

Thankfully, these irritants are infrequent. Overall, this work usefully blends analysis and many sorts of data. Importantly, the contents capture the authentic voices of the informants, and Noël's writing is mercifully clear of the turgid language that so often invades social histories. A smattering of illustrations and maps enhance a generally evocative tale of societies shifting from "traditional" to "modern" Canada.

While a minor complaint might be raised about the jarringly abrupt beginnings of new chapters, the occasionally bumpy ride provided in *Family and Community Life* is well worthwhile. "Bottom up" history certainly has its critics, but Noël shows that micro-history matters; as she puts it, "every local area has its own particular story to tell" (13). While its local details will appeal particularly to residents of northeastern Ontario, this thoughtful and deeply researched work also provides broader insights into individuals, families, and community. Readers of *The Northern Review* might wish for more attention to the issue of "North." Noël treats this term as a label rather than a concept or a form of self-identification. Indeed, one searches in vain for the sort of thoughtful discussion of "North" found in Kerry Abel's *Changing Places* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006). Perhaps the difference in the two books reflects the geography of Noël's study, in particular her focus on the transition zone between northern and southern Canada.

In the end, rather than condemning Noël for what is not in her volume, one should applaud her achievement in examining the private and domestic spheres as arenas of community character and social change. Conscientiously researched, carefully thought out, and effectively written, *Family and Community Life in Northeastern Ontario* brings positive attention to microhistory, assesses family and community, and reminds us that northern provincial settings are both relevant and interesting.

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Learning Native Wisdom: What Traditional Cultures Teach Us About Subsistence, Sustainability, and Spirituality. By Gary Holthaus. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2008. viii + 266 pp. Bibliography, index.

In the North, many communities are experiencing a critical mass of sustainability challenges caused by, among other things, the changing climate's impacts on the land, weather, and seasons; increasing social and political pressures resulting from oil and natural gas development; the rising costs of food, fuel, and other commodities; and an uncertain

global economy. Rural and Indigenous northern communities are among those most vulnerable to these threats. Though adaptation to difficult and changing ecological circumstances has long been a way of life in Alaska, today many communities lack the necessary economic or political capacity to respond to such challenges. In recognition of this problem in Alaska and indeed worldwide, a new body of literature has emerged from academics, journalists, and novelists alike, which aims to identify durable and long-term solutions that enhance community resilience, self-reliance, and sustainability. But much of this literature has come to seem too familiar and comfortable because it covers the same themes and solutions time and again. Often, this literature shares an almost industrial vision of sustainability that casts the issue as merely a problem for science and technology to resolve, while paying only lip service to the valuable wisdom and expertise inherent in the values, traditions, and cultures of local people and places.

This is not the case, however, with the latest offering from Gary Holthaus. In *Learning Native Wisdom*, Holthaus departs from the mainstream sustainability literature, offering perhaps the first legitimate framework that communities in the North and elsewhere can use to address their challenges in effective and culturally appropriate ways. In contrast to those who would parcel out topics such as wildlife conservation, subsistence, agriculture, and energy use into discrete problem areas to be addressed in a secular manner by their respective management agencies, administrations, and academic disciplines, Holthaus argues that the sustainability problems of our age cannot be treated in isolation. He takes the reader on a tour of the many lessons he learned in twenty-five years spent in Alaska as a school-teacher and traveller and during time spent with American Indian communities stateside. Through a combination of storytelling and personal reflection, he shows that the many individual challenges of sustainability are symptoms of a larger systemic cultural problem that can only be addressed with a systemic and integrated cultural solution.

In place of the seemingly obligatory “triple bottom line” or “three-legged stool” of economy, ecology, and society that characterizes much of the sustainability literature, Holthaus offers three very different categories: subsistence, sustainability, and spirituality. Under these three interrelated headings, he argues that we must re-learn old ways of thinking about the relationships between society and the environment before we can implement sustainable solutions, and he insists that we must first change ourselves, our ways of living, and our culture before anything even approximating sustainability will be possible.

Holthaus is an educator by trade and his emphasis on (and critique of) education resonates throughout this book. How we raise our children, how we manage and care for the land, how we can feed ourselves without further degrading ecosystems, and why cultures must re-adopt social models of integration rather than secular models of fragmentation—these are all topics covered here.

According to Holthaus, the sustainability problems we face are fundamentally cultural in nature and cannot be addressed effectively within the confines of our existing cultural framework and worldview. Nor, he argues, can they be solved with conventional technological solutions and economic growth models (in fact, we are repeatedly reminded that these are the very approaches that have created our problems in the first place). Such arguments have been made in the past by Wendell Berry, Daniel Quinn, Gary Snyder, and E.F. Schumacher, among others, but Holthaus introduces them here in a refreshing style. As he points out in his introduction (4), this book is not a how-to manual for sustainable design. Rather, its fourteen chapters are written as vernacular essays—meditations, if you will—and they engage the reader in a way that is conversational. Indeed, the book employs a maieutic method of teaching and working through problems that Holthaus may well have learned from Indigenous peoples in Alaska, and which stands out as one of its most powerful features.

Central to Holthaus' main argument is the notion that all people are fundamentally "subsistence people" and are dependent on the natural world for support in countless ways. This view is a welcome change and stands in stark contrast to more familiar ways of thinking that distinguish the western world from so-called "primitive" or "traditional" societies based on ethnocentric conceptions of "subsistence". To Holthaus, it is "life on the land and the view of the world," not science and technology, "that create subsistence and sustain a culture" (69). His many years of experience working with Alaska Natives give him authority on this subject and he uses it in interesting and effective ways to make his points. In our view, Holthaus's new way of understanding "subsistence" has the potential to yield positive results for northern peoples and communities by turning on end the overly-rigid and narrow government subsistence regimes that often do more to restrict local peoples than to empower them.

In Holthaus's vision, the idea of sustainability is bracketed on one side by "subsistence" and on the other by "spirituality." His use of the latter term refers not to the church or institutionalized religion *per se*, but to a more general category of experience that is closely connected to an individual's worldview. This usage implies the ability to see connections, to understand

the whole rather than just the parts, and to act with respect in our interactions with one another and with the lands we depend on. Holthaus examines this theme from a different viewpoint in virtually every chapter. For him, both spirituality and worldview imply an ethical relationship to land and land use, and this too is a refreshing addition to the sustainability literature because ethical considerations are rarely addressed seriously in it.

Learning Native Wisdom is well referenced and includes sources that will be familiar to anyone who has read the literature on sustainability. It also relies on sources that are seldom examined in this literature and uses them in creative ways to support its main arguments. Holthaus's learned connections to Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Native American world views situate his subject matter within a broad historical framework that resonates globally but with clear regional and local implications. Whether the problem is the educational system in Alaska or the agricultural practices and resource issues that Holthaus dealt with in his work with the Northern Plains Sustainable Agriculture Society, this book is grounded in personal experience. Perhaps most importantly, the broad intellectual framework Holthaus employs forces us to think about sustainability in new and more productive ways that carry us beyond what has become "business as usual." Too often, even when we claim to be doing something new in the field of sustainability science, we are merely changing the language we use to talk about problems rather than actually changing the way we think about them.

This book will be welcomed by a diverse audience because it does not follow any standard academic prescriptions or disciplinary conventions. Anyone interested in sustainability, whether an ordinary citizen, a city administrator, or a wildlife manager, will likely find it engaging. While those with particular interests in the North may be familiar with some of the ground it covers, they will still find Holthaus's presentation and insights fresh. Researchers in the natural and physical sciences will perhaps learn the most from Holthaus's reflections. In particular, those working in resilience theory, where concepts are drawn so heavily from ecology and ecosystem science, may find this book especially enlightening because it highlights the cultural, spiritual, and ethical side of sustainability problems.

Learning Native Wisdom is written in such a manner that it need not be read from beginning to end. Rather, a reader can pick it up almost anywhere in the narrative and find the centre. However, if this approach is taken, we suggest reading the introduction and conclusion first. In particular, the conclusion, "Creating a Sustainable Culture," offers an excellent summary of key themes and arguments. The book as a whole is challenging because it

discusses problems that defy immediate or obvious solutions, and it makes important contributions by sharing wisdom from Holthaus's long and intimate connection with the people of Alaska and elsewhere. It deserves a thoughtful read by us all.

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***Health Transitions in Arctic Populations*. Edited by T. Kue Young and Peter Bjerregaard. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008. 496 pp. Tables, graphs, maps, bibliographical references.**

Health Transitions in Arctic Populations is a comprehensive compilation of data about Arctic regions, peoples, environmental features, and living conditions. It describes health patterns, the lifestyles of resident populations, and environmental and economic factors affecting communities in the Arctic. The volume was supported in part with funding from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, the University of Toronto Press, the Directorate of Health in Greenland, and the Karen Elise Jensen Foundation. The dedication of editors Peter Bjerregaard and Kue Young to the dissemination of knowledge about circumpolar health issues is evident throughout the publication and its accomplished contributors provide an impressive breadth of information and expertise.

The book is divided into the following five sections: Regions, Peoples, Health Determinants, Consequences, and Strategies: Improving the Health of Arctic People. Each section contains information on a range of subjects and includes tables, graphs, and maps. The Regions section, for example, describes the health status of resident peoples; health services; socio-economic indicators; population characteristics; historical developments; linguistics; traditional lifestyles; and geographic features in Greenland, northern Canada, Alaska, Arctic Russia, and northern Fennoscandia. The Peoples section describes several aspects of population health, including migration patterns; genetic relations among ethnic groups; historical population distribution; and political influences on Inuit, Dene, and Sami peoples, as well as the cultures, languages, socio-economic conditions, and health patterns of these groups. The Health Determinants section focuses primarily on environmental factors, including work conditions, contaminants, water quality, and climate change. Finally, the section on Consequences includes sub-sections that discuss issues related to a range of infectious, cardiovascular, and other diseases,