

The German company Urangesellschaft increased uranium exploration there from the 1970s. In 1990, ninety percent of Baker Lake residents voted “No” in a plebiscite on the Kiggavik proposal and Urangesellschaft withdrew the project. Years later, AREVA Resources (now Orano Canada) resumed prospecting after acquiring Urangesellschaft’s licence. It used intense lobbying to promote its mining proposal, which was echoed by the Canadian government based on their specific development interests. The plans even had partial Inuit support after the Government of Nunavut and the Nunavut Inuit organization issued policies supporting uranium mining in 2007. The book illustrates how Joan Scottie and many other residents challenged state and corporate pressure for residents to accept uranium mining over so many decades. The minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada finally rejected AREVA’s mining proposal in 2016 after many years of Inuit opposition and the launch of residents’ protest committees. AREVA ceased exploration, but left enormous waste on the land, including dangerous materials.

The book goes to the heart of these events. It is sometimes hard to read because of the disturbing state and corporate violence. At other times, the book is full of hope, power, and collective strength. The conclusion ends with the phrase “YOU CAN WIN.” Joan Scottie’s picture on the cover conveys the book’s overall message. She sits in Inuit regalia on a rock next to the river’s turbulent currents. Her picture conveys a kind person with dedication, significant life experience, and intense resolve.

The researchers and allies to Inuit interests, Warren Bernauer and Jack Hicks, contextualize Joan Scottie’s storytelling with careful historical data on the state authorities’ fierce measures to impose a colonial regime during the twentieth century, including resettlement and forced attendance at residential schools, which brought about intergenerational trauma. The contributions of the three co-authors interlace to produce a powerful and insightful story.

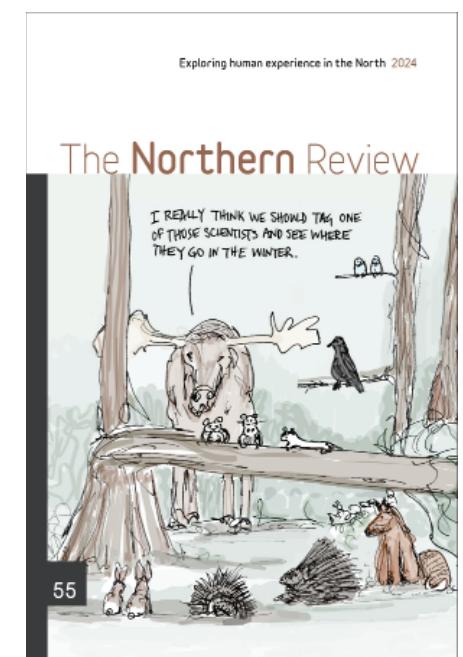
Besides being an excellent piece of academic scholarship, it is a very comprehensible, poignant good read. I recommend this book to the general public from Indigenous and non-Indigenous backgrounds, and to activists and experts in the field. In particular, it will be insightful for corporate actors from employee to CEO levels, and from junior exploration to major production companies. It should be a must-read for state and other political actors, as well as Nunavut Inuit representative agencies and politicians to reflect on the process leading to the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement. The book shows how long-term and everyday politics and policy-making affect the spaces and environment in which Inuit people secure their livelihoods, values, social relations, and culture.

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Cover Art

Tag the Scientists!

Amanda Graham
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Northern research. A big topic. An important one. Scholars, academics, practitioners, and community people are thinking about it a lot: how and why it’s done. We’re talking about how to repatriate it, about how to fund it, about how to ensure that inquiries are relevant and methods valid, that people are involved in research in good ways, and that the research benefits widely.

This is the place where “Tag the Scientists” comes from. Deep in the boreal forest, CritterLab, with its moose PI, fox and porcupine grad students, and bunny undergrads, undertakes an observational study of southern scientists who conduct research in and about the North, to uncover the complex lives of their subjects through remote sensing. It’s a riff on ACCESS, an idea facetiously floated by Aron Senkpiel and Norm Easton in the *Northern Review*’s first issue, recounting a time they’d been talking about “the problem of the South.” They had joked around with the idea of a northern Association of Canadian Colleges Engaged in Southern Studies. It would hold annual Southern Studies conferences in the North, and establish scholarships for students to come north to study southern Canada. The Association would set up field stations in the Near, Middle, and Far South to enable researchers to spend a month or two down south in the winter. “That reminded us,” they breathlessly conclude, “that we would have to give some thought to developing a code of ethics to which members engaged in southern research would have to subscribe.”¹ The tables would be comprehensively turned!

“Tag the Scientists,” poking a bit of fun at ACCESS before it, encapsulates the resistance to outside researchers that developed in the 1960s and 1970s in northern Canada, as well as in the United States in “Indian Country,” and in Australia and New Zealand. Resistance to, or at least suspicion of, social sciences emerged in the wake of Project Camelot, a 1964 large-scale US Army study planned to test a “general systems approach to predicting and influencing instability in several Latin American countries,”² that did much to damage relations between researchers and the communities where they operated. Camelot didn’t go forward after the word got out in Chile about what was going on, but the fall-out reverberated. In the wake of the fiasco, social scientists in many countries were prompted to think about their discipline and about “the harm that the social sciences might do to society and particular persons.”³

In the late 1960s, academics were pointing out the northern resistance they were encountering to their research activities. In one instance, a scholar noted that social scientists working in the North were “no longer able to move about as freely as they did in the past. … Northerners have always felt that they and their resources were being exploited.”⁴ In another, one reported that northerners felt that they “have had their fingers, toes, and toenails counted once too often.”⁵

Against the backdrop of growing federal government pressure for the North to be more productive, the question of research relations in the North began to emerge more frequently in the literature. Julie Cruikshank, anthropologist at the University of British Columbia, noted in 1971 that “many Indian and Eskimo communities are outspokenly raising objections to becoming grist for the anthropology thesis mills.”⁶ And it wasn’t just Indigenous people who objected to insensitive and intrusive research. A professor of sociology at the University of Minnesota, drawing on discussions in a seminar on psychology ethics, wrote that, “the average citizen, when aroused, may place restrictions upon research far beyond any scientist’s imagination.”⁷ Research subjects everywhere were becoming less willing to be pawns in someone else’s game.

Meanwhile, growing concern about Indigenous conditions and issues in Canada led to the federal government’s 1969 White Paper,⁸ which provoked reaction from Indigenous people across the country. Many local and regional Indigenous organizations—such as the Indian Brotherhood of the Northwest Territories or the Yukon Native Brotherhood—were formed to insist on better conditions for Indigenous Peoples and advocate for their self-determination.

By 1973, in Canada, there are more statements about the need to involve Indigenous northerners in research. Famously, we see the Yukon Council of Indians, in their historic document *Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow*,

setting out five conditions for research “if it is going to be any good to us.”⁹ At about the same time, a Métis scholar, Karl E. Francis, observed that “In both Alaska and Northern Canada research and especially research in the social sciences has come under considerable fire … from many who would question both its relevance to northern needs and the propriety and sensitivity of many projects.”¹⁰ As a result, he argued, “we are witnessing a fundamental change in the terms of reference for northern research arising from the Northerner’s rejection of [their] imposed role as object of investigation and curiosity.”¹¹ Some of this antipathy to researchers was prompted by the activities of proponents of a Mackenzie Valley pipeline, who were undertaking baseline natural and social science research after oil had been discovered on Alaska’s North Slope in 1968, and launched a new kind of northern rush there and in Canada.

In response, the “Northwest Territory Ordinance was amended [to regulate] the intrusion of social scientists who have been invading the North in increasing numbers and creating various kinds of social unrest among northerners [sic], especially the aboriginal people.”¹² Community people in the Mackenzie Valley were often vocal about the effects of research, about feeling that they “had their knowledge ripped off, brought down South and changed into academic language [so researchers could] become mice doctors or what have you.”¹³

Practitioners and academics rallied and talked and associated. The Northern Studies community, emerging at Canadian universities with the indirect support of the federal Northern Scientific Training Program,¹⁴ formed the Association of Canadian Universities for Northern Studies, which, in 1982, published its *Ethical Principles for the Conduct of Research in the North* in English, French, and Inuktitut.¹⁵ Requiring researchers to abide by the principles became more and common. In time, as more land claims were settled and Indigenous northerners had time, space, and need, nation-specific codes and protocols for research were developed to ensure local control and involvement. “Tag the Scientists” has northern researchers deciding what research, for what reason, and in what manner.

And all that history is an important piece of this new enterprise we’re embarked on at Yukon University. As Yukon College took the steps to become a university, an enhanced scholarly capacity was going to be needed. A fund was established in Fall 2014 to support research. Discussions ensued about what kinds of supports would be needed to help people consider undertaking scholarship or research when it had not been part of their duties. A big once-a-semester thing? A once-a-month activity? How about a regularly scheduled drop-in space where questions could be asked, research contemplated, and scholarship imagined? ResearChats began that fall, and, to encourage attendance, reminder emails were soon embellished with a “Chatoon.”

CritterLab and its exploits were one thread in the Chatoons:



Amanda Graham, "Lab Meeting," 2015.

Some of the cartoons highlighted the occasional study or relevant event:



Amanda Graham, "Compendium," 2017.

Another thread was the "Sometimes research..." series:



Amanda Graham, "Boots and Gloves," 2015.

While the heyday of ResearChat "Chatoons" is mostly over, ended by COVID-19, it survives in reruns. And possibilities of new situations are raised, where CritterLab is studying northern topics for northern benefit, joined by researchers from outside the region who wish to partner.

The research community in the North that the *Northern Review* founders Aron Senkpiel and Norm Easton saw budding in 1988, when they began the journal along with Ken Coates, and what they wished to nurture through this journal,¹⁶ now includes a growing Indigenous scholarly community. There's far to go, of course, but we've come quite a way in thirty-five years. Now, as then—when the northern colleges were still young and political devolution and land claims were underway—the North's "drive towards autonomy" includes an important dimension: the desire, the need, and the capacity to study itself.¹⁷

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Notes

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