

Editorial: Number 52

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Outsiders have been fascinated by the Inuit for centuries, marvelling at the ability of the people to adapt to some of the world's harshest conditions. As Europeans struggled with life in the Arctic, they were puzzled by the way the Inuit lived easily in a vast open and treeless territory, covered by ice and snow for more than half the year and subject to extreme winter temperatures. It took generations for outside observers to overcome their superficial sense of wonder about the Inuit and to seek to understand and describe the reality of Inuit life and culture in less wide-eyed terms.

Throughout the twentieth century, the Inuit became one of the most heavily studied people in the world. Anthropologists, sociologists, political scientists, and scholars from other disciplines travelled North to study the Inuit. Many of these researchers were exemplary and worked well and supportively with communities, developing lifelong friendships and often working with Inuit organizations to promote their drive for rights, political reform, and cultural survival.

Much of the research was driven by external and Western concepts of culture, political organization, and academic interest. Collectively, the scholarly work destroyed long-standing myths and stereotypes left over from the days of the first European travellers. While the cultural portraits of the Inuit that emerged were an improvement on the earlier renderings, the scholarship did not align with Inuit conditions and evolving social realities. Throughout this time, the Inuit began to organize politically and economically, launched and settled their land claims and, in 1999, celebrated the establishment of the new territory of Nunavut.

Over the past twenty years, research on the Inuit has been profoundly transformed. New research protocols require scholars to secure approval from the community organizations before heading into the field. Researchers have to abide by community requirements and protocols, share their results with the communities and/or organizations, protect their research informants, and

otherwise ensure that the research serves community interests. A new generation of scholars, some represented in this issue of the *Northern Review*, has internalized these expectations and is in the process of transforming Arctic research. Indigenous scholars, including Inuit, have emerged together with non-Indigenous researchers to bring new perspectives to the study of human activity in the Far North.

The rethinking and the reimagining of the historic and contemporary experience of the Inuit is continuing apace. Emerging topics are providing new perspectives on a variety of important themes, from understanding Inuit relationships with land and traditional territories, the response to the mining industry, Inuit experience with education and training programs, representations of Inuit priorities in national political processes, and the integration of Inuit cultural awareness within Canadian institutions, like the Canadian Armed Forces. This work, importantly, is typically done in partnership with Inuit communities and organizations while managing to make significant contributions to global academic understanding of the internal and external dynamics of Inuit life.

There are two major strands, both represented in this collection of articles, in the study of Inuit in the Canadian North. The first focuses on the internal aspects of Inuit life, from matters of language, land use, artistic expression, and the social realities of northern Indigenous peoples wrestling with the challenges and opportunities of the twenty-first century. The second strand relates to Inuit relationships with the broader world, from resource-based economics to the cultural intrusions of modern media, from the politics of Indigenous rights to engagement with the institutions of the modern state.

Because of the complexities of legal contests over Indigenous rights, the remarkable political transitions associated with Nunavut and Nunavik, consultation requirements associated with resource projects, and the Inuit desire to protect their traditional territories from environmental change, research figures prominently in Inuit affairs. As the Inuit support more students who are pursuing advanced studies, and as northern research centres, like the Nunavut Research Institute, the Canadian High Arctic Research Station, and the Aurora Research Institute, enhance north-centred capacity, the evolution of academic research on the Inuit continues apace.

As the articles in this issue demonstrate, the introduction of new approaches, new scholars, and more North-centric research is enriching northern scholarship and, even more important, providing the academic foundation for efforts to improve the quality of life for Inuit people in the Canadian North.

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