

***From Far and Wide: A Complete History of Canada's Arctic Sovereignty.*
By Peter Pigott. Toronto: Dundurn, 2011. 287 pages.**

In *From Far and Away*, Peter Pigott, a popular historian best known for his work in aviation and military history, purports to provide Canadians with “a complete history of Canada’s Arctic sovereignty.” The reality is otherwise.

Pigott claims that the idea for this book was sparked by his work for the Treaty Section at the Department of Foreign Affairs (11), but it seems that this is simply a case of a writer trying to jump on the bandwagon of recent interest in Arctic issues. Unfortunately, in this case, the author is ill-equipped to carry out the task. Pigott reveals little to no knowledge of the legal issues at play in the Arctic, a partial knowledge at best of the long history of military involvement in the region, and a poor grasp of the historical intersections between sovereignty, security, and stewardship. A quick glance at the bibliography confirms an inexcusable ignorance of the extensive scholarly and popular writing on these subjects. There is not a single reference to recognized authorities on the subject, such as Shelagh Grant, Franklyn Griffiths, Rob Huebert, Ted McDorman, or Donat Pharand, never mind the valuable recent scholarship by Janice Cavell, Peter Kikkert, Adam Lajeunesse, and a host of others.

These omissions are inexcusable, but even worse is the author’s proclivity to simply cut and paste material from existing sources—many of which he does not even list in his bibliography. Often the text bears uncanny resemblance to arguments and narratives produced by Arctic experts. For example, Pigott’s discussion of the Joint Arctic Weather Stations is entirely lifted from Peter Johnson’s 1990 article on the origins of Alert published in *Arctic* (which is never referenced anywhere in the book). In other cases, he simply lifts text from primary materials—such as page 230, where sections are lifted directly from the Western Electric booklet *The DEW Line Story* without any citation. In an academic context, this study would be failed outright for rampant plagiarism. This list of substantive problems is hardly exhaustive and is only compounded by a litany of spelling and factual errors.

More generally, the author never delivers on what he purports to argue. Pigott hopes “the audience will come away ... with the realization that 90 percent of sovereignty is stewardship and that all sovereign rights of Arctic lands and waters by the government of Canada is owed to British exploration in the post-Napoleonic era and Inuit use and occupation of Inuit Nunangat since time immemorial” (11). What does the author mean by “stewardship”—a term that Franklyn Griffiths has often employed in his writings on the Arctic—given that it is seldom discussed, implicitly or

explicitly, elsewhere in the book? The author never follows up on the theme of Inuit ownership, starting his narrative with the “British obsession” and their extension of “legitimate title” over northern North America (15–16) rather than Indigenous occupation. When it comes to sovereign rights, how are Canada’s claims to the extended continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles a reflection of the origins of sovereignty that the author asserts? The book is filled with examples of sloppy writing and over-generalizations, which are revealing not just of poor style but a weak grasp of the subject matter.

If there is an enjoyable part of the book, it is the early chapters, which summarize the well-trodden trail of the early explorers, the Franklin expedition, and the Yukon gold rush. There is nothing new and random detail obstructs the flow, but the material is interesting. The section on the Yukon Field Force is particularly competent, although it adds little to what Kenneth Eyre documented in his 1981 dissertation.

The rest of the book is a disjointed patchwork seldom stitched to the ostensible sovereignty theme of the book. The discussion of the early postwar period perpetuates long-standing misconceptions recently corrected by Janice Cavell and Jeff Noakes in *Acts of Occupation*—another key source that Pigott failed to consult. The discussion on the 1922 Logan expedition and the Northwest Territories and Yukon (NWT&Y) Radio System is useful but fails to advance Kenneth Eyre’s existing (and much better) work on the topics. Similarly, the chapter on the Second World War skims across the surface of sovereignty issues without making any meaningful contact. Pigott cites *The Roundel*, the journal of the Royal Canadian Air Force, rather than the ample scholarly literature on this period. For example, he misses nearly all of the superb work by Ken Coates and Bill Morrison on the impacts of the Northwest Defence projects. Writing about the Aleutian Campaign without consulting Galen Perras’ book and many articles is highly problematic, and for a chapter on “Sovereignty and Mackenzie King” it is remarkable that there is next to nothing about the prime minister’s well-documented wartime sovereignty concerns.

From here the author’s failure to connect his eclectic source material to sovereignty issues only gets worse. He provides limited context in which to situate defence activities in the North, particularly when it comes to the official balancing act between continental security and national sovereignty. What threat (alleged by Pigott) did the Americans actually pose? This essential element is never analyzed, but is central to his argument. How did the Canadian government respond to American requests for access to its Arctic and perceived encroachments on its sovereignty? Again, this is never

discussed. Instead, the author meanders from anecdote to anecdote. Pages 196–97 are a painful example: each individual paragraph is a stand-alone section, with nothing weaving the random detail together. The section on the Joint Arctic Weather Stations is filled with extraneous detail (including a random list of the twelve individuals who first served at Alert) but never makes any connection to *sovereignty*. A quick read of the work by Shelagh Grant, Gordon W. Smith, and others would have made the link crystal clear. The DEW Line section jumps around owing to the author's disorganized chronology and again fails to discuss sovereignty in any substantive manner. As for Prime Minister John Diefenbaker—he only factors into the last few pages of the chapter that is ostensibly about him, and he was hardly the primary progenitor of the DEW Line to which the author attempts to tie him. In short, there is no rhyme nor reason for much of what appears (and what is omitted from) in this narrative.

The closer to the present the author gets, the more disjointed the narrative becomes. It is unbelievable that a book claiming to be “a complete history of Canada's Arctic sovereignty” never even explains the core idea of internal waters (mentioned only once on p. 242) versus international strait (which is never explained), never mind framing the overarching debates in legal terms. Given that the author once worked in the Treaty Section at the Department of Foreign Affairs, it is particularly striking that there is so little appreciation of the legal bases of historical and contemporary disagreements. As for the military presence in the Arctic, the discussions about the 1970s and 80s are pathetically light. There is a short mention of northern naval deployments (NORPLOYs) but nothing about air patrols (NORPATs) or army activities (such as the New Viking series of exercises). There is also a complete ignorance of any of the debates during that era about the role of the Canadian Forces in defence of sovereignty. The discussion of the government's response to the *Polar Sea* voyage in 1985 lacks any context, which has been ably provided by Rob Huebert in his dissertation, articles, and a book chapter. Instead of working systematically through evidence, Pigott descends into anecdote and tangent. The 1990s are dispensed with in a single page, and the author makes no reference whatsoever to the Arctic Capabilities Study completed at the end of that decade—the catalyst for much of the Arctic sovereignty-security discussion that followed. Amazingly, there is no examination of climate change and how this generated popular and political concerns that prompted (or at least rationalized) Arctic operations in the early 2000s. Instead, Pigott jumps right into an unstructured overview of some activities and political commitments over the last decade without any robust appreciation of context or debate. By the end, the author seems content to cut and paste

random testimonies, articles, and journal entries with little explanation of how they intersect with sovereignty. The book whimpers to a close with the same disconnectedness prevalent throughout. The author makes no attempt at an overall conclusion and by the end of the book it is obvious that he has lost any sense of an overarching point.

From Far and Wide: A Complete History of Canada's Arctic Sovereignty is a complete disappointment. Far from "recount[ing] exclusively the historic activities of the Canadian military in Canada's North"—a confusing claim made on the inside of the dust jacket that seems to mistakenly equate sovereignty with a military presence—the author does not possess sufficient background knowledge to make even a modest contribution to the literature. Both Pigott and Dundurn Press (usually a publisher of respectable military and Northern history) should be embarrassed for producing such a disjointed and poorly researched book to try to prey upon the popular interest in Arctic sovereignty and security issues. This is a book best avoided—by popular and professional audiences alike. Readers seeking background on Canada's Arctic sovereignty and security challenges are advised to turn elsewhere.

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Inuit and Whalers on Baffin Island through German Eyes: Wilhelm Weike's Arctic Journal and letters (1883-84). Edited and annotated by **Ludger Müller-Wille and Bernd Giesecking**. Translated by **William Barr**. Montreal: Baraka Books, 2011.

In 1883, Franz Boas and Wilhelm Weike travelled from Germany to the shores of Cumberland Sound and Davis Strait, Baffin Island where Boas studied the geography and the local Inuit. Weike was a Boas family servant before the trip and at Baffin he performed everyday housekeeping tasks and helped Boas with his observations when needed. Boas had just completed his doctorate in physics and was pursuing post-doctoral studies. He kept a journal and letter-diaries of the trip and directed Weike to do the same. Boas published *Baffin-Land* in 1885. His book *The Central Eskimo* (1888) became a classic of cultural anthropology and his charts were used as a baseline in the Canadian government maps of the 1920s and 1930s. Weike refers to Boas as "Herr Dr" throughout his journal and letters.

The preface, introduction, and Part 2, "Wilhelm Weike—Life in Germany and on Baffin Island (1859–1917)," were written by the editors and give some background to the central characters and the extent of German knowledge about the Far North at the time. Ludger Müller-Wille was a professor of