

The Canadian North: Trends in Recent Historiography

Bruce W. Hodgins et Shelagh Grant

Volume 16, numéro 1, autumn 1986

URI : https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/acad16_1rv04

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

The Department of History of the University of New Brunswick

ISSN

0044-5851 (imprimé)

1712-7432 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer ce document

Hodgins, B. W. & Grant, S. (1986). The Canadian North:: Trends in Recent Historiography. *Acadiensis*, 16(1), 173–188.

qu'il s'affilie à des syndicats que contrôle le Parti communiste canadien. Dans cette région, l'application du modèle du développement inégal des régions périphériques peut s'appliquer d'une manière plus évidente, même s'il faut toujours nuancer la problématique pour éviter de confondre sous-développement de type tiers-mondiste, du mal-développement dont le système capitaliste est porteur et dont on perçoit certains effets dans les pays développés.

Cette brève présentation permet de dégager la contribution récente des études régionales à l'ensemble de l'histoire du Québec. Cette histoire passe par l'analyse approfondie de secteurs d'activité économique comme la forêt, l'agriculture, la pêche ou les mines, et leur impact sur la structuration des espaces et des sociétés régionales ou périphériques (population, villes, marchés, coopération, syndicats, compagnies). De plus en plus les analyses des réalités interrégionales (ex. micro-régions/Québec/Provinces atlantiques/Nouvelle-Angleterre) s'imposent aux chercheurs, car l'histoire du mal-développement des régions périphériques est une composante des réalités plus larges qu'il importe d'appréhender.

CAMIL GIRARD

The Canadian North: Trends in Recent Historiography

THE LONG WINTER IN NORTHERN HISTORIOGRAPHY is coming to a close. During the last few years, roughly since the appearance in 1977 of Mr. Justice Berger's brilliant, incisive and controversial *Northern Frontier: Northern Homeland*,¹ the outpouring of historical writings on Canada's diverse North has almost resembled the rapid run-off of a northern springtime. In addition to the increased quantity, new themes have surfaced along with various critical interpretations and innovative methodology. Undoubtedly, within the last decade northern historiography has entered a period of accelerated growth and change.

Much of the historical writing on northern Canada published before 1960 seemed to be more an adjunct of colonial or European imperial history, a description of discovery and exploration based on the journals of mariners, whalers, missionaries and fur traders. Emphasizing the remoteness of an alien environment, these accounts were exceedingly difficult to integrate into the popular nation-building themes so prevalent in general Canadian histories of comparable periods. Admittedly, a profusion of literature attended the Yukon gold rush, yet even this event was treated as an isolated incident, a beyond-the-frontier adventure story which at times seemed more closely tied to American

1 Thomas Berger, *Northern Frontier: Northern Homeland*, Volume 1 (Ottawa, 1977).

than Canadian history. Then, in the mid-1960s more critical inquiries into a broader range of interests finally appeared.² These were relatively few in number, although an intellectual thrust was added in 1966 when Carl Berger published his now famous article, "The True North, Strong and Free",³ focusing on the importance of the northern myth to our national psyche since at least the time of Confederation.

By then, members of the historical profession were becoming increasingly critical of the state of northern historiography. In 1970, while underlining the centrality of the northern experience in Canada's history, Professor W.L. Morton lamented the fact that "the North is yet to be integrated into the historiography of Canada".⁴ The next year, there appeared the most important single interpretive work on Canada's North, Morris Zaslow's *The Opening of the Canadian North, 1890-1914*.⁵ Reportedly, his follow-up volume covering the later years is now in the hands of the publishers. Indeed, since 1971 only a few historians have attempted to correlate, integrate or incorporate in a national perspective, the many aspects of the disparate pasts of such a vast and diverse area.

In contrast to the limited number of northern histories published in the 1960s, the situation changed dramatically by the mid-1970s with the public focus on environmental depravation and the value of wilderness, and on the alleged vast oil and gas potential in the North at a time of perceived energy shortages throughout the western world. The North was now much more topical, allowing scholars to secure research and publication support. Works of very high calibre appeared. The most influential perhaps was Louis Hamelin's *Nordicité Canadienne*, or *Canadian Nordicity* in its English translation, which was a breakthrough in altering the traditional southern perceptions of the "North". Transcending political boundaries, Hamelin defines North as measured by the degree of "nordicity" in terms of settlement, climate, land forms, economic conditions and accessibility.⁶ Yet as late as 1984, Richard Diubaldo could still claim that to most southern Canadians, the North "appears to have no history, no deserved uniqueness. It remains a frozen, desolate and barren wilderness in the nation's consciousness".⁷ All criticism aside, in the past decade northern historiography

- 2 Examples of note are Diamond Jenness, *Eskimo Administration II* (Montreal, 1964 [Arctic Institute of North America, Technical paper no. 14]); R.A.J. Phillips, *Canada's North* (Toronto, 1967); and Kenneth Rea, *The Political Economy of the Canadian North*. (Toronto, 1968).
- 3 Carl Berger, "The True North, Strong and Free", in Peter Russell, ed., *Nationalism in Canada* (Toronto, 1966), pp. 3-26.
- 4 W.L. Morton, "The 'North' in Canadian Historiography", *Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada*, ser. IV, vol. VIII (1970), pp. 31-40.
- 5 (Toronto, 1971). Note also Morris Zaslow, *The North West Territories, 1905-1980* (Ottawa, 1984 [Canadian Historical Association, Booklet no. 38]).
- 6 Louis Hamelin, *Nordicité Canadienne* (Montréal, 1972); *Canadian Nordicity* (Montreal, 1978).
- 7 Richard Diubaldo, "The North in Canadian History: An Outline", *Fram*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Winter 1984), p. 187.

has not only proliferated, but has also broadened in both scope and approach to reflect some of the revisionist trends occurring elsewhere in Canada and throughout the western world. Of special note are the particularist themes related to political and social interaction, the introduction of comparative studies, the emergence of local histories written by resident northerners, and the incorporation of ethnohistory as an integral component of the historiography of northern Canada.

By any recognizable descriptive definition, Canada's North is certainly more than one region. It is a huge area internally divided by contrasting geographic conditions, southern-prescribed political boundaries and diverse ethnic, cultural and economic experiences. United only in southern perception, there is no distinct entity which fits a universally accepted definition of North. As in *The Opening of the Canadian North*, in this survey our North is not politically confined or defined. Its boundaries are vague, shrinking somewhat northward over time. While the majority of the works discussed relate to the Yukon and Northwest Territories, also included are a number of studies on provincial Norths. Generally our North is sparsely populated, beyond agricultural and industrial settlement, and remote from the metropolitan centres of southern Canada. Given these broad geographical parameters, limitations have to be otherwise applied. Thus, although it has been credibly argued that the state of the art remains in academic journals,⁸ this paper will concentrate on book-length volumes, together with passing reference to periodicals that have a northern focus. Similarly, while acknowledging the excellence of the many recent studies written in French, especially on northern Quebec, it was reluctantly decided that this subject should be covered in a separate article.

Of the few attempts in recent years to consolidate and correlate current research, five works deserve special mention. From an academic perspective, an invaluable contribution to the study of northern history is Alan Cooke and Clive Holland's *The Exploration of Northern Canada 500-1920, A Chronology* (Toronto, Arctic History Press, 1978). In addition to a comprehensive listing of explorations by land and sea, the work contains an extensive bibliography, a selection of maps and a convenient index of the key explorers. Currently out of print, this volume has proved to be a popular resource. Kenneth Coates' *Canada's Colonies: A History of the Yukon and Northwest Territories* (Toronto, James Lorimer, 1985) is the only recent publication to fit the definition of a general history of the North. This concise overview of less than 250 pages is centred on a clearly enunciated thesis statement which argues that the attitude of the Canadian government towards its two territories was tantamount to negligent colonialism. Although lack of documentation is quite acceptable for a popular textbook, the author has provided a convenient bibliography for each chapter.

The other three works of a comprehensive nature are edited volumes, each concentrating on a particular region or culture. *A Century of Canada's Arctic*

8 Richard Diubaldo, "The North: Bibliographical and Research Considerations", *Fram*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (Summer 1984), p. 494.

Islands, 1880-1980 (Ottawa, Royal Society of Canada, 1982), edited by Morris Zaslow, brings together the definitive studies of senior scholars from diverse disciplines. Organized chronologically to retain a historical perspective, the papers effectively encompass the important aspects of exploration, military and scientific activities, cultural issues, as well as economic, social and political developments in the Arctic Archipelago, with particular attention to the years 1880-1980. The thoughtful concluding essay by T.H.B. Symons, "The Arctic and Canadian Culture", explores the meaning of the Arctic for the majority of Canadians and stresses the need for more concerted effort to expand our northern studies.

Another example of exceptional editorial achievement is found in the two most recent volumes of *The Handbook of North American Indians* published by the Smithsonian Institute in Washington D.C. First appearing in 1981, Volume 6 examines the sub-arctic cultural groups, with anthropologist June Helm of the University of Iowa as editor. With contributions by some 50 scholars from Canada and the United States, this is to date the most comprehensive study of the Indian tribes residing in the more than 3,200,000 square kilometre area extending from Labrador to Alaska. In terms of time-frame, this work is equally ambitious, beginning with pre-history and extending into the present. The physical and social environment is described in somewhat general terms related to the three major geographic regions, then followed by detailed studies on the individual experience encountered by 35 distinct cultures including the sub-arctic Métis. For the scholar, the four chapters on the history of ethnological and archaeological research are of special interest.

Identical in format, coverage and quality, Volume 5 in this series was published out of sequence in 1985. *The Hand Book of North American Indians: Arctic* is edited by anthropologist David Damas of McMaster University and includes the Greenland, Alaskan and Canadian Inuit. As in the volume edited by Helm, Damas has allowed critical interpretations of the individual authors to emerge without detracting from the overall unity of the book. The anomaly of the Inuit being fully integrated into a series on "North American Indians" is only indirectly explained in the introduction, which refers to the intention of examining all North American native cultures. Similarly, the rationale for employing the designation "Eskimo" throughout is justified in terms of English and French usage, reflecting the fact that this is indeed a northern history written from a totally southern perspective.⁹

9 With the notable exception of the Smithsonian publications, those interested in up-to-date definitive histories of the various Canadian Inuit cultures will have to seek out the anthropological and archaeological monologues in academic journals, the proceedings of workshops and conferences on Northern Affairs, or studies sponsored by such federal agencies as the Archaeological Survey, the Ethnological Service and the National Museum. By comparison, there have been a number of recent studies on the Alaskan Inuit, including the publication by Limestone Press, Dorothy Jean Ray, *Ethnohistory of the Arctic: The Bering Strait Eskimo* (Kingston, Ont., 1983). Instead, Canadians seem content with editorialized picture books. In the field of art history, this is quite appropriate as with Alistair MacDuff's *Lords of the Stone: An Anthology of Eskimo Art* (North

Such efforts of consolidation may be considered a sign of definite progress in northern historiography, but it is the analytical interpretation found in specific studies that will encourage greater integration of the North into Canadian history. In this category, the number of publications has multiplied dramatically in recent years. Of particular note is the renewed interest in the fur trade, now with the emphasis on ethnohistory and inter-cultural relations. Thus we find a number of revisionist interpretations following in the tradition of Arthur Ray's *Indians and the Fur Trade* (1974), which placed the aborigines rather than the white man at the centre of study.¹⁰

The experience of the James Bay Cree from 1600 to 1870 is the subject of Daniel Francis and Toby Morantz, *Partners in Fur: A History of the Fur Trade in Eastern James Bay* (Montreal, McGill-Queen's University Press, 1983). The authors' innovative combination of historical and ethnological methodologies has resulted in a well-substantiated and convincing study, which concludes that "although events of the nineteenth century altered the Cree's relationship to the traders, they did not radically change or destroy their relationship to the land" (p. 171). With somewhat divergent interpretations, this theme of native adaptation also appears in Shepard Krech III, ed., *The Sub-Arctic Fur Trade: Native Social and Economic Adaptations* (Vancouver, University of British Columbia Press, 1984). The opening essay by Arthur J. Ray supports the general argument that the "modern welfare society" of the sub-arctic Indians "is deeply rooted in fur trade", with the major responsibility attributed to the practices of the Hudson's Bay Company (pp. 16-17). The remainder of the essays are more specific studies. Using the Fort Simpson trade as an example, Shepard Krech supports Ray's thesis, maintaining that while there may be differences "from one individual to the next, from one band to the next, from one ethnic group to the next" (p. 142), social changes among the northern Indians in the 19th century were adaptations directly related to the impact of the fur trade. In her contribution to this volume, Toby Morantz indirectly challenges the more simplistic versions of causal relationships, claiming that the social structure of certain tribes had an equal bearing on both the extent and form of disruption occurring during the initial contact period. Carol Judd, on the other hand, shows how two groups of Indians within the same tribe reacted quite differently to the Moose Factory fur trade in the mid-1700s. Despite the anthropological emphasis and the unifying theme of adaptation, the limitations of time and place in each study make direct comparisons difficult and conclusions somewhat tentative. Moreover, as Charles Bishop, Robert Jarvenpa and Hetty-Jo Brumback point out in their articles, there are distinct problems in correlating the work of anthropologists, archaeologists and historians into a credible version of fur trade history. Still, the questions raised in *The Sub-Arctic Fur Trade* are certain to encourage continuing debate and investigation.

Vancouver, 1982).

10 An example of fur trade historiography with the European at the centre, is Peter Newman's *Company of Adventurers* (Markham, Ont., 1985).

Shifting the focus of discussion from native historiography to that of the white man, it seems that Canadian historians have shown little interest in the early explorations of the Arctic, despite a persistent pre-occupation with the 19th-century exploits of the British. At a conference held in Rome in 1981 on "The History of the Discovery of the Arctic Regions...to the 18th Century", only three of the 27 contributors were Canadians.¹¹ The expeditions of John Franklin, on the other hand, have continued to inspire some exemplary work. There also appears to be a trend towards reproducing the journals and personal diaries of Arctic explorers, sea captains and other northern travellers, some with excellent editorial explanation, annotated footnotes, illustrations and maps.

Stuart Houston's initial success with his *To the Arctic by Canoe 1819-1821: The Journal and Paintings of Robert Hood, Midshipman with Franklin* (Montreal, McGill-Queen's University Press, 1974) has resulted in a second venture. *Arctic Ordeal: The Journal of John Richardson, Surgeon-Naturalist with Franklin 1820-1822* (Montreal, McGill-Queen's University Press, 1984) is much more than a personal account of the overland expedition to the mouth of the Coppermine River. Richardson was also a botanist, zoologist, ornithologist, ichthyologist and geologist, at a time when the study of natural history was becoming a key component of polar explorations. His extensive lists of the Arctic flora and fauna alone might be considered just reason for publication of the journal, but there were other factors which made Richardson's notes unique, not the least being his description of the events and circumstances leading to the cannibalism and murder that Franklin discreetly omitted from his official report. Even the prose was of a quality rarely found in the diaries of Arctic explorers.

Recent historiography of the Franklin era continues the exhaustive inquiry into the rescue attempts. *The Pullen Expedition in Search of John Franklin* (Toronto, Arctic Press, 1979) is edited by a descendant, Admiral H.F. Pullen RCN. This volume describes a lesser known endeavour led by Commander W.J.S. Pullen RN, who set out from Alaska in 1849 to follow the Arctic Coast eastward to the Mackenzie Delta. Notes, letters and diary entries are accompanied by editorial comment, charts and photographs. A biography by R.L. Richards, *Dr. John Rae* (Whitby, England, Caedmon, 1985) brings a more personal perspective into the denouement of the search through the life story of the man who succeeded in solving the mystery of the explorer's disappearance. In retrospect, the subsequent criticism Rae incurred for making public his report of cannibalism seems quite unjust compared to the many accomplishments described by his biographer.

In a successful combination of narrative and analysis, Hugh Wallace has integrated the Franklin searches into the much broader scene of Arctic exploration in *The Navy, The Company and Richard King: British Exploration in the*

¹¹ The papers delivered at the conference were reprinted in their entirety in the December 1984 issue of *Arctic*, Vol. 37, No. 4. Of the three Canadian contributors, only one might be designated an historian, Guy Mary-Rousselière, an Oblate missionary from Pond Inlet.

Canadian Arctic, 1829-1860 (Montreal, McGill-Queen's University Press, 1980). In addition to criticizing the role of the Royal Navy, Wallace shows how Dr. Richard King's plea for an overland search was rejected, ostensibly through the influence of Hudson's Bay Company officials who hoped to discredit King for having publicly censured the fur trade as the key agent of destruction for the northern natives. In a study stripped bare of heroics and romanticism, the author effectively examines the forces responsible for the changing character of Arctic exploration during the mid-1800s.

Rectifying a longstanding omission in the historiography of Arctic exploration is William Barr's ambitious study, *The Expeditions of the First International Polar Year, 1882-1883* (Calgary, The Arctic Institute of North America, Technical Paper No. 29, 1985). From century-old reports in four languages, Barr has recreated the 14 principal and three auxiliary expeditions, focusing not just on their scientific programmes, but also on their problems, failures and hardships. This work represents a major achievement in bringing the history of scientific exploration to the fore, and at the same time integrating these studies of the Canadian Arctic into the international scene.

One of the few significant works on 20th century exploration to appear in recent years is Richard Diubaldo's *Stefansson and the Canadian Arctic* (Montreal, McGill-Queen's University Press, 1978). In contrast to the traditional focus on adversity and accomplishment, this account of the great Canadian Arctic Expedition of 1913-1918 emphasizes the backroom politics and internal dissent, reflecting the current trend in revisionist interpretations to amend earlier versions of polar exploration.

A more innovative approach in relating the narrative of Arctic exploration is found in David Pelly's *Expedition: An Arctic Journey through History on George Back's River* (Weston, Betelguese, 1981). Full documentation and an impressive bibliography support the history of the George Back expedition of 1832 which is cleverly woven into the narrative of a contemporary canoe trip to create an intriguing tale correlating the past to the present. Also designed to meet scholarly standards and yet appeal to a wider audience is *Nastawgan; The Canadian North by Canoe and Snowshoe* (Weston, Betelguese, 1985), edited by Bruce W. Hodgins and Margaret Hobbs. This collection of papers describing a diverse range of experiences encountered by turn-of-the-century travellers in the remote wilderness integrates narrative and analysis to explain the nature and extent of Canadian fascination with northern adventures, long after the era of first discoveries had ended.

Although whaling had become the major activity in the Arctic by the late 1880s, only in the past few years have Canadian historians investigated this aspect of northern history in any depth. The unexpected value of journals belonging to lesser known men is clearly illustrated in *An Arctic Whaling Diary: The Journal of Captain George Comer in Hudson Bay 1903-1905* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1984), superbly edited by W. Gillies Ross. Written when whaling was in decline in the eastern Arctic, Comer's journal provides new

insight into the tension existing between the American whalers and the Canadian patrols whose purpose was to show the presence of authority. The veteran captain from New England describes Inspector Moodie of the RNWMP as being somewhat officious, anti-American, relatively ignorant of Arctic conditions, and over-paternalistic in his relations with the Inuit. Humour abounds in the anecdotal footnotes, as in the case of Comer's strict accounting of the children sired by the Mounted Police at Fullerton, a reported total of six from 1903 to 1910, or the request by Moodie that his position be given "the rank and title of Lt. Governor" (p. 152). Comer's impressions and Ross's notes provide a sharp contrast to the rather glorified accounts of the early patrols and an important step in revising the history of Mounted Police activity in the Arctic.¹² Ross's latest book, *Arctic Whalers, Icy Seas: Narratives of the Davis Strait Whale Fishery* (Toronto, Irwin, 1985) again illustrates the potential of skilful editing. The personal diaries and logbooks of some 15 whalers, mostly British, are preceded and concluded with vivid descriptive narrative. A fascinating collection of period maps, documents, sketches and photographs are well integrated into the text. This work, combined with previous publications, makes Ross an undisputed Canadian authority on whaling in the eastern Arctic.¹³

Another recent contribution to the saga of Arctic whalers is Daniel Francis' *Arctic Chase: A History of Whaling in Canada's North* (St. John's, Breakwater Books, 1984). This excellent account successfully incorporates data obtained from books, articles, ships' logs and manuscript sources into a succinct analytical study of the industry and its impact on the Inuit in both the eastern and western Arctic from the 1720s into the 20th century. Francis builds up a strong case in support of his claim that overkill rather than just a declining market was responsible for the demise of Arctic whaling. In his opinion, "no one was really interested in preserving the bowhead until there were almost none to preserve". Moreover, the whalers left behind a greatly depleted Inuit population, "hungry for the white man's trade" (p. 107).

The decline of whaling indirectly encouraged the growth of the Arctic fur trade. Despite extensive study of the industry in more southerly regions, few works have dealt with operations in the Arctic. This gap is partially overcome with the publication of the Richard Bonnycastle diaries, written during his travels in the Mackenzie District while in the employ of the Hudson's Bay Company. *A Gentleman Adventurer* (Toronto, Lester, Orpen Dennys, 1984) is described by editor Heather Robertson as "an adventure story and autobiography" and a "glimpse into the secret workings of the Hudson's Bay Company". The elitist view provided by a young lawyer educated at Trinity College

12 Not available to the authors at the time of writing is W.R. Morrison, *Showing the Flag: The Mounted Police and Canadian Sovereignty in the North, 1895-1925* (Vancouver, 1985).

13 An earlier study placed more emphasis on the American whalers and their impact on the Inuit: W. Gillies Ross, *Whaling and Eskimos: Hudson Bay 1860-1915* (Ottawa, 1975 [National Museum of Man, Publications in Ethnology No. 10]). By contrast, *Arctic Waters, Icy Seas* centres more on the industry itself, the techniques employed and hardship suffered by the crews.

and Oxford brings new evidence and insight into the various stages of Inuit dependency, the nature of trader rivalry, internal reasons for the decline of trade in the 1930s over and above the Depression, and perhaps of greater interest, the declining fortune of the Hudson's Bay Company since the 1920s, a circumstance he believed was due to ineptitude and inefficiency at various northern posts. In addition to some fascinating journal entries which appear to have been written for purely personal reasons, Bonnycastle's own photographs serve to verify his observations and impressions.

Early history of what is now the Canadian Northwest has been closely integrated into the historiography of the Pacific Coast of North America, at times appearing equally relevant to American, Russian or British imperial history.¹⁴ Yukon histories, on the other hand, unquestionably belong to the historiography of northern Canada. The early years of European penetration in the Yukon are well covered in Theodore Karamanski's *Fur Trade and Exploration: Opening the Far Northwest, 1821-1852* (Vancouver, University of British Columbia Press, 1983). Well-substantiated by research into Hudson's Bay Company journals and records, this exceptional narrative complements the important work of Allan A. Wright, *Prelude to Bonanza* (Whitehorse, Arctic Star, 1980 [second edition]), which focused on the trading and prospecting activities just prior to the discovery of gold in the Yukon. The Klondike Gold Rush itself, while probably the single most written about event in Canadian history, has attracted little interest of late. The only Canadian publication of note is the handsome coffee table edition by Pierre Berton, *The Klondike Quest: A Photographic Essay, 1897-1899* (Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, 1983). This comprehensive collection of period photographs is accompanied by a flamboyant narrative in keeping with the Berton tradition.

Although not central to the story, the Klondike saga is well integrated into Lewis Green's account of surveying the Alaska boundary, *The Boundary Hunters: Surveying the 141st Meridian and the Alaskan Panhandle* (Vancouver, University of British Columbia Press, 1982). Complete with maps, cartoons and photographs, the story begins with the Anglo-Russian Treaty of 1825 and traces both Canadian and American attempts to locate a mutually acceptable border. Significantly, Green offers a relatively unbiased view of the tribunal proceedings, observing that the decision was no real loss to Canada in economic or strategic terms, only a matter of losing face.

One of the more innovative approaches to social history is found in Robert G. McCandless, *Yukon Wildlife: A Social History* (Edmonton, University of
 14 Primary examples are Glynn Barratt's *Russia in Pacific Waters, 1715-1825: A Survey of the Origins of Russia's Naval Presence in the North and South Pacific* (Vancouver, 1981), and the sequel appearing two years later, *Russian Shadows on the British Northwest Coast of North America 1810-1890: A Study of Rejection of Defence Responsibilities*. Also see Barry Gough's three books, also published by the University of British Columbia Press: *The Royal Navy and the Northwest Coast of North America, 1810-1914* (1971), *Distant Dominion: Britain and the Northwest Coast of North America* (1980) and *Gunboat Frontier: British Maritime Authority and the Northwest Coast Indians, 1846-1890* (1984).

Alberta Press, 1985). By tracing the development and impact of wildlife policies in the Yukon, the author has shown how government decisions in the late 1940s, combined with the influx of new settlers, had effectively impoverished the native peoples by introducing irreversible changes to their society. Tracing the origins of wild life laws back to the Forest Laws predating the Norman Conquest, the author slowly unveils the conflicts arising between the hunters and the conservationists, and those who relied on the furbearing animals for food and clothes. Although the key actors in this compelling drama are the administrators and politicians, it is soon apparent that they are the villains and the Indians their victims.

In recent years, historians have begun to unravel the political, and social implications of the American military activities in the Canadian North during the Second World War. Formerly relegated to articles in journals or unpublished papers, one aspect of the "war at home" has finally appeared in hardback. Edited by Kenneth Coates, *The Alaska Highway: Papers of the 10th Anniversary Symposium* (Vancouver, University of British Columbia Press, 1985) is a collection of papers by scholars from Canada and the United States. The development of the highway is traced from the inception of the idea through to the impact on Yukon society, integrating political, military, economic and social history into a surprisingly cohesive volume. Unknown to most southern Canadians, the war years left an indelible mark on the North and much of the history has yet to be written.

A delightful book, but one which does not quite fit the definition of scholarly history is Richard Brown's *The Voyage of the Iceberg* (Toronto, James Lorimer, 1983). Admitting to taking some liberties with speculation, the author has traced the imaginary path of a large iceberg from its probable origins in Greenland's Jakobshavn Fjord to its contact with the ill-fated *Titanic* on 14 April 1912. Along the route, he has interwoven detailed descriptions of Arctic whale hunts, the Newfoundland seal hunts, Inuit customs and hunting practices, and the numerous species of wildlife in the eastern Arctic. Having himself travelled the route on oceanographic vessels, Brown adeptly combines biology, ethnology and history into a fanciful tale of the Arctic. Considering the excitement in the fall of 1985 over the discovery of the sunken luxury liner, this book has indeed turned out to be timely.

Quite apart from northern histories written by southern scholars, there is a new phenomenon emerging in the past decade: the growth of local histories written by northerners, many published by northern presses located in Whitehorse or Yellowknife. More popular than scholarly by strict definition, they nevertheless are providing an invaluable insight into northern living as it is and was. Many authors are relatively new to the North, well educated and attracted to the region by careers in the civil service or education, as in the case of Alfred Aquilino who moved to the Mackenzie Delta from Ontario in 1975 to work for the Department of Social Services. *The Mackenzie Delta: Yesterday and Beyond* (Vancouver, Hancock House, 1981) is described by the author as "a

historical journey...filled with the lives and spirits of the people who make up the vital mosaic of the Mackenzie River, its Delta and hinterland". Photographs and poetry add color and feeling to an otherwise factual account of the people and communities of the region. Another window on the past is presented in *Christmas in the Big Igloo: True Tales from the Canadian Arctic* (Yellowknife, Outcrop, 1983), an anthology of 20 recollections of Christmas dating back to 1821. Edited by Kenn Harper, a teacher, anthropologist, historian and linguist who has lived in the eastern Arctic since 1966, this small but attractive book very simply portrays a wide variety of experience and perceptions encountered by Inuit, explorers, government and company employees, missionaries and fur traders.

There is an age-old debate over the value of autobiography as history or even as an historical tool, yet some life stories are undoubtedly more effective than scholarly works in correcting popular misconceptions. Outcrop Limited, a small but flourishing publishing house located in the capital of the Northwest Territories, is responsible for two recent autobiographical accounts of life in the Mackenzie District. Frederick Watt, a reporter now residing in Victoria, B.C., recounts his prospecting endeavours in the early 1930s. *Great Bear: A Journey Remembered* (1980) focuses on the lesser known mining rush into the Barrens sparked by Gilbert Labine's discovery of pitchblende on the shores of Great Bear Lake. Covering a much broader experience in time and place, *Rebels, Rascals and Royalty: The Colourful North of LACO Hunt* (1983) follows the adventures of a 30-year on-and-off resident of the Northwest Territories. LACO — short for Leonard Arthur Charles Orga — arrived in Canada in 1928 as an apprentice with the venerable Hudson's Bay Company. After ten years in its employ, Hunt resigned when he received a formal rebuke for his public statement that "some Indians were dying of malnutrition and starvation and that the government should be censured for its attitude". Hunt returned to the North in 1950 as a government administrator assigned to the Aklavik District. From there he went to Ottawa, and then to a posting at the United Nations. He eventually returned to the nation's capital and was appointed Executive Secretary of the Advisory Committee on Northern Development. As indicated in the sub-title, the story centres on his experiences in the North: Part I dealing with "The Pioneer North" from 1928-1939, and Part II describing the post-war years, "The North Comes of Age". In many ways, the pattern of Hunt's career was analogous to the changes occurring in northern Canada during the decades preceding and following the Second World War, a transitional phase which saw government take over from the Hudson's Bay Company as the largest single employer in the Northwest Territories.

An outstanding example of one man's attempt to correct southern misconceptions is the story of Ernie Lyall's lifetime experiences in the eastern Arctic. *The Arctic Man: Sixty-Five Years in Canada's North* (Edmonton, Hurtig, 1979) is a virtual gold mine of minutia, with vivid images of unvarnished realities that only a northerner could have described. The motive for writing the book was rather

simple. According to Lyall, "the outsiders, or what I call the outsiders, have written so much baloney that sometimes it's hard for me to recognize in their books the land and the people that I know so well". Southern perceptions and romantic notions of the Arctic may be shattered, yet Lyall may have come closer than most in his effort to get the facts straight.

Two other "local" northern books deserve special mention. Both were privately published and pictorial, providing a subjective view of northern natives. *Our Métis Heritage...A Portrayal* (Yellowknife, 1976) was produced and published by the Métis Association of the Northwest Territories. Describing it as "a visual presentation of the history", the authors coordinated the many period photographs with a short but incisive narrative to depict the life of the Mackenzie Valley Métis, "equipped with survival mechanisms to operate in both worlds". Another publication mirroring the life, thoughts and emotions of northern natives is *Denendeh: A Dene Celebration* (Yellowknife, 1984), published and "authored" by the Dene Nation. The text contains a complete history of the people and their land, their hopes and ambitions. The magnificent full colour photographs are by René Fumoleau, the Oblate priest whose book on Treaties 8 and 11 was successful in forwarding the native position in the land claims dispute.¹⁵ His sensitivity and understanding of the native people among whom he has lived for more than 25 years is clearly evident in his selection of subjects and artful interpretation.

Discussion of local histories, whether by region or culture, would not be complete without mention of *A Vast and Magnificent Land: An Illustrated History of Northern Ontario* published jointly by Lakehead University (Thunder Bay) and Laurentian University (Sudbury) in 1984. Edited by Matt Bray and Ernie Epp, this volume deserves recognition as a serious attempt to describe the origins and growth of settlement and industry in the remote hinterland of Canada's most populated province. Despite some shortcomings in both format and content,¹⁶ the public interest aroused by this book, now in its second printing, should encourage further study of what in many respects is an unrecognized region of Canada. Already a popular history of the Temiskaming and Northern Ontario Railway has appeared, *Link with a Lonely Land* (Erin, Ontario, Boston Mills, 1985) by Michael Barnes, a local school teacher. Although lacking the scholarly detail and incisive analysis of Albert Tucker's *Steam into Wilderness: Ontario Northland* (Toronto, Fitzhenry and Whiteside, 1978), this recent publication with its many photographs and anecdotes will likely entertain many northern

15 René Fumoleau, *As Long as this Land Shall Last* (Toronto, 1975).

16 The photographs were of exceptional interest, but often unrelated to the accompanying text. Furthermore, the emphasis on group pictures in urban settings tends to underestimate the proportion of uninhabited land. While one recognizes the difficulty of covering such a broad topic without omissions, it is surprising to find no mention of the numerous Indian communities and only a vague reference to the extensive recreational canoeing which has attracted many adventurers to "the vast and magnificent land" since the turn of the century. After the first two chapters, the land and the native people seem to be obscured by the focus on industrial activity.

Ontario residents and visitors. Particularly in those regions where identity has a special meaning for the inhabitants, popular local histories play a significant role in recapturing the spirit of that identity.

Several recent publications have endeavoured to explain current issues affecting northern natives by utilizing an in-depth historical approach. Daniel Raunet's *Without Surrender, Without Consent: A History of Nishga Land Claims* (Vancouver, Douglas and McIntyre, 1984) traces government policy and the intrusion of the European settler on the life of the Nishga tribe in north-western British Columbia. This detailed account shows how white man's history can be effectively integrated into native history while still maintaining the centrality of the Indian. Employing an anthropological perspective rather than a historical one, Hugh Brody examines the cultural heritage of the Beaver Indians of northeastern British Columbia in *Maps and Dreams* (Vancouver, Douglas and McIntyre, 1981). As in his earlier introspective analysis of the eastern Inuit,¹⁷ Brody rejects the methodology and format employed by most social scientists, and bases his approach on oral histories and insights gained during his 18-month residence on the reserve. The result is a subjective view of the present, explained through events and traditions of the past. As to the future, Brody's message is clearly stated: only a guaranteed hunting territory can slow the negative effects of the receding frontier.

Another very current issue is examined from a historical perspective in William R. Morrison's *Under the Flag: Canadian Sovereignty and the Native People of Northern Canada* (Ottawa, Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, 1984). Beginning with a discussion on the theory of sovereignty, and followed by the history of Canadian claims to title over the Arctic Archipelago and adjacent mainland, Morrison goes on to describe Canada's first efforts to assert her authority over the territorial North and its original inhabitants. With the major focus on the late 1880s to the end of the First World War, this study shows that the establishment of sovereignty met with virtually no resistance, in spite of the government's reluctance to incur any unnecessary expenditure on behalf of the natives. *Under the Flag* provides an appropriate background for Morrison's earlier work on the history of native land claims in northern Canada.¹⁸

More theoretical probing of northern problems is contained in *A Choice of Futures: Politics in the Canadian North* (Toronto, Methuen, 1981) by Gurston Dacks. Here the political scientist expands and substantiates the thesis that the northern issues of today are rooted in policy decisions of the past, and their solutions dependent on more constructive government attitudes in the future.¹⁹ By comparison, Nils Orvik has centred his studies more on external factors that

17 Hugh Brody, *The People's Land* (Middlesex, England, 1975).

18 William Morrison, *A Survey of the History and Claims of the Native Peoples of Northern Canada* (Ottawa, 1981).

19 Also note Robert J.D. Page, *Northern Development: The Canadian Dilemma* (Toronto, 1986), not available to the authors at time of writing.

affect the North and its security. In a collection of essays compiled in volume No. 1-83 of the Northern Studies Series, *Northern Development: Northern Security* (Kingston, Queen's University, 1983), Orvik points to three major components in a northern "power triangle" conflict: the natives, private industry and the federal government. Using the history of Greenland as an example of comparable circumstance, he argues for a more progressive approach in combining internal and external considerations in the policy debates of the future.

Attempts by the Inuit Circumpolar Conference to foster a sense of unity among the Inuit of Alaska, Canada and Greenland has resulted in a rather unusual deployment of the comparative method, both in time and place, to describe the transitional changes occurring since the days of Rasmussen's Fifth Thule Expedition. *Oil and Amulets* (St. John's, Breakwater Books, 1983) is written by Danish-born journalist, Philip Lauritzen, who has travelled extensively in the Arctic with Greenland's representatives in the ICC. By contrasting Rasmussen's observations with his own views of Inuit communities across the Arctic, the author has endeavoured to make a multiple comparison of past and present. In the Canadian edition, translated by R.E. Buehler, the similarities of experience and attitude are stressed, with differences explained in terms of varying government policies. This book should provide incentive for historians to tackle more comparative analysis in their study of white man's impact on various aboriginal cultures.

Another work which utilizes comparative methodology to probe our northern sensibility, is Roald Nasgaard's *The Mystic North: Symbolist Landscape Painting in Northern Europe and North America, 1890-1914* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1984), published in conjunction with an exhibition at the Art Gallery of Ontario. The paintings, which included a number by Canada's Group of Seven, were selected to explain Nasgaard's argument that the artists of northern Europe, particularly the Scandinavian countries, shared a "common set of subjects, feelings and structures". In his belief, the trend towards wilderness subjects and a more spiritual, mystic quality of expression began in Europe and was only later adopted by the Group of Seven. Similarly, just as Canadians' perception of their North was influenced by these landscape paintings, so were the people of northern Europe. Although a number of Canadian historians have attempted to define the "myth of the North" in the Canadian identity,²⁰ Nasgaard has transcended nationalism to show that all Norths have had immeasurable impact on thought and culture in the northernmost regions of the western world.

The proliferation of northern histories appearing in book form has not diminished the excellence of scholarship in academic journals. By far the oldest and still one of the best sources for northern history is the Hudson's Bay Company's *Beaver*, which Richard Diubaldo has described as being "to the north what the

20 As an example, see W.L. Morton, *The Canadian Identity* (Toronto, 1972), p. 146, and Morton, "The 'North' in Canadian Historiography".

Canadian Historical Review is to Canadian History".²¹ While this is undoubtedly true, there are also other excellent periodical sources for northern studies.²² In light of the trend toward comparative studies, one very new periodical must be noted. *Fram: The Journal of Polar Studies* was conceived as "a positive reaction to the shortcomings of traditional scholarship relative to the Arctic and Antarctic regions" and designed to "enhance and complement contemporary historical inquiry".²³ This ambitious venture, published in the United States but with a multi-national editorial board, has promised between 400,000 and 500,000 words per year to include monologues, reprints, translations, oral histories, maps, photographs, bibliographies, indexes and reviews. From the quality and diversity of scholarship appearing in the first two volumes, this journal promises to be an outstanding resource for students of northern history.

The criticism that the North has not been fully integrated into Canadian history is probably still valid, due in part to the fact that the North as most Canadians know it has remained for so long a remote and alien environment, relatively, isolated from the settled south. In terms of more recent history, this has become increasingly less so, with the result that the northern experience is more easily incorporated into 20th century economic and political histories. For earlier periods, integration may be difficult, but not impossible.²⁴

Without question, the historiography of northern Canada has proliferated and broadened its scope in recent years, while at the same time incorporating many revisionist interpretations. Still, potential areas of future study appear endless. In the economic sphere, there are numerous possibilities: the Arctic fur trade, sealing, transportation and recreation to name only a few. Certain specific topics demand more investigation: the missions, the Eastern Arctic Patrol, the northern Mounted Police posts and the Hudson Bay Railway. Comparative studies also offer interesting topics: the Inuit of Canada, Alaska, Greenland, and the Soviet Union; mineral development in Spitzbergen, Greenland, and the Arctic Archipelago; adaptation of the Métis and the Laplanders; evolution of political institutions and self-government in the Yukon and Northwest Territories, Alaska, Greenland and northern Australia; or even just settlement growth in various Arctic regions. The only major impediment is the cost involved in travel. At a time when Ottawa is making severe cutbacks in social science research grants, the problem has even more serious implications over the

21 Richard Diubaldo, "The North: Bibliographical and Research Considerations", *Fram*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (Summer 1984), p. 495.

22 Examples are: *Arctic*, an interdisciplinary journal published by the Arctic Institute of North America; *The Musk-Ox: A Journal of the North* out of the University of Saskatchewan; *North/Nord* produced under the auspices of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development; and *Northern Perspectives* a bulletin published bi-monthly by the Canadian Arctic Resources Committee. *Arctic Anthropology* and *Etudes Inuit/Inuit Studies* round out the list.

23 S.C. Jackson, "Editorial Comments", *Fram*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (Summer 1984), p. 381.

24 For instance, see John Webster Grant's *The Moon in Wintertime* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1984) where a full chapter deals with the achievements and failures of Arctic missionaries, as an extension of experiences elsewhere in Canada.

long term.

For the southern historian, the study of northern Canada is sometimes akin to probing beyond the frontier. The increasing number of local histories written by northerners should inspire further and more serious inquiry into social interaction and regional development. For the northerner, local histories have become not just a means of preserving the past, but a rather subtle yet effective way of educating the "outsiders". The North as a factor in the Canadian identity has long been acclaimed; the North in Canadian historiography is only beginning to show its potential.

BRUCE W. HODGINS AND SHELAGH D. GRANT

Canadian Popular History in the 1980s

CANADIAN HISTORY HAS FINALLY come of age. In the past few months more books about the nation's past have made the bestseller lists and been offered as book club selections than at any other time within the admittedly short memory of mortal humankind. Significantly, few of the blockbusting bestsellers have been authored by academic historians, who continue to ply their craft in the pages of journals with miniscule circulations and through the university presses and specialized publishers where subsidies make possible tiny press runs no commercial publisher could tolerate. The division between the historians of the academy and those outside it is neither new nor different. What distinguishes the present crop of non-academic historians from their predecessors is that they show distinct signs of emerging as "professional" historians who can make a decent — and in some cases even spectacular — living out of historical research and writing. This generation of non-academic historians is not one of genteel amateurs, therefore, but of skilled and experienced writers, coming out of the tradition of magazine journalism which has particularly flourished at *Macleans*. Indeed, four of the five authors under review here share a common association as some-time editors of Canada's equivalent of *Time* or *Newsweek*.

If the relationship between the academic and non-academic historian in Canada has long been an uneasy one, the sheer success of the present generation of non-academics adds new dimensions to the longstanding hostilities. As one of the authors under consideration here observes, Canadians have an abiding suspicion of success, partly because in this country of limited resources it is generally believed that success must come at someone else's expense. The tendency of some academics airily to dismiss bestselling historians as panderers to the lowest common denominator of public taste has always come from the dubious security of not being required to take public taste into account. Most