

# Introduction

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*Clint Sawicki*

The *Northern Review* and the Northern Research Institute (NRI) were conceived and established at Yukon College with the common mission of building local research capacity in the Yukon and the North. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, Yukon College undertook a three-part integrated plan to become a leader in Northern Studies: this included a teaching component, the College's Northern Studies Program; a publishing component, the *Northern Review*; and a research component, the Northern Research Institute (NRI). About this time, the late Aron Senkpiel coined a phrase about northern research and education, that they needed to happen "In the North, by the North, and for the North." That phrase continues to be valid today, and this current volume exemplifies some of what has been done.

The Northern Research Institute (NRI) is proud to be in its sixteenth year of promoting and fostering northern research through grants from the Northern Research Institute's Research Endowment Fund. The fund, a million dollar investment by the Yukon Government in 1991, has made a significant impact in the Yukon and is unique in the North. With over 267 researchers supported over this time, the endowment has proven invaluable to many local and northern researchers and continues to produce significant research findings.

In his article "The Northern Research Endowment Fund and Fellowship Grants, 1992–2007: Reflections on the Initiative for Northern Studies in the Yukon," Dr. John Stager, one of the NRI's original committee members, sets the stage, giving a history and overview of the endowment fund and the kinds of research that it has supported. Dr. Chris Burn, permafrost specialist and recipient of many NRI grants, writes about his research experience and embodies many of the things that the endowment fund tries to do. As well, Norm Easton discusses the beginnings and early stages of the NRI's creation and establishment.

In addition to introductory essays discussing the role of the NRI, the important work that it has funded, and the unique ways that knowledge and science are constructed in the North, the six peer-reviewed articles that follow attest to the diversity of Yukon research. Three articles are written by archaeologists and anthropologists—one concerns the prehistory of the Yukon, a second looks at Dawson property ownership during the Klondike Gold Rush, and a third considers some of the cultural differences between First Nations and non First Nations understandings of non-human nature. A fourth article by a Yukon College sociologist discusses Yukon Aboriginal Baha'i storytelling. Two other articles discuss different aspects of Yukon natural history—one is a study of bats, the second discusses criteria for establishing protected areas in the Yukon.

It is evident through this edition that the NRI and endowment have helped to build local capacity “in the North, by the North and for the North”; three of the authors are current Yukon residents (two are Yukon College instructors) and one (Dr. Chris Burn) holds a Northern Research Chair and has been conducting research in the Yukon, together with community researchers, for over twenty years.

This is a celebration of the Northern Research Endowment, the research it has sponsored, and the researchers themselves.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank those individuals who had the foresight to create this special fund; it is an enduring legacy for Yukon research. I would also like to thank Yukon College for its support of the fund. Last but not least, I thank the past and present members of the President's Committee on Northern Research who donate their time to adjudicate applications. We are grateful for their commitment to the NRI and their promotion of northern research.

**Clint Sawicki** has been coordinator of the Northern Research Institute since 1998.