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**Editorial, Number 58**

Ken Coates\*

Northern political affairs are, to put it mildly, in “transition.” Political turnover continues in the Territorial North. American President Donald Trump continues his chaotic ways, most recently (November 2025) through the release of the “America First” national security strategy that raises serious questions about Canadian sovereignty in the Arctic. Russian adventurism in the Far North remains a looming threat. Climate change is having an outsized impact across the region.

It is not all worrisome. Indigenous re-empowerment and self-determination across the Circumpolar North continues to broaden, along with expansions in governance. There are significant commercial successes for northern Indigenous economic development corporations (and Alaska Native Corporations). The establishment of First Nations education and health authorities and Indigenous-led wildlife management regimes in Canada, among other initiatives, promise a different and exciting future in the North.

For the *Northern Review*, it has been a distinct privilege to be a small part of the Arctic futures re-imagining process, helping to challenge the status quo. We encourage, in a variety of transnational and multidisciplinary perspectives, wide-ranging and thought-provoking analysis and commentary on northern issues. While we make a concerted effort to tap the exceptional knowledge and expertise of people living and working in the North, we also welcome contributions from scholars and professionals currently based elsewhere. We all share a concern for the just, inclusive, and creative evolution of the Arctic.

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.