

Call for Contributions: Book collection on Artistic Witness and Response to Environmental Change in the Arctic

This book collection will explore how Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists from Arctic communities have witnessed and responded to environmental changes often driven by human actions and the associated impacts of those changes on identity and wellbeing. Due to the slow onset of environmental changes across Arctic geographies, people struggle to comprehend the magnitude of disturbance and how those impacts are embodied and experienced within an individual or community. Many issues of environmental change, such as warming air or water contamination are invisible, diffuse, and incremental in nature. Yet, they can be felt on the skin, heard in a new silence, and sensed.

Artists often focus on intimate details of place, observing and documenting gradual or abrupt environmental changes. Through works of literary art, visual art, and performance art, artists interpret and depict elements of the environment so that others may become aware of these other existing realities through direct sensory experience. These works give us the experience of being woken up to the world and encourage us to look closer – seeing things for the first time even if they have always been there.

Intimate connections with the land and waters allow for detailed insight into the emergent impacts of environmental changes on our health, wellbeing, and knowledge. As landscapes are dynamic and alive, they provide immediate experience in which we develop and deepen knowledge. Changes to land, waters, and environment are thus woven into our individual and community identities, our personal and communal landscapes, and the future we will collectively inhabit.

This is a call for chapter contributions – from research texts and storytelling, to artworks in their many forms, or a combination of these modes of engagement – that help to further our understanding and ways of knowing environmental change through artistic witness and response in the Arctic. The chapters will be written by authors from many backgrounds, artistic mediums, and geographies of the Arctic, to communicate diverse ways of knowing, and Indigenous and non-Indigenous perspectives. The chapters will provide a dialogue between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, as well as between people who know and live in and with the Arctic and those who do not. The book seeks to bring together a collection of voices and ideas that is accessible to a broad audience, and representative of the diversity and richness of perspectives in Arctic communities.

Included in this call is a list of potential sections for the collection, all of which should be broadly interpreted. Importantly, this is a draft list and can be modified depending on the contributions in response to this call and to accommodate the interests of contributors.

I ask that if you are interested in contributing to this collection, please submit a short but sufficient description of your proposed contribution for review along with a short (~150 word) biography by March 8, 2024. (Note: submissions will be reviewed on a rolling basis beginning immediately).

All contribution proposals will be reviewed and responded to by March 22, 2024. Please send all submissions to antonia.sohns@mcgill.ca

I have begun working with Routledge to publish this collection and will work to finalize the contract for publication once the proposed contributor's list is developed.

Thank you for your consideration and I look forward to receiving your proposals.

Antonia Sohns

Working outline for the collection:

Introduction: Background on art as witness and response to environmental change in the Arctic

Section X: Indigenous Art in the Arctic

- Discussion of Indigenous ontologies of art in the Arctic
- Art as a worldview, as the experience of life

Section X: Art as Witness

- Artistic witness to environmental change in varied circumpolar geographic and cultural contexts
- Artistic perception and perspective
- Ways of knowing through art

Section X: Environmental Change and Injustice

- Art as response to injustices resulting from environmental change (to wellbeing, identity, community, the land and waters)
- Art practices as healing to past and current trauma
- Art as connection to community, to knowledge and traditions

Section X: Artistic Dialogue: Indigenous and non-Indigenous perspectives of environmental change through art

Section X: Voices from Beyond: Art and the more-than-human

- Art and stories from the perspective of land, waters, and the more-than-human

Section X: Arctic Indigenous Languages

- Arctic Indigenous languages and ontologies in relation to land and water, and how they manifest in Indigenous conceptualisations of justice, Indigenous law and forms of governance.
- Arctic Indigenous languages and language renaissances as tools of resilience, justice, identity, self-determination, and of healing intergenerational trauma.

Section X: Mapping Imaginaries: Arctic cartography and counter-mapping

- Place names
- Stories of place and landmarks
- Words and terms that convey close kinship with land and waters

Section X: Petroglyphs to the future

- Beauty and history that comes from art
- Passage of time through art
- Artistic envisioning of better futures, of alternative pathways

Conclusion