

## Editorial: Number 53

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This collection of essays is a wonderful addition to the scholarly understanding of the Canadian North. The papers, written by University of Saskatchewan graduate students and their Indigenous Studies professor, Dr. Bonita Beatty, draw on Indigenous concepts and values to describe First Nations and Métis involvement in the modern economy. The result is a provocative and informative look at the persistence of Indigenous culture in the twenty-first century and the ongoing efforts by Indigenous Peoples to combine culture, economic activities, and commercial realities.

The collection focuses on the Indigenous Peoples of Northern Saskatchewan. This area, covering the northern half of the province, has a population roughly equal to that of the Yukon, but lacks the high level of Government of Canada funding and the political autonomy enjoyed by the Yukon, Northwest Territories, and Nunavut. The Northern Administration District is resource rich, particularly in uranium. Cameco and Orano Canada operate several of the world's richest uranium deposits, with strong connections to First Nations and Métis communities whose collaborations with the resource companies are among the most extensive and sustained in the country, if not the world.

The Canadian Shield dominates and defines Northern Saskatchewan. The region is bisected by the Churchill River and its many tributaries. There are, quite literally, thousands of lakes. The Indigenous communities are widely scattered and almost all have populations fewer than 1,500 people. Some are accessible only by boat or air. Several forest fires have caused severe damage in recent decades, forcing mass evacuations from the region and necessitating considerable rebuilding. The northern highway system is poorly developed, with many of the roads unpaved. Infrastructure developments, in terms of water, Internet, electricity, energy supplies, fire protection, and housing, are often seriously deficient. Indigenous language use is much stronger than in many parts of Saskatchewan and southern Canada, and hunting, trapping, fishing, and gathering activities remain robust and an invaluable part of the local economy and food supply.

Indigenous governments in the area are faced with a wide variety of socio-cultural and economic challenges, but they are exercising considerable autonomy in the management of educational and health institutions, have strong relations with resource companies, and have created several highly successful Indigenous economic development corporations. The non-Indigenous population in the region remains highly mobile, and the short time that many non-Indigenous doctors, nurses, and teachers stay in the region remains a challenge. Perhaps most importantly, the Government of Saskatchewan is disengaged from the northern communities, and community authorities struggle to get attention, despite some serious community-level problems that have been exacerbated by the opioid crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic.

The graduate students whose work appears here participated in the Master's of Northern Governance and Master's of Governance and Entrepreneurship in Northern Indigenous Regions programs, the latter offered together with the University of Tromsø in Norway. Both programs are excellent examples of the efforts by the University of Saskatchewan and committed faculty members like Dr. Beatty to develop professional and academic expertise in northern affairs. Their work is part of the ongoing effort by the communities of Northern Saskatchewan to document their historical and current realities, knowledge, and ways of life, and to provide a literary foundation for further education on and for the Indigenous Peoples of the Provincial North. By so doing, this collection is a wonderful example of the contributions that the *Northern Review* continues to make to the understanding of the North.

**Ken Coates**