

Editorial

Ken Coates

From its inception, the *Northern Review* has endeavoured to provide solid, North-centred scholarship, engaged with issues of significant concern to the people of Arctic and Subarctic regions. The essays and literary material included in the journal has ranged widely, from issues of social policy and northern politics to questions of Indigenous cultures in transition and the historical experience of newcomers. We have made a concerted effort to be relevant, and even provocative, without surrendering our core commitment to providing serious scholarly contributions on matters concerning the North. This issue continues in that same vein.

The special collection on rapid landscape change and human response in the Arctic and Subarctic tackles one of the most important themes in northern development. The global debate about climate change and the resulting ecological transitions has created heightened awareness of the delicate balance between human societies and the environment. Northerners are particularly alert to these issues, as debate continues about the manner in which global warming will change everything from animal migrations and the distribution of plants, birds, and insects, to age-old understandings of the safety of ice and the reliability of snow pack and, in the process, potentially disturb Aboriginal peoples' relationships with their traditional territories. Add to this the international controversy surrounding the opening of the Northwest Passage and the rush for oil and gas resources in the high Arctic—a development possibility made feasible only by the rapid retreat of the Arctic ice pack—and questions of human response to landscape change is clearly *the* defining issue of this generation.

The papers in this special collection emerged from a two-year international research project and the “Dark Nature” conference held in Whitehorse in 2005. Antony Berger and David Liverman outline the project and its intellectual contributions in their introduction to the essays included in this issue of the *Northern Review*. The contributions, as with the Dark Nature process more generally, range widely, focus on Subarctic and Arctic themes, and cross a variety of disciplines and academic perspectives. The papers include a commentary by Berger on the importance of this theme for

the North and an investigation by James H. Dickson and Petra J. Mudie into the life of Kwäday Dän Ts'inchí, the well-known frozen body discovered in northern British Columbia. James Ford's contribution examines the nature of environmental hazards in Nunavut while Trevor Bell and M.A.P. Renouf consider the impact of ecological shifts on Indigenous cultures in Newfoundland in the period 1500–1100 BP. Thomas Heyd and Holmes Rolston, III provide philosophical discussions of the long-term relationship between environmental change and the evolution of humankind and highlight the profound human and intellectual questions that are raised by the prospect of substantial shifts in landscapes. Individually, these papers make vital contributions to the understanding of Arctic and Subarctic transitions; collectively, they provide a timely reminder that rapid landscape change has long been a part of northern life and that the lessons and experiences of the past can be a useful guide—and a warning—about the ecological realities within which we currently operate.

From the beginning, the primary strength of the *Northern Review* has been its broad coverage of northern issues. The editors avoided the disciplinary and geographic specialization of most academic journals and sought instead to bring in a broad range of perspectives—from various countries, disciplines, and professional perspectives. The result has been a very different kind of journal, one that seeks continuously to engage with the issues of greatest importance to the North. The other papers in this issue reflect this continuing emphasis on breadth and diversity. Robert Wheelersburg's study of Saami reindeer herding in Sweden highlights the continuing importance of Indigenous subsistence activities. The contribution by Darryl Wood examines a matter of serious concern across the North—violent crime and the difficulty securing and retaining police officers in Alaska—and offers the surprising conclusion that rates of serious crime did not differ significantly depending on the presence of a police officer. Gerald A. McBeath and Maria Elena Reyes offer a valuable review of education testing in Alaska, tackling the highly politicized issue of Aboriginal academic performance. The essay by Christine Cook, Anthony Strange, and Susan Renes, the third on Alaska, examines new community-focused approaches to training counsellors for rural Alaska. Christopher Powell's historical essay, in contrast, focuses on the Mackenzie district and specifically on the long-ignored question of union organization and activism in the mining sector. Number 28 concludes with two very different pieces: a literary reflection on oral tradition from highly regarded Canadian author Robert Kroetsch, and Corey Coates' extended book review of *The Diary of Abraham Ulrikab*, edited by Hartmut Lutz. The latter is a remarkable document of an Inuit man relocated from

his home territory in 1880 and put on display across Europe. These entries continue the *Northern Review's* tradition of including literary contributions and encouraging extended discussion of northern-centred documents and commentaries.

The editors of the *Northern Review* know that you will find this issue to be challenging, informative, and deliberately eclectic. Over the past few years, the journal has reached beyond northern Canada to include contributions from Alaska and Europe and from disciplines that have not previously been represented in the pages of the journal. The North has changed dramatically in the years since the *Northern Review* was founded. International and circumpolar dialogue has expanded rapidly. The issues and questions raised in the North are finding new and expanding southern audiences. Those of us who have worked on northern themes over the years have often argued that one of the best features of northern scholarship is that it reaches so readily across national and disciplinary boundaries. This issue of the *Northern Review* continues what we believe to be the core mandate of the journal: the development and celebration of North-centred reflections on the issues of the Subarctic and Arctic world. We are confident that you will enjoy the special collection on the human response to rapid landscape change and the wide-ranging papers and contributions that complete this issue.

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