

Our 58th volume continues in this vein. We start by celebrating the life and professional contributions of Mary Ehrlander, a superb Alaskan scholar and since 2013 a valued member of our editorial board, who sadly passed away earlier this year. Mary had also published articles in the journal in 2007 and 2010, with fascinating comparative research exploring the history of alcohol in the Circumpolar North. Mary will be missed by many, for reasons that her University of Alaska Fairbanks colleague Brandon Boylan makes very clear. We appreciated her kind and insightful contributions, and we're grateful that she connected us with Brandon, who has now joined the *Northern Review* as a senior editor. We are already finding his expertise and measured advice very helpful. There is much to learn from and share with our Alaskan neighbours and friends, and we are glad to continue this valuable collaboration across our international border.

The research papers in this volume cast a broad net over northern issues, from legends in the South Nahanni River Valley and the role that stories can play in colonization, to the raging current debate about critical minerals and the complexities of our relationship with them. Another contribution explores the challenges of data collection in northern communities, and contemplates how the evidence and methodologies used can skew policy making. These are all, in markedly different ways, issues of wide concern and importance across the North.

The *Northern Review* continues to invite commentaries on Indigenous research frameworks and academic scholarship. A research perspective paper explores one of these frameworks and how it was applied in a project in Old Crow, Yukon, offering guidance for what is still sometimes seen as an uneasy intersection of knowledge systems. A unique reflection paper also brings an important and valuable perspective, making the case for researchers and practitioners to bring their heart to conservation science, as well as the numbers.

Finally, a thoughtful commentary on the urgent push to develop northern Ontario resources argues for the importance of continuing baseline studies to protect scientific integrity, health, and Indigenous self-determination. This paper also speaks to themes of pan-northern significance.

Constructive provocation remains a hallmark of the many and varied contributions to the *Northern Review*. We look forward to welcoming ever more perspectives from researchers and thinkers, North and South, as we ponder the grand and important issues of our time. If northern policy is to change—and it is, and will continue to shift in coming years—it is vital that we have informed, insightful, and creative commentary on best paths forward for the Peoples of the North.

In-Memoriam

Mary F. Ehrlander, Professor of History and Arctic & Northern Studies, 1953–2025

Brandon M. Boylan*

Long-time University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) professor, a *Northern Review* senior editor, and my close mentor and friend Mary F. Ehrlander passed away on July 16, 2025, at the age of 72. In her career, Mary educated generations of Alaska and Arctic specialists; wrote biographies of pioneering Alaskans; and co-developed the Model Arctic Council, a simulation program that educates on the Arctic Council and pressing Arctic challenges.

While still raising her three boys Staffan, Wyatt, and Marcus with her husband Lars, Mary began her post-secondary education, earning a BA in Political Science and an MA in Northern Studies from UAF, and an MA and PhD in Government from the University of Virginia (UVA). At UVA, she received a James Madison Memorial Fellowship for graduate work on the U.S. Constitution. She taught at Lathrop High School in Fairbanks before embarking on a professorial career at the University of Alaska Fairbanks where she rose to professor of history and director of the Arctic and Northern Studies Program. She retired from UAF in 2020 as professor emerita.

From my vantage point, Mary was most passionate about three aspects of her work. First, she took great pride in leading and shaping the Arctic and Northern Studies Program for two decades. She especially loved working with graduate students, mentoring dozens over the course of her career. Having developed a strong reputation for her teaching and advising, she won UAF's highest teaching honour, the Emil Usibelli Distinguished Teaching Award, in 2016. Several of Mary's former students attended her celebration of life on August 11, 2025, which is testament to the legacy she leaves and the impact she had on their lives.

Second, Mary became enthralled with the story of Walter Harper, the Irish-Athabaskan man who was the first person to summit Mount Denali. She once joked while writing her celebrated book on his life, *Walter Harper: Alaska Native Son*, that she developed a crush on him. Her book was instrumental in the establishment of Walter Harper Day, which Alaskans celebrate on June 7, and for the commissioning of the bronze statue of Walter and his dog Snowball that sits outside Doyon in Fairbanks. For her book, Mary won the 2018 Alaskana Award from the Alaska Library Association and was named the 2018 James H. Drucker Alaska Historian of the Year from the Alaska Historical Society. She was so humble that she didn't even mention these awards, and I remember learning about them later on. She also wrote, with Hild M. Peters, *Hospital and Haven: The Life and Work of Grafton and Clara Burke in Northern Alaska*, which tells the story of an Episcopal missionary couple who devoted several years in the early twentieth century to the well-being of the Gwich'in Peoples of northern Alaska.

Third, Mary cared deeply about the UArctic Model Arctic Council, a program she co-developed, which brings together university students from across the Arctic to learn about Arctic issues, international relations, and the Arctic Council through simulation and role playing. She enjoyed running programs at UAF, Dartmouth College, and the University of Lapland in Finland. In this sense, she expanded her teaching beyond UAF to educate the next generation of students on the Arctic, a region she deeply loved.

Mary lived a full and meaningful life. She gave to everyone, and everyone loved her. She was a model on how to be a good person. Even at the end of her life, she exemplified dignity and grace. I will miss her terribly but knowing her has been a great gift in my life, and for that I am grateful.

Research Article

“A Mixture of History, Myth, and Bullshit”: The Legend of Headless Valley and the Colonization of Nahʔą Dehé, the South Nahanni River Valley

Robert Vranich*

Abstract: In February 1947, Pierre Berton led a daring, mid-winter expedition into the South Nahanni River Valley (Nahʔą Dehé) in the Northwest Territories to find a secret tropical paradise. Berton's syndicated reports for the *Vancouver Sun* created one of the most exciting and bizarre media spectacles of the early postwar period, and it set in motion a series of events that would lead to the establishment of Nahanni National Park Reserve. Placing Berton's expedition to the Nahanni in a broader context, this essay traces and examines the narrative origins and evolution of a series of lurid tales about the Nahanni wilderness that are collectively known as the Legend of Headless Valley. The Legend of Headless Valley—which includes stories about a secret tropical valley, a lost gold mine, murdered and decapitated prospectors, evil spirits, prehistoric cave-dwelling monsters, and a tribe of head-hunters—remains one of the most enduring legends in the Canadian North and a fundamental feature of the Nahanni wilderness. In examining the narrative history of this northern legend, this essay helps reinforce the idea that stories about northern Canada—however lurid, speculative, or even untrue—are constitutive parts of northern geographies, both real and imagined, and mediating factors in their colonization by outside forces.