OCEAN FRONTIER INSTITUTE POSTDOCTORAL FELLOW IN MARINE FORECASTING & RISK COMMUNICATION

Applications are invited for a postdoctoral fellowship in marine forecast production, communication, & implementation, funded through the Ocean Frontier Institute (http://oceanfrontierinstitute.com/) and based at Memorial University in St. John’s Newfoundland. The successful candidate will join a multidisciplinary team of researchers from Sociology, Engineering, Geography, and Medicine, carrying out a program of research on marine occupational health & safety. This is a one year position, with an option to extend for a further nine months.

Marine areas present a uniquely challenging working environment, in part due to the variety of ocean & weather hazards present. Marine forecasts remain a key tool for mitigating the impact of these hazards, informing risk-based decision-making through a very public and applied branch of scientific practice. The forecaster’s ultimate goal is to blend information from observing and prediction systems while anticipating impacts on people, in order to issue timely and actionable marine weather alerts. Similarly, forecast users blend multiple forecasts with observations, then interpret this information within the context of their accrued experience, specific awareness of weather impacts, and consultation with peers, all while weighing weather risks against a range of other concerns (economic pressures, risk mitigation options, etc.). The practice of forecast production and dissemination is evolving rapidly as a result of new technology, improved understanding of user needs, and growth in the private forecast industry; at the same time, forecast users continue to explore new sources and means of accessing information in an attempt to better assess their risk. Taking full advantage of the changing forecast landscape requires active collaboration between those producing forecasts and those using them; unfortunately, many user communities have limited direct contact with meteorological service providers, raising concerns that practices of production, communication, and use may not be evolving together.

The current project will address this possibility through a study of contemporary marine forecasting offices and selected marine industries. The project is part of OFI Module I, and a collaborative effort between Memorial University’s climatology and occupational health & safety (OHS) communities. Building on preliminary work conducted in Newfoundland and working with partners at the University of Tromsø, the current project addresses two major research questions: 1) how have approaches to marine forecasting and related risk communication evolved in recent years, and 2) where should efforts to improve forecast utility be focused?

The Postdoctoral Fellow will play a leading role in designing and conducting comparative studies of:

a. Work cultures and practices in marine forecasting centres across the North Atlantic.

b. Approaches to incorporating forecasts into operational decision-making, both between regions and across different industry sectors

They will also aid in the development and testing of novel climate/weather communication tools in key Atlantic Canada communities.

The successful applicant will have completed all requirements for a doctorate or equivalent degree in any of a wide range of social science disciplines (e.g. geography, sociology, anthropology), ideally connected to public health, social science of work, risk communication, or science and technology studies. Experience conducting

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interview-based qualitative research is required; background or interests in weather & society, offshore/fisheries work, or marine hazards and risk would be assets.

Interested applicants should submit a cover letter explaining how they are qualified for this position, a current CV and a 2-page statement of relevant research interests and activities, as well as contact information for three referees to Joel Finnis, Department of Geography, Memorial University (jfinnis@mun.ca).

The start date for this position will ideally be no later than December 2018. Deadline for applications is September 15th, 2018.

All qualified candidates are encouraged to apply. However, Canadian citizens and permanent residents will be given priority. Memorial University is strongly committed to employment equity and welcomes applications from all qualified candidates, including women, members of visible minorities, Aboriginal persons, members of sexual minorities and persons with disabilities.

We thank all applicants for their interest, however, only those selected for an interview will be contacted.