

## Book Review

*Mining and Communities in Northern Canada: History, Politics, and Memory.* Edited by Arn Keeling and John Sandlos. Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2015. 456 pp. 16 b&w photos, 6 maps, 2 tables, notes, bibliography, index. Free e-book available <http://press.ucalgary.ca/books/9781552388044>. Reviewed by Jen Jones.

The legacies of abandoned mine sites are not lost on northerners. As northerners, we are regularly reminded that these sites continue to influence the landscape, the people, and the politics of the region. Recent northern news stories provide reminders of once-active mine sites. Citizens living near the Giant Mine outside Yellowknife are left to contend with legacies related to the storage and maintenance of 237,000 tonnes of arsenic trioxide dust (Giant Mine Remediation Project 2007). Neighbours to the west of the Northwest Territories, too, are reminded of the legacies of once-active mine sites. One such reminder for citizens of the Yukon is the \$36.2 million of federal funding directed towards the assessment and care of abandoned mine sites—a figure recently tabled in the 2016 Yukon Government budget (Tucker, 2016). Yet abandoned mines are more than sites requiring budget lines for environmental monitoring and remediation. These once-active mines are situated within landscapes that are home to peoples and their histories, their present livelihoods, and their future. Mining in Canada's North is complex. Neither benefits nor impacts are experienced uniformly. Old mine sites often serve as icons of the cost to northerners, while the "ephemeral benefits" were, and are, seen leaving the North in the form of large trucks; shipping barges; and in the pockets of lawyers, CEOs, and southern stakeholders. Often not discussed, but present all the same, is how mines are keen reminders of the relationship between settlers and Indigenous peoples of the North. The history of northern mining consists of, among other histories, social and economic dislocation that has disproportionately impacted northern Indigenous communities. Moreover, these sites serve as reminders of the collision between the colonial policies of expansion, fuelled by the doctrine of *terra nullius*, and the Indigenous ways of being with the land (Christensen and Grant 2006)—a collision that continues to be negotiated and one which

Arn Keeling and John Sandlos, the editors of *Mining and Communities in Northern Canada: History, Politics, and Memory*, seek to explore.

Keeling and Sandlos bring together twelve chapters that illustrate the nuanced mining legacies beyond “toxic sites, tailing ponds and waste rock dumps” (4). Drawing on their backgrounds as historian (Sandlos) and historical geographer (Keeling), the editors have brought together authors who trace the histories and legacies of mine developments in Canada’s North (three territorial and two provincial Norths). Contributions to this book focus on the human interface with abandoned mines, including both past and present histories. While the editors aimed to situate the “contemporary mineral boom ... into a critical historical context” (4), they really illuminate the often overlooked human component to abandoned mines.

For the most part, the contributing authors participated in the “Abandoned Mines in Northern Canada” research project, which is based at Memorial University of Newfoundland. With a focus on abandoned mines, authors explore the multiple impacts of mining in northern communities including the “often neglected historical experiences of northern native communities and their experiences with mineral development (4). Many of the chapters relay stories of changes to the land and the culture, drawing upon perspectives of northern Indigenous peoples, governments, and industry. Like the North itself, the chapters are diverse. Included are personal and community experiences, issues of governance, and persistent legacies specific to the closure of a mine.

The book is divided into three sections. Section 1, “Mining and Memory,” relies heavily on oral contributions made by northerners. It tells of complicated relationships forged between northern Indigenous peoples and mine developments. As authors of this section write, there is not one story line; stories are not straightforward, and who is writing the story often determines what is highlighted. This is explored and illustrated by a number of authors, including Sandlos who, through the title of his contribution “A Mix of the Good and the Bad: Community Memory and Pine Point Mine,” captures the complexity of memory and legacy. Yet he and the other contributors to this book require a full reading to understand that the relationship of legacy and memory is complicated. Entwined with nostalgic stories of mining families and opportunities is the challenge to culture and self-determination. As Sandlos (158) argues, complex legacies are not to be “misinterpreted as an apologia for a development.” Instead, as authors of this section identify, stories told by northerners serve as

a reminder that communities often experience impacts not tangible or perceptible to those from “outside.”

Section 2 stretches legacy to include attention to latent colonialism. In this section, authors explore the changing relationship between northern Indigenous governments and mining companies, with a focus on the interface between Indigenous rights, sovereignty, and resource development. Authors Andrea Procter, Tyler Levitan, and Emilie Cameron draw upon both past mine developments and the recent increase in use of impact and benefit agreements (IBAs) to reflect on the changing power relationships between northern Indigenous populations, mining companies, and governments. These authors reveal the complexity of IBAs, furthering the editors’ aim to illustrate the multiple perspectives of mining while attending to the asymmetrical distribution of power and benefits. In this section, authors remind us that IBAs or other agreements have the ability to bring meaningful benefits to northerners, while simultaneously distancing the same peoples from the land that provides for their well-being and culture.

The book concludes with three contributions in a section called “Navigating Mine Closures.” Here, authors weigh in on the process of closure and how closure informs (or fails to inform) future decision making. Our attention is drawn to the memories of individuals still living in the area of abandoned mines. Yet, as Heather Green’s contribution illustrates, these memories are not homogenous, once again highlighting the diversity of perspectives that exist among northern peoples.

For many, *Mining and Communities in Northern Canada: History, Politics, and Memory* will be a welcome contribution to the scholarship of mining, northern Canada, and Indigenous relations. It is a thoughtful collection of authors who reflect on how mining in the North is not easily navigated, including the historic and current relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. Not lost on the contributing authors is the diversity and complexity of the history and legacy of mining in Canada’s North. This diversity and complexity is mirrored in the twelve different mine sites used as case studies. Yet, while each chapter is bound by its own thesis, there is a convergence among authors. It occurs in the telling of northern Indigenous experiences, an often-neglected aspect in the annals of old mine sites. It is also worth noting that some of the contributing authors are northerners themselves. For them, abandoned or closed mines are not merely research projects; they are known sites that have impacts on the people they know and the town they live in—a contribution worth considering as we move research forward in a time that recognizes

Indigenous voices and research as political acts, and fundamental to the exercise of asserting self-determination (Smith 2012).

Keeling and Sandlos have keen timing; following the publication of *Mining and Communities in Northern Canada*, was the decision of the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board to send the largest mine proposed in Yukon's history to Panel Review, which is the highest level of assessment under the *Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Act*. This mine, if licensed, like other current mineral developments, will in turn become a legacy for future generations living in Canada's North. And this mine, similar to abandoned mine sites explored in *Mining and Communities in Northern Canada*, will likely impact Yukon communities differently and disproportionately, and test relations between Yukon First Nations, mining companies, and government. However, a contemplation of the contributions made by authors in Keeling and Sandlos's book may serve those of us who are considering issues of mine governance, Indigenous rights, and self-determination, and, not least of all, the legacies beyond remediation.

#### References

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