VIEW to the U transcribed
Season 3: Global Perspectives; Episode #4
Professor Tracey Galloway
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[Intro Music comes in and fades out]

Tracy Galloway (TG): If you don't already have face to face relationships with Indigenous Canadians, form some. Attend a public event in which people are willingly and freely giving of their cultural traditions, with the hope of engaging.

I am Tracy Galloway from the Department of Anthropology and I am an Assistant Professor.

Attend a Powwow or a gathering of some kind and make friends.

I think true reconciliation will come from actual relationships that we have with each other as people.

[Theme music fades in]

Carla Demarco (CD): **Roots to Reconciliation**

On today's episode of the *VIEW to the U* podcast, which has come out in honor of the month of June where we celebrate national Indigenous history month, with National Indigenous People's Day falling on June 21st, 2019.

We will learn more about the work of Professor Tracy Galloway from U of T Mississauga's department of anthropology and the health focused research she does with northern Indigenous populations in Canada. We find out more about Tracy's journey from working as a nurse in the urban intensive care unit in a London, Ontario hospital, to her current academic path where she looks at social determinants of health and assesses access to nutrition, affordable and culturally relevant food for indigenous communities in Canada's north. With this new third season of The View to the U highlighting UTM's global perspectives, Tracy discusses her northern research that takes her to some of the most distant areas of Canada and has led to a shift in the way she defines the term remote.

CD: Hello and welcome to *VIEW to the U*: An eye on UTM research.
I'm Carla DeMarco at U of T Mississauga.

VIEW to the U is a monthly podcast that will feature UTM faculty members from a range of disciplines who will illuminate some of the inner workings of the science labs and enlighten the social sciences and humanities hubs at UTM.

[Theme music fades out]

CD: Tracy Galloway is an assistant professor in the Department of Anthropology at U of T Mississauga where she has been on faculty since 2015.

Prior to coming to UTM, she held a postdoctoral position at U of T's Dalla Lana's School of Public Health from 2008 to 2010 and she was a research associate at McGill University's Center for Indigenous Peoples Nutrition and Environment in Montreal until 2012. Her research assesses chronic disease risk and ways to promote health through better health policies and to improve healthcare system delivery and services in order to reduce the impact of chronic disease in northern Indigenous populations.

CD: I know a little bit about your research, very broadly, I'm not going to outline it because I would like you to do that, but I know that it looks at nutrition, health inequities and promoting health northern indigenous populations.

So I was wondering if you could tell me a little bit more about your work and maybe some examples of current projects and collaborations that you would like to outline that you have ongoing?

TG: Sure. I'll start by telling you that in 2008 I had a really unique opportunity. At that time, I was a recent Grad, I had done a study of child growth and nutrition in rural Canada and I had become interested in various social determinants of patterns of overweight and obesity in rural children. And with that background I had the chance to go work on something called the International Polar Year, which is generally a geological and biological survey of Arctic regions. And it happens once about every 35 years. And ...

CD: Just to clarify, you said it happens every three to five years?

TG: No, every 35 years.

CD: Because, I *thought* you said 35 but I needed you to clarify it because that seems like a long time!

TG: Quite momentous.

TG: So we were really excited that for the first time in over a hundred years, International Polar Year was going to take a look at *humans* who live in these really high latitude, harsh environments, and look at the intersection of climate change processes on the health of people.

So Health Canada funded a study that was run out of McGill university and I was hired into a postdoctoral position jointly with the Dalla Lana school of public health and McGill University to do some nutritional anthropology with those populations. So my work really stems from that very formative experience in 2008, and the years I spent a McGill afterwards I'm looking at data and communicating the results of that study to indigenous communities across the Canadian Arctic. And parallel studies have gone on since that time in Alaska in Greenland. So my research is really interested in the development and the sort of ongoing trajectory of chronic disease risk in these populations and how that intersects with various policy vehicles we have in Canada and in other jurisdictions to manage chronic disease risk.

CD: And I know you do have a couple of current CIHR funded research projects. If you could talk a little bit more about some of the specifics about those ones that are ongoing?

TG: Yeah, so one area of research has been pretty consistent since that time, is I've looked at food subsidy in Canada. We have a northern food subsidy called Nutrition North Canada, whose goal is to make sure that nutritious foods are available and affordable for people who live in remote communities. And remoteness is framed in terms of a lack of year-round surface access. So these are communities that don't have roads and that rely on air transportation for most of their food deliveries. And so this subsidy vehicle, Nutrition North Canada purports to lower food costs and make sure that healthy foods are available week to week in stores. And so I conduct ongoing assessment of whether or not that's the case.

CD: Because it is in the news quite a bit where they really don't have access to affordable food.

TG: No, no. And we've been able to show a using the program's own data that retailers are paid to ship food north that isn't necessarily translated into lower or even reasonable food costs for people who live in communities. And we know that that's having, you know, very grievous effects on health. So I worked recently with CBC marketplace on their sort of, program on high food costs in the north and then working with Valerie Tarasuk in the nutritional sciences and her brilliant PHD student, Andrée-Anne Fafard St-Germain. And we had a publication come out last week in *Canadian Medical Association Journal* that demonstrated that, in fact,

food insecurity rates have risen since the implementation of the subsidy program in 2012.

CD: Could you tell me a little bit about what "food insecurity" means?

TG: Oh, well, the United Nations definition and the World Health Organization has adopted this is that it's when people don't have access to food that they can afford or food that's culturally relevant for them. That is the food that they and their families would like to eat. And so what that means in terms of the Canadian north is that people have traditions around eating cultural food and having access to harvested food resources, and the opportunities for people to eat their traditional food stuffs are very limited. So they then in fact rely on the same kind of market foods that you and I do. Bread and milk, cheese and butter and peanut butter.

TG: And those staples are very, very expensive in northern communities. So when we survey, we use a standard inventory that was developed in the US and is used very worldwide and we asked questions about people's recent food habits and we asked things like, you know, have you or your children gone without a meal gone hungry and the last day or in the last week? So food insecurity is operationalized in terms of hunger and the frequency of people being unable to afford their next meal.

CD: And I know that because it is the north, you know, it isn't necessarily the most ideal climate for even growing certain things. I did hear something on CBC where there was a group that brought up fresh vegetables and the northern people were really excited about having this food that they didn't normally have access to. Would there ever, and again, I don't know how ignorant this question is, but even to have like a greenhouse that you could grow these things yearround? Like would it ever be feasible to build something like that or do they have facilities like that?

TG: Some communities, I mean communities have been remarkably innovative in terms of addressing the problem of food insecurity. So in Iqaluit for example, which is a city Nunavut, it's got 7000 people live there year round, there is a greenhouse, heating it is a challenge, lighting it is also a challenge. So in the south, we tend to think of day length in terms of what we're used to. But of course in the Arctic for half of the year, there isn't any daylight at all. So you have to light a greenhouse facility. Right? The other challenge about growing projects in the north is that beyond a certain point, it's just permafrost. And so there is no soil in the way that we know it.

TG: But the community of Arviat, Nunavut is very interested in developing some soil structure for potential grind projects. So people are being very, very innovative. More likely a solution is built around harvesting

TG: traditional foods that are in abundance and have not been negatively affected by climate change. So an example of that is the Arctic Char Distribution Program in Nunavik, which is the intuit occupied area of Quebec. So there are 15 communities in Nunavik and they have a wonderful program where they pay local harvesters to supply fresh arctic char to pregnant or lactating mothers. And they're supplied with this weekly and they receive it until the child is one year old. So that, you know, really draws on available resources and it has a myriad of positive effects beyond better nutrition for the moms and Babes, but it also employs harvesters and gives them a source of revenue. And that taps into the Inuit identity of being a harvester or being prideful and being able to share resources with those most vulnerable or needy in your community. So that's a really positive program.

CD: Yeah, that sounds wonderful. And can you tell me how, you did touch on this a little bit when you were involved with the project that you mentioned, but how you got interested in this area in the first place. And also were you always interested in nutrition specifically and also indigenous populations?

TG: Yeah, I think so. I mean, my early training was as a registered nurse. I worked in an ICU in London, Ontario for ten years. And there are resident first nations populations in and around London including the largest being the Chippewas of the Thames. And when you work in ICU or emergency settings, anywhere in inpatient hospitals, you really see that there are some people who are just present in those hospitals more often than others and that appear by virtue of whatever their living conditions or life experiences seem to be more vulnerable in terms of health. And I was just seeing repeated patterns that led to a pretty concrete understanding that indigenous populations were not experiencing sort of, fair access to health services, education, employment in the region in which I was living, and that really led me to seek out graduate education experiences that could help me understand that.

CD: I wanted to ask you another question that's kind of related, but just if you've come across challenges having to do with like building up trust with the Inuit population, if that's a fair question, because sometimes I know, historically, research with Inuit populations hasn't always been seen as a positive. And so if you've, there's been a challenge with even accessing some of the populations that you worth with?

TG: In terms of relationships with communities. I have benefited tremendously from the resilience an ongoing willingness of people who live in remote places to engage with researchers. When I, you know, read the history of how poorly we have served some of these communities in the past, I'm, you know, continually surprised at the welcoming attitude and the

TG: willingness to work with us that exists in these places. And I'll give you a recent example, and that is the 29 communities served by the hub, the Ontario hub of Sioux Lookout, which is a very small town that is a kind of a service center for a number of first nations communities in the south. On several occasions now, folks in those that municipality have flown down, chiefs and deputy chiefs and representatives to speak to me and others of my colleagues from the University of Toronto who are involved in an initiative called Reconciliation Through Engineering.

TG: So that initiative, which is funded by the Center for Global Engineering, is trying to partner with a number of these communities to advance science in the areas of housing and water quality and food insecurity to see if we can't support community efforts to overcome these challenges. And repeatedly, people who are very busy with their own community concerns, we'll take time to come down and talk with us. And the reason isn't that we happen to be a generation of, you know, very approachable scholars, that's not it at all. It's this persistent hope and resilience and desire to change things for their own people, for their own communities, that makes them continue to engage with us, *even* with past histories where they haven't been served well, where data has been extracted and not returned in any useful form. So yeah, that's a continual surprise to me.

CD: That's amazing, because I think there would be some sorts of resistance to participating, but it's good to know that they see it as, like, a benefit for them.

TG: Yeah. Well, I don't know how long we can depend on that hope and that resilience. I mean these are places that are really struggling. And I can give you a very recent example: so about a month ago I was in Sioux Lookout, and I had arranged to meet with the chief of a first nation, a fly in only first nation chief, Donnie Morris from Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug or KI, it also goes by the name of Big Trout Lake First Nation.

And Chief Morris had agreed to fly down for some meetings, but a few days prior to that there was a really tragic fire in that community that involved loss of life. And Chief Morris was too busy consoling the family, and helping them relocate, and helping marshal the community's few resources in the service of these families. So within two weeks of that event, I received a communication from Chief Morris that he was ready to meet. And he was going to step away, you know, and delegate those duties and come back to the table and engage with us because he's very concerned about the high cost of food in his community.

TG: And that just shows that, like the dedication, the ongoing persistence of people who work in this area to try and serve them better. And as a research community, I think we're really honored to have the opportunity

to engage with folks like this and try and use our research to advance policy that better serves these places.

CD: Yeah.
The other thing I was going to ask you is if you've come across any findings that you found particularly surprising over the course of your academic career?

TG: After about a decade of working in the Canadian Arctic and flying in and out of tiny communities on little planes and using gravel runways. And seeing very limited services in terms of health centers, grocery stores, post offices, just you know, the sort of range of services you would find in a small community. I had an idea of what a remote community looked like and I don't want to detract from that message, the Canadian Arctic communities, you know, wherever they are across the north are small, they are remote and they have very limited services and people have to fly and leave their communities for very basic things. Things like a dentist appointment or heaven forbid, orthodontics. You know, this is very complex services and people fly thousands of miles to achieve them in the south and Ottawa, Winnipeg. So that was my idea of remoteness.

TG: And then when I began to extend my work on food security and nutrition into the northern parts of the provinces, I had to reconceive my notion of what is remote. So the Canadian Arctic is certainly remote in a sense that it's, you know, there are long distances, hours long flights between communities and they're very small populations. So the interconnections in terms of logistics and infrastructure are very thin. But the Canadian Arctic also benefits from a legacy of infrastructure development that is tied to a history of radar stations, American air bases, Canadian air bases, the DEW line, the distant early warning line, this sort of a cold war, you know, post World War II, investment in all of this infrastructure, and the northern parts of the Canadian provinces, provinces like Ontario, Manitoba lack that infrastructure entirely.

TG: So when I began flying to the 31 fly-only communities in Northern Ontario, I had to relearn what remote means. It means even smaller planes and shorter runways and they're all gravel, very like, extremely limited services in these communities. And even the regional hubs that serve them are very poorly served. And that translates into what you'd expect, you know, high food costs. So the food costs for communities in Northern Ontario are as high as they are in Nunavut even though they are hundreds in some cases, thousands of kilometers closer to major urban centers in the south. So yeah, that was a surprise.

CD: Yeah. And I'm just wondering, because you mentioned about, that it's not always easy to get to some of these places because they're so remote. And

you mentioned the 31 communities? So is it even a challenge sometimes to plan for your research trips there, because like how often are you even able to get a flight there?

TG: Yeah, well there's regular commercial service to these communities. Yup, absolutely. And in fact that is the way that most health, legal, postal, food services arrive in those communities is on routine booked flights, right?

CD: Okay.

TG: So passenger and cargo flights. So there is a schedule of those and we just try and slot ourselves into the schedule, and have to be aware that when disasters – like the recent fire this week in Pikangikum – happen that we may have to wait and take a back seat to those efforts. But I actually have a recent grant from the University of Toronto, with a co-PI named Dr Shoshanna Saxe in Engineering Science. And we're looking at this challenge so that ...

CD: This the XSeed funding ...

TG: That's right. It's an XSeed-funded project to look at air service reliability and what factors in terms of infrastructure and services serve as determinants for the reliability for how often a plane can land and take off as scheduled. And then I'm getting some data on health service delivery and food costs to look at outcomes related to that air service reliability. So that's a really exciting collaboration.

CD: Yeah. How often would you go there in the span of a year would you say?

TG: Oh I'm going to those Ontario sites at least once a month.

CD: And I know this is a very big question, but what do you feel is the biggest impact of your work?

TG: In terms of shifting policy, I really hope we can get some traction on the Nutrition North Canada on that subsidy. I think it's an ongoing piece of bad policy. I think it represents the continuation of colonial injustice for these communities and I really hope we can make changes. If we're able to achieve that over the sort of, life of my research efforts here at the University of Toronto, that would be a more than satisfactory outcome. Beyond that, some of these challenges are very difficult. Air Service infrastructure for example, trying to get provinces and the federal government to make real dollar investments in airport facilities, in lighting and navigation and runway surface and length, safety zones. It's expensive

and it's hard to do, but we're going to continue to provide an evidence base that advances that agenda and see if we can't make things better.

[Interlude music fades in]

CD: Coming up: Global perspectives.

Tracy talks about some of her work in Canada's north and also provide some thoughtful advice for ways in which we can enrich our lived experiences by participating indigenous culture and look to engaging more fully on the route to reconciliation.

[Interlude music fades out]

CD: I wanted to also touch on this, so this new season of the podcast is focused on global perspectives. So looking at UTM researchers who have global impact or do field work around the world in the course of their work. So I just wondered if you could speak to this impact in your interests specifically in the Yukon and in Nunavut?

TG: The Inuit populations that I work with span borders and so you know, people don't think of their jurisdiction, their traditional territory as ending at the Yukon Alaska border, or even a border that seems really solid in our minds but isn't at all, is the one between Canada and Greenland. Because when you're in that northeastern part of Nunavut, you're only a couple of hundred miles from Greenland and culturally and in terms of land use and water use, the Greenlandic and Canadian intuit population is contiguous. It just like sort of flows over that border. Linguistically, there's continuity there.

TG: So I work really closely with colleagues at University of Alaska Fairbanks and at various Greenlandic health research institutes and some of those located in Denmark because of course, Greenland used to be a Danish protectorate. So a lot of the research capacity is located there and we work on issues like food security and chronic disease risk and patterns of chronic disease in those populations. And that is really, that circumpolar health community is a very close knit one because of course, at the polls, you know, things kind of come together again. And so we meet as an organization every three years. We met last summer in Copenhagen and then the next meeting will be in 2021 in St Petersburg.

CD: Oh wow. And have you learned any new languages since you started?

TG: I have not. I have not. I'm very impressed that I actually have two PHD students who are studying Inuktitut and, yeah, it is a very challenging language and they're making great progress. And from what they tell me,

people are very generous in speaking the language with them and trying to understand what they say and how they say it and give feedback, so. But no, I haven't, it's not something I've accomplished.

CD: Okay. Just when you mention certain communities and it just sort of rolled off the tongue, I thought I maybe you picked up some?

TG: No, no. In fact, you know, I'm routinely mocked a bit for my attempts to say please and thank you in various indigenous languages, but that's, you know, again, that's another thing that we can all do is show some humility about the things we know and the things we don't.

CD: Yeah. Absolutely. And I know that June is National Indigenous History Month and June 21st is National Indigenous People's Day in northern territory's. Even talking about this, it is a huge subject, but what do you think is a fitting or productive way to commemorate these days or, or what we can do to keep the dialogue going? Of course the work that you're doing, I think it's doing an amazing job of that, but the regular average citizen, what can we do to commemorate these days?

TG: Well are you asking like as a regular Canadian or a regular citizen of the U of T?

CD: Well yeah, regular Canadian, I think either or. But I just, I think we have been talking a lot about these issues and of course that report just came out about the missing and murdered aboriginal women and like I know that's not your area of research, but there has been a lot of talk. Then there's always the worry that the focus is going to shift to something else and we're going to stop talking about that and I just feel like, what can we do to keep this dialogue going?

TG: Oh I think that's a really good question. And my mind goes to some advice I heard given, I think it was in a radio interview after the release of the TRC recommendations.

CD: That, just to spell it out, The Truth And Reconciliation ...

TG: That's right, Truth and Reconciliation Commission. And that advice was, you know, if you don't already have sort of face to face relationships with Indigenous Canadians, form some. Attend a Powwow, those are public events in which people are, you know, willingly and freely giving of their cultural traditions with the hope of engaging, right? Those are not closed spaces, so attend a POW or a gathering of some kind and make friends. I think true reconciliation will come from actual relationships that we have with each other as people. And there's a really great opportunity to do that. There's going to be a water event on the Credit. I'll provide a link, but I

TG: think it's July 12th to 14th and it's a real opportunity for people who are living sort of in the Mississauga area to connect with First Nations who are concerned with the quality of water in the Credit River. And there's going to be cultural events and sunrise ceremonies and dancing and singing and sharing. And I think that'll be a beautiful opportunity for us, all of us who care about nature and outdoor spaces and health and the way those affect our minds and bodies and spirits to sort of come together. [LINK: http://www.waterallies.com/event/gathering-with-the-credit-river-july-12-14-2019/

CD: That's amazing. That's a great tip. And if you could share that link, that would be fantastic. I think exactly what you're talking about. Ways to connect, so that again, it's not so foreign to us.

TG: Yeah. I just like, I applaud any organization who's making the effort. So I live close to the community of Stratford, Ontario, and every summer there's the Stratford festival and thousands of people come to see the place. And last year for the first time in my knowledge, they had a sunrise ceremony and dancing and invited some indigenous guests to come and perform that and you know, publicized that. Then we could connect with people whose traditional territory this was, and sort of learn a little more about their interpretation of what could or should happen in this space.

TG: Any opportunity that we have like that to engage, to connect, to feel, to form friendships, that I think advances the conversation.

CD: I think so too. And you're just making me think that like, especially when you have this way either through music or dance or theater, it's just, I don't know. I think sometimes people connect better in those ...

TG: And as researchers, you know, I think sometimes we're a little bit humble about what privileges our work brings, but in terms of reconciliation and awareness of your ability to contribute to research around indigenous issues, I think it really behooves us to sort of take a look at our positions of authority and privilege and say every time we enter a classroom, we have a chance to engage with this material, and to show mentorship and leadership in terms of how we discuss it, how we frame it, what words we use, how we understand it.

TG: We can mentor others by publicly showing humility about our lack of knowledge in this area and inviting in an indigenous speaker who may sort of come at the topic area from another way. We can offer up ourselves as researchers and just say, look, these the are skills and expertise I have. Can you make any use of them? And then I think there's enough capacity in our indigenous community for people to make their own decisions about

who they want to engage with and how, but if we don't offer, we won't know if we could have been useful.

CD: Great wisdom. So that's pretty much all the questions that I had for you. Thank you so much Tracy, I really appreciate your time today. Okay.

TG: It's a great privilege to sort of, engage with you and the community like this and yeah, if you give any interesting feedback, let me know.

CD: For sure. Thank you so much.

TG: You're welcome.

[Theme music fades in]

CD: I would like to thank everyone for listening to today's episode of *VIEW to the U*.

I would like to thank my guest, Tracy Galloway, for telling us about her health research in Canada's northern communities and for providing some great insight and wisdom on ways to move forward.

For further resources, please see her website, which we link to from our website and SoundCloud pages, and for more information about her work and the upcoming water gathering with the Credit River event that is taking place at Erinndale Park July 12th to the 14th [http://www.waterallies.com/event/gathering-with-the-credit-river-july-12-14-2019/].

I would like to thank the Office of the Vice-Principal, Research for their support, and those who've provided feedback or help to promote *VIEW to the U*.

Lastly, and as always, thank you to the musical Tim Lane for his tunes and support.

Thank you!