestige) had to take into account these dimensions. And the polar bear was replaced by a human figure on what became the official logo the event.

### ... As It Changed

At ICASS IV in the spring of 2001, I had proposed to create IASSA Awards. I had met with fairly clear opposition: it was seen as elitist rather than an opportunity to raise the visibility of our work. For my part, I would have had a hard time choosing whom to give my Gold Medal to for the best keynote speech, among all the remarkable contributions of Julie Cruikshank, Jean L. Briggs and the other polar stars. There were no awards until a little later in our history, which suddenly unleashed the possibility to celebrate our successes with moving and memorable ceremonies. At the time, the IASSA Newsletter was printed and sent to all members by postal service and only later was it renamed Northern Notes and sent by email. Print had a virtue:

Murielle Nagy, who was secretary of the association during my term of office, was able to retrieve all issues from 1998 to 2001 inside her precious and countless archeological artefacts boxes. Recently, I scanned them and gave them to Andrey Petrov as a humble legacy from a former president, in order to enrich our shiny and performing 21<sup>st</sup> century website (nothing to do with the prehistoric site we created on my watch), and its still incomplete collection of NoNos. Surgery for the removal of appendicitis way was much more intrusive than it is today, as one of the participants who came from so far away to spend the congress in a room at the Hotel-Dieu no doubt recalls. At the Summit of the Americas 2001, at the very place where ICASS IV was to be held three weeks later, right under the hotel room window where George W. Bush was having trouble sleeping, 50,000 persons of the anti-globalization movement protested against neo-liberalism and globalization, and I understand that it did not succeed in overturning the world order even today. The IASSA president who occupied the same bed after George W. a few days later slept very little, too, but for other reasons such as a participant's appendicitis and other miscellaneous contingencies. Aside from the lack of sleep, all these facts relate to Naipaul's so well-coined Law. But, as social scientists and citizens, we are well placed to know that there is a corollary: the world is what it is because it has been socially fabricated, and therefore it can be changed. IASSA's collective achievements, to which I am proud to have contributed, show this well, when I look at our world as it is, now.

### References

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Nagy, M. 2002. *The Power of Traditions: Identities, Politics and Social Sciences. ICASS IV. Keynotes presented at the Fourth International Congress of Arctic Social Sciences. May 16-20, 2001. Quebec City*. Quebec City, IASSA (Topics in Arctic Social Sciences 4).

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### Letter from Peter Schweitzer

*President, 2001-2004, anthropologist, Professor, Department of Cultural and Social Anthropology, University of Vienna, Austria, Professor-Emeritus, University of Alaska Fairbanks, USA*



It is wonderful to be given the opportunity to reminisce about my years as IASSA president. Still, such an occasion also serves as a reminder of the frailty of human memory, and, more specifically, of the human tendency to view the past through the prism of the present.

Thanks to my successors, IASSA is the voice of the Arctic Social Sciences today. Notwithstanding the enormous strides my predecessors had made, IASSA was still in the process of asserting its place in the Arctic science landscape, when I had the great honor of serving as IASSA's fourth president from 2001 to 2004. Permanent observer status at the Arctic Council (AC) had been achieved but our association was struggling – and, as far as I know, continues to struggle – to finance our participation in AC events. Likewise, we had a seat at the table of the International Arctic Science Committee (IASC), but that seat was not in the center but in the margins. It would take till the reorganization of IASC, which resulted in the creation of a Social and Human Working Group in 2011, to give us social scientists and humanities scholars the same visibility as our natural science colleagues.

In hindsight, this changing relationship between scholars from the so-called “hard sciences” and us, representatives of the supposedly “softer” sciences, was a defining element during most of my time at the helm of IASSA. Looking back at the source material our own *Northern Notes* provide, I found the following in the “From the president” column of the spring 2002 edition: “It seems to me that the question of what the particular role of social scientists within the “Arctic research triangle” (courtesy of Igor Krupnik)–northern residents, natural scientists, and social scientists– is or can be has been triggering the most debate.” My conclusion from these discussions was “that Arctic social scientists need to be more self-confident in developing a specific social science agenda in the Arctic.” Several processes and events that happened after my time in office but were shaped in the years before have been most significant in that respect.

Chronologically speaking, the first was the completion and publication of the Arctic Human Development Report (AHDR) in 2004, the first so-

cial science report sponsored by the Arctic Council. The AHDR process had started in 2001 and included IASSA participation all the way. In November 2005, the 2<sup>nd</sup> International Conference on Arctic Research Planning (ICARP II) took place in Copenhagen. Again, the planning for this decadal Arctic science exercise – entitled *Research Planning in the Context of Understanding the Arctic System in a Changing World* and consisting of 13 working groups, several of which addressed social science issues – started years before the 2005 event. Last but not least, the first ideas about social science involvement in the International Polar Year (IPY) 2007-2008 fell into my tenure. Igor Krupnik, Gerard Duhaime and several other IASSA members made the association early on aware of the potential significance of the upcoming IPY for the social sciences. At the Fifth International Congress of Social Sciences in Fairbanks, these early efforts became formalized in an IASSA IPY task group, chaired by Igor Krupnik. I still recall the frantic lobbying efforts during the summer of 2004, when Igor and I sent off several letters to Chris Rapley from the International Council for Science (ICSU) to ensure social science representation in the IPY committees and calls. I believe that readers of these lines are aware of the tremendous success of the IPY 2007-2008 for the Arctic social sciences and humanities. This success was not only expressed in the fact that this IPY was the first one with a significant contribution by social science projects and researchers but also by the increased recognition by the natural science dominated world of the IPY and Polar science, a legacy that we continue to build on.

As usual with IASSA presidents, the highlight of my tenure was the International Congress of Arctic Social Sciences. In my case, it was the above mentioned Fifth International Congress of Arctic Social Sciences (ICASS V) that we held in Fairbanks, Alaska, in May 2004. ICASS V brought together some 400 researchers, students and indigenous people from around the world to share ideas about social science in the North. The following year, we produced a volume entitled *Connections: Local and Global Aspects of Arctic Social Systems* (Sudkamp 2005), which contains the keynotes from that event. The book begins with the opening remarks and blessing by Reverend David Salmon's, in recognition of



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### Letter from Peter Schweitzer (cont.)

and respect for the conference taking place in Athabaskan country. In addition, the volume contains the conference's keynote speeches from Larisa Abryutina (Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North), Fikret Berkes (Natural Resources Institute, University of Manitoba), Dalee Sambo Dorough (Inuit Circumpolar Conference Advisory Committee on United Nation Issues), Tim Ingold (University of Aberdeen), and Georgianna Lincoln (Senator, Alaska State Senate). Anne Sudkamp not only edited the volume but served as the IASSA Executive Officer for all three years. She did an excellent job in that, and made mine a manageable one thereby.

When I was elected IASSA president during ICASS IV in Quebec City in 2001, my immediate predecessor – Gerard Duhaime – told me that I had two main tasks to fulfil over the next three years: to find my successor and to host ICASS V. In the Fall 2004 edition of Northern Notes, I was able to write, "I am glad to report that both tasks are completed: ICASS V had the biggest turn-out of our congresses so far and Nuuk, the

new IASSA location, will provide a president and vice-president." While the final months of 2004 meant the transition of leadership into the able hands of Yvon Csonka, they did not mark the end of my involvement with IASSA. I stayed on as a council member for several more terms and am now an engaged member of the association, who is looking forward to our next ICASS. This brings me to my final thought: while looking back is important, looking ahead is what really counts. I hope that our collective reminiscences will help us with facing and mastering the challenges of the future. With that, I wish IASSA and all of us that the next 30 years will be as successful as the first three decades have been.

Sudkamp, Anne, ed. (2005) *Connections: Local and Global Aspects of Arctic Social Systems. Keynotes presented at the Fifth International Congress of Arctic Social Sciences*. Fairbanks: International Arctic Social Sciences Association.



**IASSA 30th Anniversary Webpage**  
<https://iassa.org/iassa-30>

IASSA  
INTERNATIONAL ARCTIC SOCIAL  
SCIENCES ASSOCIATION

Northern Notes

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### Letter from Yvon Csonka: 2004-2008: In the shadow, and at the forefront, of the International Polar Year

President 2004-2008, anthropologist, Professor, Swiss Federal Statistical Office, Switzerland



As I participated in the founding meeting of IASSA in Fairbanks in August 1990, I of course would never have imagined that I would one day be elected as its fifth president—again in Fairbanks, at ICASS V in 2004. The secretariat moved smoothly to Ilisimatusarfik, The

University of Greenland in Nuuk, another Arctic location at about the same latitude, close to the Arctic circle.

Looking back at that term from a distance, it feels like one of its main aspects was: accompanying—and, most importantly, shaping—the preparation and execution of the *International Polar Year* (IPY) 2007-2008. Shortly before my term began, an important process had been launched by Igor Krupnik (councilor 1990-1995, 2004-2008): the IASSA-IPY task force, which spearheaded the introduction of the humanities and social sciences, and Indigenous concerns, in the planning process of the International Polar Year (IPY) 2007-2008. Igor and Grete Hovelsrud, both IASSA members, subsequently became members of the IPY Joint Committee. The IASSA Council then set up an IASSA-IPY liaison team made up of social scientists who were members of their national IPY Committee. IASSA worked in conjunction with Indigenous organizations and with many other partners such as the University of the Arctic. The surge of officially IPY endorsed research in the humanities and social sciences, many with Indigenous leadership or participation, and its acceptance by colleagues from the natural sciences, was a major achievement of the period.

But this breakthrough was not an isolated one: it came as part of an array of recognition of the humanities and social sciences, and of Indigenous knowledge, as equal players in the community of Arctic and polar researchers. IASSA was one of the co-sponsors of ICARP II (*International Conference on Arctic Research Planning*), which took place in Copenhagen in the fall of 2005, and it was an active participant in it. We were elated by the final conference statement, which concluded that :

*Since the first Conference on Arctic Research and Planning held in 1995 in New Hampshire, there*

*has been a paradigm shift to a holistic and multi-dimensional perspective in the Arctic. This holistic perspective integrally includes the human dimension, Indigenous insights and a more full integration of Arctic processes in the earth system.*

The strong involvement of IASSA in ICARP I and in ICARP II was linked with the development of closer ties with IASC, which were formalized in 2008 in a Letter of Agreement, signed by the presidents of both organizations (Kristján Kristjánsson and I). IASSA also fulfilled its role as observer organization at the Arctic Council by actively participating in its meetings (vice president Birger Poppel took on that task) and in the activities of its Sustainable Development Working Group.

Some large international projects with strong IASSA participation were initiated and carried out in those years. One of the major programmes was *BOREAS, Histories from the North : Environments, Movements, Narratives*, initiated by the European Science Foundation and joined by the US-National Science Foundation and the Canadian Social Science and Humanities Research Council. Some of its components were endorsed as IPY projects, and presented at ICASS VI. The *Arctic Social Indicators* project, a follow up to the *Arctic Human Development Report* set up by the Arctic Council, also had strong IASSA representation. So had the Sustaining Arctic Observing Networks.

We managed to convene a face to face Council meeting early in the term, back to back with ICARP II. There we decided to hold the sixth *International Congress of Arctic Social Sciences* (ICASS VI) in 2008, that is, four years instead of three after the previous one, in order to be able to host it, venue-wise, in the newly inaugurated Ilimmarfik, university campus in Nuuk, and timewise at the heart of the International Polar Year (IPY) 2007-2008. Birger Poppel, vice-president of IASSA, took on the heavy task of convenor of the congress. ICASS VI itself was an officially endorsed IPY project. The Ministry of Education and Research of the Home Rule Government of Greenland provided generous support, which made ICASS the major contribution of Greenland to the IPY, thus showcasing capacity building in education and research in the

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### Letter from Yvon Csonka (cont.)

Arctic itself. Despite the logistical difficulties in accessing Nuuk in great numbers, ICASS VI had 375 participants, of whom some 300 travelled to Greenland from 22 different countries. The congress banquet was held on the day of the eighteenth anniversary (which in many European countries is the official age of reaching adulthood) of the founding of IASSA (August 23<sup>rd</sup>): at that occasion, we inaugurated the tradition of IASSA honorary lifetime membership awards, which were bestowed on the first chairman of the association, Ludger Müller-Wille, the late Ernest "Tiger" Burch, and Robert Petersen.

From those vibrant times, a few salient impressions stand out in my memory (in no particular order) :

That a change of paradigm was ongoing, towards a rapprochement of the natural sciences, the social sciences, and Indigenous knowledge and concerns (examples above)

That we were reaping the fruit of seeds planted by our predecessors, who founded IASSA and worked hard to achieve its purposes

That there was an awful lot going on simultaneously in terms of Arctic (social) science and science policy, reflecting chang-

es in societies and the growing empowerment of Indigenous people

That we operated as a community and that the IASSA agenda was carried not only by each member of its council, but also by a wide network of its members

That as president it was such a relief to be able to count on council, and on a network of members, to delegate the many tasks on hand; still, I regretted that we didn't achieve the goal of revising the by-laws, but that was remedied by later IASSA councils

That the IPY preparation and carrying out was such a mammoth train contemporary with the term of office, and that it was such a success not only to get on board, but to actually be in the locomotive.

All through the term, I truly felt that the council and I were standing on the shoulders of previous IASSA councils and chairpersons (the term president was introduced with the fourth term), who had struggled under trying circumstances, and had been successful in bringing increasing recognition to Arctic social sciences and to the association representing this community. My regret here is not being able to cite by name all

### **Tenth International Congress of Arctic Social Sciences (ICASS X)**

Arctic Generations: Looking Back and Looking Forward  
Арктические Поколения: Взгляд в Прошлое и Будущее  
**June 15-19, 2021 | Arkhangelsk, Russia**

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## Features LETTERS FROM PAST-PRESIDENTS

### Letter from Gail Fondahl

*President, 2011-2014, human geographer, Professor, Department of Geography, University of Northern British Columbia, Canada*



When I was encouraged to run for president of IASSA in 2011, the decision to do so was not terribly difficult. I already had a long 'love-affair' with IASSA. Early in my career, Ludger Müller-Wille had invited me to take part in the organizing committee for ICASSI I, an invitation for which I will be ever

grateful. The Congresses were always my favorite academic conference – a group of colleagues from many different disciplines gathering to talk about the challenges of one (vast) region were much more stimulating than the disciplinary conferences I attended. And this well before 'multi-, inter-, and trans-disciplinarity' became mantras of academia.

I stepped into the role of president of IASSA at a very exciting time (of course, any IASSA president could likely assert this!). Attention to climate change in general, and the Arctic's particular role as 'canary in the coalmine' were on a strong upswing. Yet the Arctic Council's recently signed Nuuk Declaration (May 2011) also strongly emphasized the need for greater focus on human development in the Arctic. My presidency coincided with serving as co-editor of the second *Arctic Human Development Report* (with previous IASSA president, Joan Nyman Larsen), with being assigned Canada's representative to IASC's Social and Human Sciences Working Group (founded in 2011), and with a year-long academic leave (2012-13), of which several months were spent in Europe. Together, these positions created the platform to lobby for more attention to issues confronting the Arctic beyond climate change — issues that cried for engagement with the social science and humanities. The Canadian International Centre for the Arctic Region (CICAR) arranged for me to present talks at several Canadian embassies, 'Arctic Futures: It's about Climate Change... but also much more!' (France, Ireland, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, Norway), to which other ambassadors, especially of the Arctic states, were invited. Many seemed very receptive to this message.

The highlight of all IASSA presidencies, I assume, is hosting ICASS. ICASS VIII, in 2014, brought the congress to Canada for the third time, but to the West for the first, and to Canada's northernmost research university. The

burgeoning interest in the North caused our attendance to swell – ICASS VIII had almost twice as many attendees as ICASS VII (and the trend continued – ICASS IX in 2017 would almost double in size again). Working on organizing with Gary Wilson (co-organizer) and Cher Mazo (ICASS Secretary) — two stellar colleagues — made the experience especially fulfilling. The experience was not without its aggravations: in what we assume may have been influenced by events in Syria and then the Russian annexation of Crimea, the Canadian Embassy refused to provide visas to over 20 of our Russian colleagues. Nonetheless, we still had good representation from Russia, and especially from Sakha Republic (Yakutia)). Indigenous participation was also notable, at over 10%. And the Congress presented an opportunity to celebrate key contributors to Arctic social sciences, Julie Cruikshank, Igor Krupnik and Oran Young, who received IASSA Honorary Lifetime Membership Awards, some of the scholars of the Arctic who I most venerate.

In what may have been the first academic book to result from an ICASS, Gary Wilson and I co-edited *Northern Sustainabilities: Understanding and Addressing Change in the Circumpolar World* (2017, Springer), from papers presented at ICASS VIII. Editing an academic tome is indeed 'like herding cats,' but the uptake was impressive — the book was among the top 25% most downloaded in its respective eBook collection in 2018. The interest in the social sciences and humanities perspectives on the Arctic continues to grow.

IASSA has continued to flourish, under the leadership of President Peter Sköld and Executive Secretary Gabriella Nordin, and then President Andrey Petrov and Executive Secretary Ann Crawford. Its profile at Arctic Council has increased. History to date also indicates that to chair IASC's Social and Human Working Group one may need to consider first serving as IASSA president (J). IASS has certainly helped to promote the critical importance of social sciences and humanities to addressing the challenges that face the North. Key is its role in bringing social scientists and humanities scholars together, along with northern residents, on a regular basis, to share research results and plot future collaborations. We all certainly miss the opportunity to do so this year, but look forward to ICASS X.



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### Letter from Peter Sköld: Putting Arctic Social Sciences on the Map—And Having a Great ICASS IX Conference

*President, 2014-2017, demographer, Professor, Executive director, Arctic Research Centre at Umeå University, Sweden*



When Umeå University in December 2012 established the first Arctic research center in Sweden (ARCUM) we realized that the country had a rather low Arctic profile, being the last of the eight Arctic Council member states to hold the chairmanship and to present a national

Arctic strategy (both in 2011). We were also the only member state not to have an Arctic research center. The ambition was to engage and promote the researchers we already had at the university, to strengthen their Arctic identities, and to activate Swedish researchers at the international arena. At that moment it was hard to think that we less than a year and a half later should be elected for the presidency of IASSA.

In front of us were three absolutely marvelous but also very intensive years. We decided to prioritize the webpage, the Secretariat, international collaboration, and the ICASS IX conference. Thanks to heroic efforts by Gabriella Nordin-Sköld and Linus Lundström at the Secretariat, and the clever and dedicated work by IASSA Council this was made possible. IASSA Council members were Gail Fondahl (CAN, past President), Diane Hirshberg (USA), Grete Hovelsrud (NOR), Andrey Petrov (USA), Gertrude Saxinger (AUT), Florian Stammler (FIN), Tatiana Vlasova (RUS) and Alona Yefimenko (IPS). The Local Organization Committee was invaluable.

Initially the Secretariat improved the IASSA website in collaboration with Arctic Portal in Akureyri. The website was given a new design, new format and updated texts. The IASSA listserv developed with a new system linked to the webpage, and the Secretariat revised all texts before publication. Strong efforts were made to develop IASSA activities on social media (Facebook and Instagram).

The cooperation with the international Arctic science organizations was very good, and gave an opportunity to research to speak with a strong voice. During the Arctic Science Summit Week, on 2 April 2017 IASSA, IASC and UArctic signed a renewed and revised Letter of Agreement. It states that the three organizations share many common interests around growing, supporting and disseminating Arctic research.

In pursuit of these, we collaborate in arranging workshops, conferences, and reports on topics of mutual scientific interest, by encouraging the development of integrated plans for scientific research, by communicating to the public, by entering research partnerships with Arctic residents, by supporting the training and education of students and early career researchers, by providing advice to policy makers, and by addressing the Arctic Council together. There were also a good collaboration with other organizations such as IPS, APECS, SCAR and ISSC (later ISC).

IASSA enjoys Observer Status at the Arctic Council since being accredited at the Barrow Ministerial Meeting 2000. This means that we may attend meetings of the Senior Arctic Officials and of the AC's Working Groups. Most of IASSA's WG participation was at the meetings of the Sustainable Development Working Group (SDWG). With the IASSA President based in northern Sweden and the Arctic Council chairmanships in Canada and USA over the period 2014-2017, there was some extensive travelling crossing the Atlantic Ocean. It was, however, totally worth it since it provided invaluable experiences. We could also see social sciences and humanities becoming more integrated and visible, and during the last meetings observers were even allowed to take the word.

I cannot say how proud and honored I was to act as IASSA President. We are representing important values and our research is more important than ever. I presented our message at 34 international events in 11 different countries, and I hope that this contributed to putting social sciences on the Arctic research map.

Three years go by in no time, and 8 June 2017 it was time to open ICASS IX in Umeå. The overall theme was **People and Place**. The Arctic is home to approximately four million people, counting numerous ethnicities among its inhabitants. More than ten percent of the total population living in the Arctic is Indigenous peoples. In modern times, rapid and extensive changes have brought opportunities



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### Letter from Peter Sköld (cont.)

but also challenges to peoples and places in the north, including climate change, industrial extraction, pollution, globalization, migration, food- and water security and widening socio-economic gaps. Social sciences and humanities have a great responsibility to address these challenges. By focusing on people and place ICASS IX high-lighted the many variances across the Arctic region in terms of sustainabilities, political systems, demography, infra-structures, histories, languages, legal systems, land and water resources, public health etc.

The opening ceremony of ICASS IX at Umeå University was inaugurated by the special Umeå University Sami joik performed by Krister Stoor followed by welcoming speeches by Umeå University Vice-Chancellor Hans Adolfsson, President of the Sami Council Åsa Larsson Blind, Senior Arctic Official of Sweden Andrés Jato and Senior Arctic Official of Finland René Söderman. The interest was huge, and the five-day conference offered 204 scientific sessions, and almost 900 presentations ran in 21 parallel session slots. The ICASS program was organized in 22 different themes: Literature, Resource Management & Extractive Industries, Archeology, Environment & Climate Change, History, and Research Methodologies to mention a few. Each theme had a great variety of sessions and in the theme Indigenous issues for instance, the participants were offered presentations on education, traditional knowledge, research ethics, health, and more.

Each conference day opened with a plenary session in Aula Nordica. The plenaries presented recent research and ongoing projects in five different areas: Extractive Resource Development and Sustainability in the Arctic, What is the Role of Education and Education Research in Advancing Understandings of the Arctic? Indigenous Perspectives on Knowledge, An Interdisciplinary Dialogue on Society and Climate Sensitive Infections: Current and Future Challenges, Arctic Science Through Metrics Lenses – Analyzing National & Global Trends

The ICASS conference is a triennial conference gathering researchers from a wide range of countries. Our aim was not only to present an impressive scientific program, but also to show Umeå, Northern Sweden and the Sami culture and give the participants a chance to mingle and meet up with old (and new) friends. On the opening day we arranged the welcoming reception at Gammlia. The Västerbotten Museum was

open to all participants with a number of stands showing Västerbottnian customs and traditions, Sami artist Jörgen Stenberg entertained at the scene and the Umeå Sami Association Sáhkie treated reindeer meat soup to all guests. In addition, three films were screened during the conference. One of them, the awarded film Sami Blood, was shown in Aula Nordica to a moved audience and the applause never seemed to end when the director Amanda Kernell entered the stage after the screening.

I will forever remember the evening of the Gala Dinner – it was hilarious. When I arrived in good time before dinner I was sent down to inspect the ballroom. Everything looked good so I turned around to walk the stairs back to the entrance area, but then the first guests had arrived and I stopped at the foot of the stairs to welcome them with a handshake. After them came more and more guests and it all ended with me personally shaking the hands of 600 dinner guests. Very nice, but not planned.

We were then served a three course dinner and danced to the fabulous Renhornen orchestra. At the Gala dinner the IASSA Awardees were presented and honored. **Ann Fienup-Riordan** is an anthropologist active in Alaska since 1973, where she conducts research and education. She has for instance developed methods for how researchers can collaborate with and support the local community in the research process. Ann Fienup-Riordan has written more than 20 books and has also received recognition for her work by the Alaska Federation of Natives. **Carl Christian Olsen (Puju)** is a linguist specializing in Inuit languages. Ever since 1968, he has studied Inuit languages and is presently director of the Greenland Language Secretariat as well as chair of the Greenland Place Names Authority, and chair of the Language Commission in the Inuit Circumpolar Council. He is director of the Greenland Language Secretariat and has studied Inuit languages since 1968. Carl Christian Olsen has studied and conducted research in Denmark, Norway and the US, and he was one of the founders of the University of Greenland. Approximately 800 visitors attended the five-day ICASS IX conference, and media interest was great. We counted 32 reportages in TV and radio over the five days. We produced two films, one with interviews of past presidents, and one capturing the marvelous spirit and good atmosphere. I will always be grateful to each and everyone that joined us at ICASS IX, and made this a great memory and milestone.

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