

clarity

2019



College of
Liberal Arts

Arts. Humanities. Languages. Social Sciences.

Embrace change: It's the only thing we can guarantee.

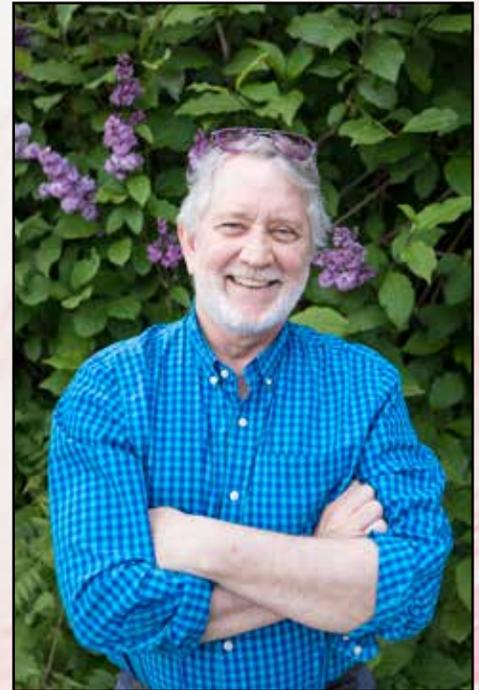
By Dean Todd Sherman, UAF College of Liberal Arts

As philosopher Heraclitus noted, "Change is the only constant in life." Indeed "change" is our new normal, and we are navigating a time of unprecedented change for our communities, our university and our state.

Alaska's budgetary concerns and political crises have made headlines from the local paper to global media. In response to these issues, the university's Board of Regents has decided to deeply explore major restructuring of the higher education landscape. Moving from the current three separately accredited universities of UAF, UAA and UAS to a single accredited institution. Major consolidations of programs, and program eliminations, are expected in our new reality. These are uncharted waters for us, but our commitment to students is unwavering.

The College of Liberal Arts is essential to the success of the university's mission as an international center for learning, research, the arts, and study of our Arctic climate and culture. We educate tomorrow's leaders. We believe it's not only what you learn, but who you become. Our vibrant and diverse faculty are dedicated to student success through quality teaching and challenging our students to understand the complexities of our world.

The liberal arts undertake some of the most dynamic, engaging and comprehensive issues facing the world today. We are the human dimension. Our rigorous curriculum bridges the arts, languages, humanities and social sciences, to encourage student-led inquiry while offering unique opportunities for scholarship and exhibition. Our goal is for students to become resilient and adaptive, and to graduate as creative thinkers and doers who have the intellectual courage to seek truth and pose new solutions. We are proud of our CLA graduates, who become our most inspiring entrepreneurs, artists, doctors, executives, analysts, educators, attorneys, scholars and change makers.



Clarity Staff: Annie Duffy, Sarah Manriquez, and Kathryn Reichert

Layout and Design: Kathryn Reichert

Photography: Sarah Manriquez

Special Thanks: Our thanks go out to everyone in CLA. Thanks as well to our contributors: Diane L'xeis' Benson, LJ Evans, Abby Hatfield, Zoë Jones, Da-ka-ween Mehner, Tobey-Jean Priest, Maya Salganek, William Schneider and Todd Sherman.

Cover: "The Long Swim," by Todd Sherman, acrylic on paper

Inside Cover: detail from "Mariah Henderson" by Todd Sherman, acrylic on paper

MOLLY OF DENALI

by Diane L'xeis' Benson

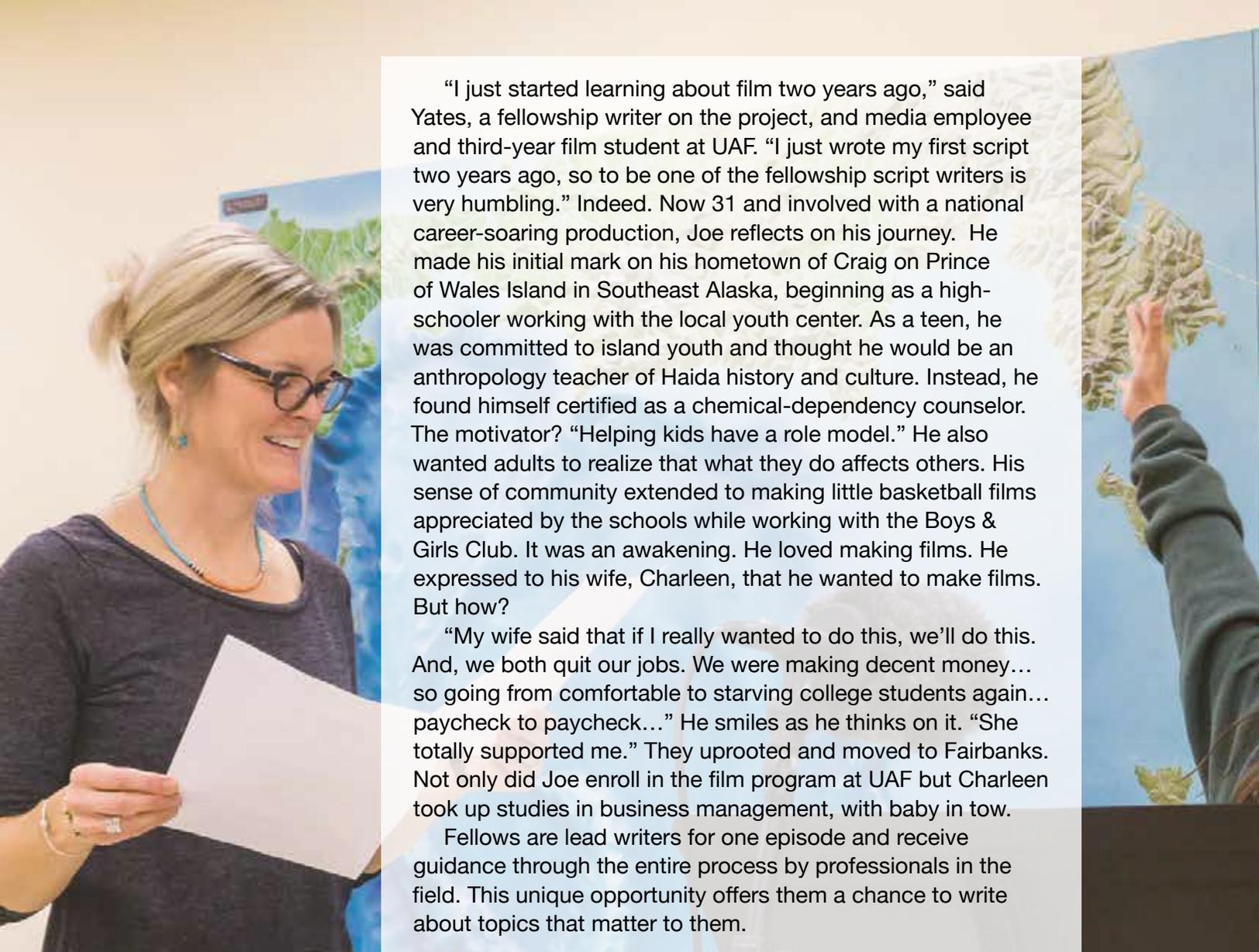


Dad, Mom and Molly unloading the bush plane. Courtesy of © 2018 WGBH Educational Foundation

Angayuqaq, Oscar Kawagley, a longtime UAF scholar in cross-cultural studies and education, once shared a story to a group about when he was a boy wanting to be the cowboy, instead of the Indian. Film has always had an impact on societal perceptions and, intended or not, has perpetuated stereotypes. The recent development of the CultureStrike movement in America's film capital, Los Angeles, speaks to the tenacity of stereotypes and the never-ending need for social change in the film arts. Even today, Native children, knowing they are Native, often may not relate to venerated cinematic imagery about Native people. A PBS animated series in production is challenging this status quo before it has yet to premiere and is changing lives in Alaska.

"Molly of Denali" is a new PBS Kids national television series that began airing in June. It is

about a 10-year-old Athabascan girl who lives in the fictional village of Qyah and her adventures with family in running the Denali Trading Post. From the onset, WGBH Boston sought to hire as many Alaska Native people as possible for not only acting roles but also in all areas of production. Maya Salganek, associate professor of the UAF Theatre and Film Department has been instrumental in finding talent. Subsequently, Alaska Natives have been hired as production assistants, writers, animators, and cultural advisors. What is groundbreaking is the extent to which the producers have ensured including the Native voice throughout the production and beyond. WGBH has created scriptwriting fellowships that provide hands-on opportunities for novice writers and new filmmakers like Joe Yates.



“I just started learning about film two years ago,” said Yates, a fellowship writer on the project, and media employee and third-year film student at UAF. “I just wrote my first script two years ago, so to be one of the fellowship script writers is very humbling.” Indeed. Now 31 and involved with a national career-soaring production, Joe reflects on his journey. He made his initial mark on his hometown of Craig on Prince of Wales Island in Southeast Alaska, beginning as a high-schooler working with the local youth center. As a teen, he was committed to island youth and thought he would be an anthropology teacher of Haida history and culture. Instead, he found himself certified as a chemical-dependency counselor. The motivator? “Helping kids have a role model.” He also wanted adults to realize that what they do affects others. His sense of community extended to making little basketball films appreciated by the schools while working with the Boys & Girls Club. It was an awakening. He loved making films. He expressed to his wife, Charleen, that he wanted to make films. But how?

“My wife said that if I really wanted to do this, we’ll do this. And, we both quit our jobs. We were making decent money... so going from comfortable to starving college students again... paycheck to paycheck...” He smiles as he thinks on it. “She totally supported me.” They uprooted and moved to Fairbanks. Not only did Joe enroll in the film program at UAF but Charleen took up studies in business management, with baby in tow.

Fellows are lead writers for one episode and receive guidance through the entire process by professionals in the field. This unique opportunity offers them a chance to write about topics that matter to them.

“More Native people means we move more towards visual sovereignty.”

— Princess ‘Daazhrai’ Lucaj (Neets’aii Gwich’in)

“‘Molly of Denali’ is the first Alaska Native lead character on a national level,” says Joe. “It is not just great for myself, and those who came before me, but our future generations as well. I have a 1-year-old daughter, and she now gets a chance to have someone like her growing up in Alaska, being Alaska Native, and doing the things that she does... on TV.”

Princess ‘Daazhrai’ Lucaj (Neets’aii Gwich’in) sometimes-adjunct for the UAF Department of Theatre and Film and well-known activist, is the creative producer for the project and expresses similar sentiments. “Something turned in my heart,” she said in response to its importance. “And thinking about being a young girl and not seeing myself represented in the



media at all; that was the main draw to this. And children across the U.S. can see, we are a modern thriving people with our values and cultures.” She points out that after all, “media is the reason of how and why there are negative stereotypes.” The production “provides Native people more input into how we want to be represented. We know our stories the best.”

She was asked recently how they balance the social ills of Native peoples in such a program. For Princess, the fact that it was asked suggested a pervasive stereotype of Native people. “Well, our audience is 4- to 8-year-olds. That question is why it is important to do this – to address stereotypes. Social issues like that are across all cultures, any people.”

Big Bird and the Sesame Workshop have evolved into addressing delicate social issues tailored to reassuring young children. With Native writers at work, it seems that "Molly of Denali" will not only transport kids on adventures and educational journeys on Alaska but tackle some difficult issues in the process. One of the episodes may be on boarding schools, Princess reveals. A source for the story was encouraging for her. “One of the things he said was that when we understand our trauma and what we have been through, we are able to create the new.” She added, “It is so validating hearing from the people ... to keep doing this.”

Joe and Princess and the many others committed to the project understand the power of film and of being involved. As Princess says, “More Native people means we move more towards visual sovereignty.” ■

Diane L'xeis' Benson is an assistant professor in the Department of Alaska Native Studies and Rural Development and founder and former owner of Northern Stars Talent Agency. Her theatrical work on Elizabeth Peratrovich led to the development of the film, “For the Rights of All: Ending Jim Crow in Alaska.”

Carrie Baker reads with Cheelil Peter during Voice Acting Intensive Workshop for "Molly of Denali" in Fairbanks, Alaska. 2018. Photo Credit: Da-ka-xeen Mehner

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The College of Liberal Arts is one of the largest academic units in UAF. A vibrant array of disciplines makes up CLA — everything that falls under arts, languages, social sciences and humanities. At CLA we promote the sharing of knowledge and the art of critical thinking. We offer 41 degrees from the following departments and programs:

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Background painting/portraits by Todd Sherman

clarity is online!

See more photos from Molly of Denali as well as other articles, videos, photos and highlights from around CLA on our new Clarity website!

www.claritymag.org

"Well Aware: The Diverse Disciplines of Daryl Farmer"

by *Maureen Long*

Daryl Farmer, director of the creative writing program at UAF, talks about writing as a means of reflection and growth, the power of perseverance, and long bike rides — and shares the photos taken along the way.

Tobey-Jean Priest, lumen

"Alternative Lens on Photography"

by *Zoë Jones*

Photography instructor J. Jason Lazarus is bringing the Society of Photographic Education Northwest Chapter to UAF this fall for two full days of talks, roundtable discussions and workshops surrounding the theme "In Our Own Voices." Brian Adams, known for his "I Am Alaskan" and "I Am Inuit" projects, will be the keynote speaker for the conference.

Abby Hatfield, "Alt Odyssey 1," chemigram

"Archives Video Project Highlights Historical Treasures"

by *William Schneider*,
professor emeritus

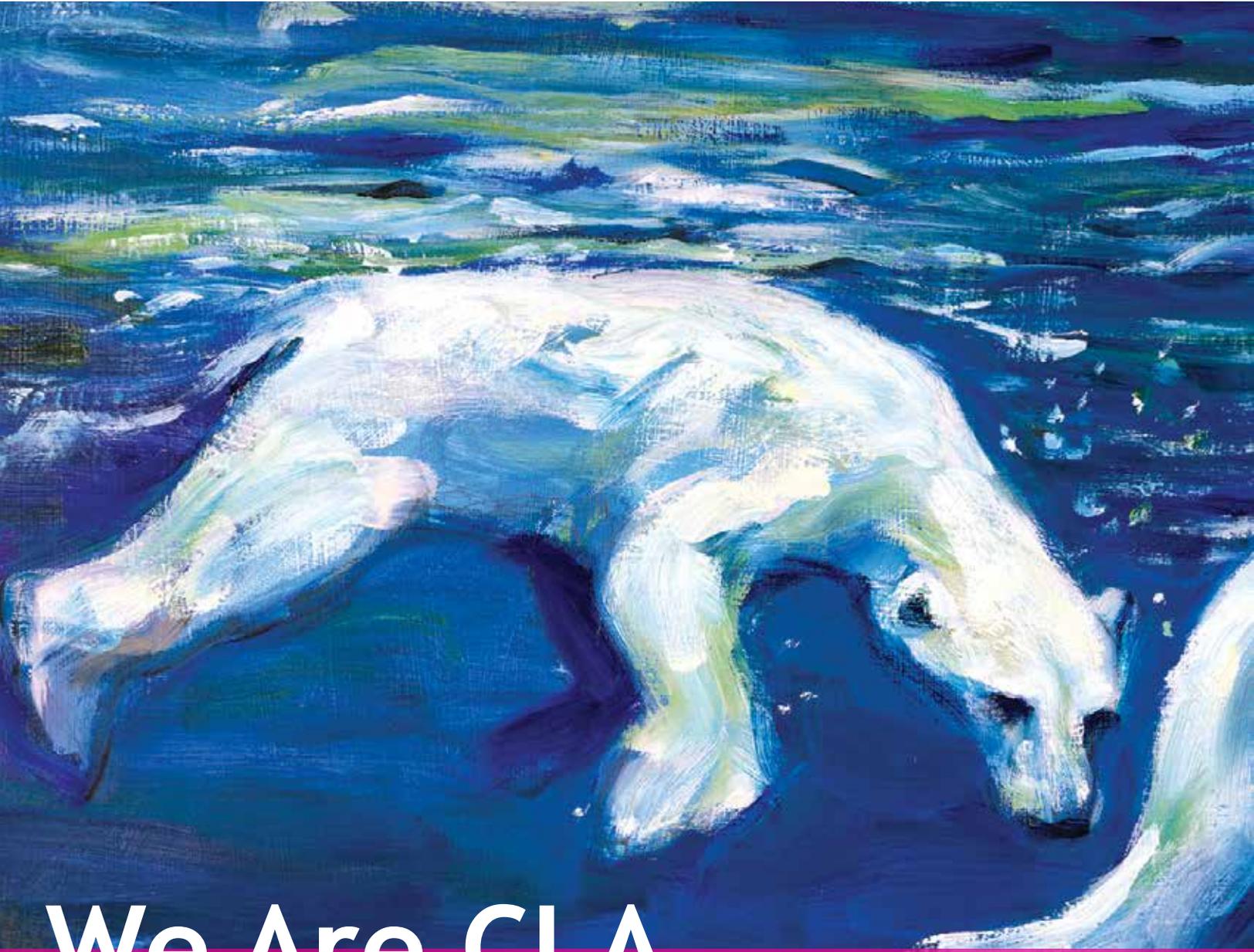
The new Archive Video Project is showcasing the Alaska and Polar Regions Collections and Archives in a three-video compilation commissioned by members of the library community. It highlights the value of the archives by featuring researchers using the collections in their work.

Kathryn Reichert, "We Went Where People Don't Go," photo intaglio

"Alternative Process Photo Gallery"

See highlights from past students' explorations in the Handmade Photos course offered by Instructor J. Jason Lazarus.

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We Are CLA

October 19, 2019

We Are CLA is the University of Alaska Fairbanks' College of Liberal Arts' open house. Meet faculty and staff from an array of academic departments, from art to psychology and everything in between. Join us for games, refreshments and the chance to win one of five \$500 scholarships!

11:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. • UAF Wood Center Ballroom