

FIELD STUDIES IN WRITING: GRAND MANAN, NEW BRUNSWICK, CANADA

Alison Hawthorne Deming, Agnes Nelms Haury Chair of Environment and Social Justice and a 2015-16 Guggenheim Fellow, launched the Field Studies in Writing Program during Summer 2015. Three MFA candidates spent two weeks on Grand Manan Island in the Canadian Maritimes engaged in place-based research and writing. Students pursued independent projects and worked with island youth to tell their stories about the place. This is a working island of 2500 year-round residents with a 200-year history in traditional fisheries. The island is undergoing a radical cultural shift due to decline of fish in the North Atlantic. Some residents head west to work in the oil fields of Alberta, some to work on fishing vessels in the Pacific. The sustainability of the local culture is deeply tied to marine life. The broad goal of the project is to explore how the arts and culture contribute to understanding and responding to the challenges of climate change, human rights issues, the loss of natural diversity and building community.

Herring Weir, Grand Manan



The Field Studies Program is available by application to all current UA MFA candidates in any genre. Students whose thesis projects explore environment, social justice, border issues, sustainability and community are encouraged to apply. Funding covers travel, lodging and per diem. Field trips on site may include visits to traditional herring weirs, lobster tank houses, fish-smoking sheds, bird-nesting islands, sea kayaking, whale watching with the island's marine biologist, local museum and hiking cliffside wilderness trails.



Francisco Cantú at work on Kent Island (photo credit Peter Cunningham)



Lawron Ingersoll, Alison Deming, Michael Brown, Harley Cary, Mackenzie Russell on Kent Island