

Toolik Steering Committee RA Update



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RA's at Toolik

- Many stay at TFS for full summer, or make several trips
- Usually not students, but often working closely with graduate students or mentoring undergrads
- Carrying on research and making project decisions when PIs are not in camp

Working at TFS in 2020

- 2020 season presented new challenges for virtually everyone –especially with COVID, State, Institutional restrictions
- Even with restrictions, 2020 was very successful for projects that were able to go to Toolik
- The helicopter was absolutely critical to being able to carry out fieldwork with reduced



COVID Challenges

- Lack of early information was very frustrating
- Quarantine prevented some researchers with families from being able to work at TFS
- Some researchers camped near TFS, but wish they could have still used limited TFS support (Fuel, Food, WiFi). Contactless fueling would have made a huge difference
- Some institutions still prevented travel even with TFS and NSF safety plans

Living at TFS

- Overall camp life was good in 2020, low population made things easier
- Sustainability remains a priority – “TFS has the opportunity to be a leader in this area”
- Camp activities were appreciated, and pretty well attended
- Cards, games, bonfires were great, request for additional Kung Fu movie VHS tapes
- Doors, stairs, and beds in muskox dorm are very loud, did disrupt sleep for several people

Title IX training and camp culture

- View of Title IX should be shifted from a “requirement” to a promotion of a safe community for all
- Title IX is not taken seriously by all, and remains a punchline for jokes
- Title IX training is good, the “real” camp scenarios are especially helpful, but could be updated
- Documentation around camp, in towers is useful

Title IX Reporting

- Choosing to report an incident is a very tough decision, and is made tougher if on-site “authorities” are all male
- Change the narrative from “reporting to the authorities” to “working together to make camp safe for everyone, and looking out for one another”
- Including a photo of Title IX office personnel in Fairbanks could make them more approachable

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion

- There is “an urgent need for better diversity equity and inclusion policies within camp and training for staff”
- Meeting held last summer was helpful in addressing the need for improvements, but didn’t come up with a clear path forward
- Adding DEI to pre-camp training, and having additional posted information will help

Mental Health in camp

- Mental health remains a concern, especially for those at TFS from prolonged stay, away from home
- Single rooms make a huge difference during a long stay
- Camp resources/counselor available?
- Community events help to stem loneliness, isolation

EDC Support and Remote Access

- Remote access prevented many projects from losing an entire year of work
- Amanda Young noted by all respondents as *incredibly helpful* and critical to several projects
- More communication on when requested tasks were carried out would have been helpful

TFS Shared Equipment

- Request for a shared handheld pH meter
- No major equipment conflicts mentioned

GIS Support

- No feedback regarding GIS in 2020

Sample Storage and Shipment

- 2020 reduced truck schedule made some logistics difficult, but manageable
- Additional freezer and fridge space in new garage is great!
- Welcome back Pete!

Summary

- Overall, 2020 went as well as it could have gone
- Camp staff has been outstanding and helpful, especially Amanda Young
- Better communication about camp policies and plans, along with better individual project communication will help eliminate many of the COVID challenges
- Sustainability, diversity and mental health should be priorities in the future development of TFS

