

Foreword

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It is with great pleasure that I write an introduction to this issue of *The Northern Review*.

The articles in this edition represent a maturity in the development of rural and northern social work. The Yukon with its diverse population and unique geography requires innovative and creative service delivery. To do this also requires a political climate that will allow the power sharing necessary to make fundamental changes in services delivery. We are fortunate in the Yukon to have had not only the political support but also the initiative of Yukon First Nations who have provided their expertise and wisdom.

Small communities, especially in the North, are a wonderful combination of strong independence and community co-operation so essential to survival. These qualities necessitate the melding of traditional social work theories with an understanding of cultural dynamics and the necessity to build on the strengths of the community.

I have had the opportunity to work with several of the authors, both those from the Yukon and from the University of Victoria. Their openness to new ideas and to the necessity of understanding the cultural dimensions of community work has been inspiring to me. Working with Yukoners, they have created new traditions, new knowledge—a community-centred approach to social services that exemplifies a democratic approach not always seen reflected in theoretical literature.

Northerners, and particularly aboriginal northerners, have long been subjected to a form of service delivery colonialism based on alien cultures and southern-based assumptions. It is encouraging that at last we have begun to explore a new frontier.

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